

# THE BIBLE:

*IS IT THE WORD OF GOD OR OF MAN?*

BY

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WROTE THE PENTATEUCH?" ETC.

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## PREFACE.

THE following chapters first appeared in substance as a series of articles, entitled "Talks upon Inspiration," in the magazine, *The King's Own*. These have been revised and considerably added to, and are now published in this form in the hope that they may be useful to some—young men especially—who, in these days of conflicting thought, may have had their minds disturbed through difficulties presented to them concerning the inspiration of the Bible.

They are written in the form of a dialogue, or series of dialogues, between "John Plainman and his son," and are intended to show how a plain, unlearned man, without a knowledge of either Hebrew or Greek, may determine for himself whether or no the Bible is what it professes to be, and what during all the centuries it has been accepted by Christians to be, the Word of God. It is customary with some of the critics to speak with thinly veiled contempt of "certain good people" who cleave tremblingly and with blind credulity to old-fashioned ideas, and this has great weight

with many who do not like to be thought too old-grandmotherly in their beliefs!

"I'm rather advanced, you know," said a young man to whom I was speaking of Christ and His salvation.

"Indeed!" I said, "in what direction? For some people advance in wisdom and some in folly, some into the light and some into the darkness? In which way are you advancing?"

"Well," he replied, "what I mean is, that I am off the beaten track."

"Don't flatter yourself, friend," I said, "you're just on the beaten track, running with the crowd. It is *the fashion* nowadays to disbelieve the Bible."

He smiled, and said, "I'm afraid it is getting more and more the beaten track every day."

Just so. What is greatly wanted in the present time is *real* independence of thought. That a man should think for himself, and not take for granted that every conjecture of the critic or scientist, every assumption or bold assertion, must be right, but weigh them first, turn them round and round, and look them through and through, and remember that at the best they are only the thoughts of *fallible men*; then let him be willing to have his own thoughts tested in the same manner.

Conversing with 'a gentleman who professed to be an agnostic, he told me that his father was a Christian minister and he had as a boy been brought up to believe in God and the Bible, but when he came to man's estate he felt himself *compelled* to give up the belief on intellectual grounds, "And," he added, "I assure you I did so with real pain and almost a feeling of guilt."

"Then," I said, "you must have had some very potent reasons which *compelled* you, as you say, to relinquish a belief which it was a positive pain for you to give up!"

"Yes, I had," he replied.

"Now," I said, "the Bible tells us that '*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,*' and this you believed at one time?"

"My father forced me to," he replied.

"Never mind," I said, "whatever the reason was, at one time you did accept that as true, did you not?"

"Yes," he admitted.

"Now then, will you give me some of the tremendous reasons which *compelled* you even with pain and a feeling of guilt to relinquish that belief?"

After a moment's hesitation he said, "I want authority."

"Whose authority?" I asked. "Huxley's, or Tyndall's, or whose?"

He looked confused, stammered some excuse, and seizing his hat hurriedly bade me good-bye, saying he would see me some other day.

Probably he little thought how truly he spoke when he said, "*I want authority.*" It is the same everywhere; men require *authority* for their beliefs, and it is strange but true that whenever they reject the authority of the Word of God, they *invariably* put themselves—though perhaps unconsciously—under subjection to the authority of man.

With regard to *verbal* inspiration, many earnest Christians think that it is merely an academical question which should be relegated to "the experts" while we go and preach the Gospel. True, the Gospel is the chief thing, but what kind of Gospel have we to preach unless we are certain that every word of it is from God?

That the Holy Spirit may be graciously pleased to use this little book to help some troubled soul by clearing away difficulties regarding the full and complete inspiration of the Holy Scriptures is the earnest prayer of the author, and his only aim in sending it forth.

## CHAPTER I.

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### INSPIRATION.

“FATHER,” said young John Plainman the other day, looking up thoughtfully from a book he had been reading, “what is inspiration?”

“In-breathing,” replied his father laconically.

“I know that,” said the young man with a smile, “but that isn’t what I mean; the fact is I used to believe that the Bible was the very Word of God, but I have so often heard in lectures and read in books something so different that I am sorely puzzled, and want to know what inspiration really is.”

“Well, my son, inspiration, in its wider meaning and common acceptation, signifies the communication of thoughts to a man’s mind by a power exterior to and greater than himself.”

“But would you say that was the meaning of inspiration when used with reference to men of genius—Shakespeare, for instance?”

“Just the same originally, from the mythological idea of the poets being taught by the muses; but, as a matter of fact, it is wrong to speak of them as

inspired at all, for their works are simply the product of their own brains."

"I see what you mean, father, and so I suppose you would say it is right enough to speak, for instance, of a newspaper article being 'inspired,' when the editor has got a government 'tip,'" said young John laughing.

"Yes, you have caught the right idea, namely, that inspiration must come from without, not from within, and it is most important to bear this in mind when speaking of inspiration in connection with the Word of God, for it makes all the difference whether we have in the Bible a *revelation from God to man*, or merely men's conceptions of God."

"Yes, I understand; but do you believe that the whole of the Bible was from God? for some say there is the human element in it as well as the Divine, and this seems very reasonable."

"Undoubtedly there is the human *element*, but remember that is a very different thing from human *error*, for which there is no room in the writings of these holy men of old, who 'spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.'"

"Then I suppose you must believe in *verbal* inspiration! And do you think that position is now tenable when so many men of learning have come to the conclusion—after careful critical examination—that inspiration, however full, does not extend to the *words*?"

"Not only do I hold verbal inspiration to be

tenable, but I am certain that without it the Bible could not be accepted as the Word of God; for, if there be human error mixed up with Divine truth, how shall we separate the chaff from the wheat, or tell what is false and what is true?"

"Of course you know that I really long to believe as I used to do that the Bible is the very Word of God, as I said before, for my mind was at rest then; but I have heard and read so much against it, not from agnostics and avowed sceptics, but from those who are not only professing Christians, but professors in colleges, ministers of churches, and others holding leading positions, that I am sorely troubled; and all the more because these men appear to be anxious to *defend the Bible and uphold the honour of God.*"

"Yes, I know well that in the present day it is very difficult, especially for a young man, to keep out of the sea of doubt, unless he be firmly established in the faith and walking close with God; for never has there been a time in all the world's history when the onslaught on faith has been so fierce as now. From the beginning Satan's great effort has been to induce man to doubt God's Word. '*Yea hath God said?*' was his first insinuation, and ever since his object has been the same; but in these last days all his force and all his subtlety, together with man's ingenuity, is being brought to bear in a vain endeavour to shake the foundations of our faith."

"But are you not rather harsh in your judgment, father? I know most people would think you so; for

while there are, doubtless, those in the ranks of the hostile critics who are manifestly Satan's servants, there are others who are evidently sincerely seeking after truth, and some of them appear to be very good men."

"Certainly we have no right to judge any man except by the rule our Saviour gave us, 'by their fruits ye shall know them.' 'Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?' Many good men may be in the hostile camp, and many who *think* they are sincerely seeking after truth, but their position there brings them under the same condemnation, for by the light of God's word we can judge their *works*, at the same time '*speaking the truth* in love,' if peradventure some of them may be led to see their error. But you know Satan can use God's children and God's servants to do his own work, and never more so than when he gets them in love with their own thoughts or their own learning, instead of submitting themselves to the teaching of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. However, if you will tell me what difficulties you have on the subject of the inspiration of the whole of the Scriptures, I'll gladly do my best to help you."

"Well, father, I'll try to put them in order before you, and I should be thankful, indeed, if you can remove them, for I assure you I don't want to doubt; and first I would mention those with regard to science. You know I have dabbled a little in it, and it is quite clear that the Bible does not always agree with the discoveries of science. Now it seems to me much more reasonable to believe that the writers of the Bible

wrote their matter simply from their imperfect knowledge of science, and so made very natural mistakes, than to believe that God Himself indited these errors and taught in His Word things contrary to His works, making the Book of Revelation out of agreement with the Book of Nature."

"Stop a bit, you are going too fast; you are making a very common mistake in confounding science with nature, whereas, these two things are totally distinct. Science is only men's ideas or theories about nature. These may or may not be correct, but in either case they are only the thoughts of fallible men. Of course, certain facts in nature can be ascertained, but beyond that it is mere supposition. Scientists themselves do not claim infallibility for science—except when they set it down in opposition to the Bible, and then they make no allowance for being mistaken in their wildest guesses. Now, the Word of God can never be out of agreement with the work of God which we call Nature; but when the so-called discoveries of science come into collision with God's Word, all I can say is, 'Well! go mend your science.'"

"But you admit, do you not, that there are expressions in the Bible, about the earth and the heavens for instance, which are opposed to ascertained facts?"

"Certainly, and so there are in our everyday speech in this nineteenth century; when we speak, for instance, of the sun rising and setting. On the other hand, there are deep truths concerning Nature in those ancient writings which men of science are only now beginning

to guess at, yet were written by inspiration of God thousands of years ago."

"I must admit that is a new thought to me, and I'll remember it, but still I have a difficulty about some of those very facts which you allow. Take, for instance, Geology, which, I suppose, has done more than any other science to revolutionise men's ideas about the Bible story of creation and the age of the world. Now this is based upon fact, is it not?—the testimony of the rocks themselves and the earth's strata?"

"Too fast, again, my son; true, the rocks give testimony to the age of the world; but who can read it aright? What geologists like to *call* the testimony of the rocks has all come out of their own heads; they have woven it out of their own brains."

"You startle me, father!"

"'Tis true, though, and I'll explain what I mean. One man goes down to the rocks, and though he gazes at them ever so long, he sees no testimony there; another man goes, and carefully noting certain facts and putting them together begins to guess, and on the foundation of his guesses or suppositions builds what he believes to be the testimony of the rocks; a third man goes, and out of the same materials—the same facts, I mean—forms other guesses, weaves another theory; and thus others do the same, each one weaving his own theory; in some things they agree, in others they don't, but they all come to different conclusions, each one contends that his theory is the true testimony of the rocks, and a difference of twenty or even a

hundred millions of years is a mere trifle to them as to the testimony to the world's age, which they imagine they can read in the earth's strata! Besides, they never take into account the tremendous upheaval of the earth's crust at the Deluge, when "all the fountains of the great deep were broken up," an event which completely alters the basis of all these modern calculations."

"I never heard it put in that way before, but you have certainly made it very clear to me."

"You will find upon examination that it is the same with every branch of science; to a certain length men can go in the discovery of facts—indubitable facts—in Nature, and very wonderful these discoveries have been; it is not these, however, but the *theories* they build upon them that often seem to come into collision with the Bible statements. But you know that in a court of law the evidence of one eye-witness is worth more than the conjectures of a thousand persons who were never near the scene, and we may well apply to those who put their theories about creation against the testimony of Him who created all things, His own words:

" 'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?  
Declare, if thou hast understanding . . . .  
Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days?  
And caused the dayspring to know his place? . . . .  
Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea?  
Or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? . . . .  
Knowest thou it because thou was then born?  
Or because the number of thy days is great? ' "

Ah, my son, I would recommend you to read and ponder

that sublime passage in God's Word, the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth chapters of the Book of Job, which is probably the oldest book in the world, and you will see what utter contempt it pours upon these nineteenth century scientists, who presume to deny God's own account of His creation."

## CHAPTER II.

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### REVELATION OR SCIENCE?

YOUNG JOHN. "Since our last talk, father, I have, as you advised, been carefully reading the book of Job, of which I had never before read much; I have really got deeply interested in it, and I must confess I am greatly struck with its sublime grandeur, but at the same time I am sorely puzzled to understand it."

"In that, my son, you are no worse off than many older heads and abler intellects than yours; the Book of Job is probably the oldest and in *some respects*, to my thinking at least, perhaps the most wonderful book in the Bible; and the more it is studied the profounder its depths and the sublimer its heights are found to be; and there is this strange thing, though the three friends of Job evidently misjudged *him*, and were full of self-righteous pride, yet all their sayings are in the fullest harmony with the whole Word of God from Genesis to Revelation."

"Yes, that is the very thing that puzzled me most; how do you account for it? who is supposed to have written it?"

“As to who was the writer no man can tell, for the Bible gives no intimation whatever, but as the Scriptures again and again refer to Job as a real person, and his afflictions and patience as real also, we are bound to accept the whole story of the book as true history, although preserved to us in the form of a magnificent poem, with a prologue and epilogue in prose.

“But what I particularly want to draw your attention to is this: here is a book coming down to us from the hoary ages of antiquity—a time which the ‘modern thought’ folks like to call ‘the age of the world’s childhood’!—the authorship of which is wholly unknown, coming to us as it were out of dense obscurity, and yet you may safely challenge the whole civilized world in this much vaunted nineteenth century to produce a poem of equal grandeur; and still more, you will search in vain through the writings of all the greatest scientists, philosophers, and poets, ancient and modern, that the world has ever known, to find a conception of God and His sovereignty so sublime, so true, or showing Him so worthy of our adoration and worship. Now how is it that

#### THIS ANCIENT BOOK OF UNKNOWN AUTHORSHIP

soars to such a majestic height above every other book outside the Bible, showing such wonderful insight into Nature, so marvellously revealing the power, the majesty, and the wisdom of God, unless it be that

whoever was the human instrument who wrote, the thoughts came from God Himself?"

"Yes, I should think that is the only right conclusion, and I shall always read Job in future with far deeper interest than before. But to return to our subject, may it not sometimes be that while the Bible statements are undoubtedly true, our ideas of their meaning may be wrong and need to be corrected?"

"Quite so, I only contend for the truth of Scripture *at all costs*, but if any real discoveries are made that would seem to run counter to our ideas of the meaning of Scripture, it is wise to examine the whole matter, keeping stedfastly to this, however, that wherever our examination may lead us regarding *our ideas*, the truth of God's Word stands ever sure, and we must accept the plain and obvious meaning of it against all comers."

"At the same time I suppose you do not really despise science, and you would not ignore the usefulness of its discoveries?"

"Certainly not; pray do not misunderstand me. For the marvellous achievements of science we may well have the greatest admiration. Mankind owes a debt of gratitude to the toilers in those difficult paths; men of mighty intellect, of patient endurance, of keen observation, who have discovered for us so much of the wonderful works of the Creator, and have done so much for the benefit of the race; but we must not allow our admiration to lead us into a blind acceptance of all their conclusions, or to regard these

as being in any degree of equal authority with the Word of God."

"Well, I can see that is very firm ground to stand upon, and indeed the position seems unassailable, provided always you have clear and indubitable proof that the whole Bible is indeed the very Word of God."

"Quite right—that is the key of the whole position; and I think I shall be able to give you undeniable evidence that the Bible is not of human but of Divine origin, that it possesses in all its statements the unassailable authority of a revelation from God. For, as I said before, the subject is of great importance in the present day, when human intellect is almost worshipped, and what is vainly called reason is even more enthroned than it was in the days of the French Revolution; when every vagary of the man of science, every conjecture of the critic, is held to be more worthy of credence than the Bible."

"But, father, you have already acknowledged the value of all true science, and I suppose you would equally acknowledge the *sincerity* of those men of learning and research whose discoveries seem to be opposed to the Bible, would you not?"

"Before answering your question, let me again impress upon you the difference there is between *discoveries* and *theories*, a distinction that is not usually taken into consideration. Then, as to any man's *sincerity* we have no right to speak, God alone is Judge, not we; but their *blindness* and *inconsistency* are manifest; for while

scientific theories are continually being overthrown and new theories set up, while there is dissension among men of science all round, yet whenever a supposed new discovery seems to collide with the Bible statements, immediately they ignore all this and claim infallibility for science. For instance, one well-known popular writer says of science that *'the effect of the introduction of law among the scattered phenomena of nature has simply been to make science, to transform knowledge into ETERNAL TRUTH,'* and yet in the same book he says: *'for two hundred years the scientific world has been rent with discussions upon the origin of life. Two great schools have defended exactly opposite views.'* A strange kind of *eternal truth* science must be!

"Now, how important it is amid all this to have a solid rock on which to rest our faith, and if it can be clearly shown that the Bible is none other than the Word of God Himself, we needn't be in the least troubled about anything that man's wisdom or folly may bring against it. For instance, our belief in the miracles stands or falls with this. You know I spent some years in India. I remember when there I was talking one day with an educated Babu, who told me he believed in Jesus Christ as much as I did; he believed in Him as being a good man and a great teacher, 'But,' he added, 'when we read of Him calming the storm by His word and things of that kind, of course,' with a smile and a shrug, 'we cannot believe that;' 'But, Babu,' I said, 'suppose Jesus *was* God, the Creator, would there be any difficulty about it?' 'No,' he said.

‘Exactly,’ I replied, ‘that is the difference between us, I believe that Jesus is God and you don’t.’ It is the same with all the miracles mentioned in the Bible; if we try to account for them as natural phenomena we fail, but if we see in them the power of God over His own creation, all difficulty ceases. And when men tell us those things are impossible and we must regard them only as ancient legends, we reply that we believe in them literally on the authority of the Word of God. So with everything in the Bible we may not be able to understand—God’s laws, His commands, His dealings with men. If we regard these as mere human inventions, human ideas, we are filled with perplexity; but if we realise that they all emanate from ‘the Judge of all the earth,’ ‘the Holy One who inhabiteth eternity,’ whose Throne is founded upon justice and judgment, who is ‘righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works,’ our minds are at rest, for we know that whatever difficulties they may present to our finite minds,

‘God is His own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain.’

The great question, therefore, for us to consider is this: Is the Bible the Word of God or of man?”

### CHAPTER III.

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#### THE BIBLE: WHENCE CAME IT?

“LET us try to answer this question.

“Now, in the first place, we have to deal with a substantial fact—*the Book is here*. However it came into existence, here it is, and a very troublesome Book it has been to the world—a ‘burdensome stone’ that they have done their best to get rid of, but in vain; they have banned it, and buried it, and burned it, but all to no purpose; they have imprisoned, and tortured, and killed, and cursed the people who loved it; the kings and the great men of the earth have risen up against it, and all the powers of earth and hell have combined to oppose it, but in vain. They have lied against it, and calumniated it; but all has been of no avail.

#### THEY CANNOT GET RID OF IT.

And what is more wonderful still, multitudes of those who were first bitterly opposed to it, have through reading it become its devoted friends, and many who, like Saul, had persecuted and killed the people of the Book, have themselves become so changed through it

that they have gladly laid down their own lives for its sake.

“Now,

WHENCE CAME THIS MARVELLOUS BOOK?

“Is it of man? Then who were the men of transcendent genius who wrote it? Nobody knows them; but for the Bible they would have been absolutely unknown. How came they out of obscurity, flashing like mighty meteors across the sky, and then passing away again into oblivion, leaving neither works nor memory behind, except what is embalmed in this Book? I leave you to answer for yourself.

“I open this strange Book to find out, if I can, why it is so intensely loved on the one hand and so intensely hated on the other. As I read, I find it speaks to *me*; it touches me at every point; it makes known to me the hidden recesses of my own heart; to quote its own words, it is *‘living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart;’* it shows me that *‘all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.’* Ah! here is the secret why men hate it; it is too true a mirror of their own hearts, so they don’t like to look into it.

“I examine it further, and my wonder increases. I find it is composed of sixty-six books\* or writings

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\*That is, as we now have them, but in the old Hebrew canon, the books of the old Testament were divided into twenty-two instead of thirty-nine, as in our English Bible.

extending over a period of at least fourteen centuries. Yet it is all one Book. Critics like to speak of it as a "Divine Library;" so it is, but it is also ONE BOOK; its *unity in diversity* is marvellous; it contains history, legislation, worship, poetry, prophecy, and theology; many writers, many different styles, varying subordinate themes, yet one great thought pervading the whole.

I find, moreover, that in every way it is

DIRECTLY OPPOSED TO ALL HUMAN MODES OF THINKING  
AND WRITING.

"There is no *doubt* in the mind of any writer, no hesitation, no *expression of opinion*; but everyone, from the earliest to the latest, speaks *with authority*; no one contradicts another, no one improves upon another; there is no jealousy, no criticism, no excuse made for 'old-fashioned ideas,' but rather the later writers quote the earlier writings as the very ground of their authoritative teaching. True, there is progressive *revelation*, but it is as the light which, from dawn of morning, 'shineth more and more unto the perfect day,' *the same light*, but with ever increasing radiance dispelling the darkness. Now this is the exact opposite of all the ways of men. In the world no two writers ever agree perfectly. In science, history, philosophy, legislation, etc., things are always changing; all is conflict, alteration, criticism, contradiction, attempted *improvement* upon former ideas.

"If, then, this Book be of man, how comes it that it is completely the reverse of every other human work? But '*My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.*'"

"Then I find that the character of God as revealed in the Bible

IS UTTERLY OPPOSED TO ALL HUMAN THOUGHTS.

Search up and down the whole world in all its ages, and see if you can find in the thoughts of earth's greatest and best any conception of a God (which has not distinctly been drawn from this Book) which is not the direct opposite to the God of the Bible. The character of God therein revealed is that of *absolute holiness, inviolable righteousness, and infinite love*; and this runs through the whole Bible from beginning to end. There is progressive revelation in the development of God's *plan*, but *no progressive revelation* of the *character* of God. The God of Genesis is the same as the God of Revelation, the 'God of Abraham' is exactly the same in character as 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.'"

"Forgive me interrupting you, but that is a point I particularly wished to ask you about, for it is often said that the morality of the Old Testament is much lower than that of the New, and I confess that there is a great deal in the Old which I cannot reconcile with the teaching of the New."

"That is a very common but a very superficial view. True the moral sense of many even of God's

eminent servants whose lives are recorded in the Old Testament was not on a line with New Testament teaching. But think of their circumstances. They had no Bible as we have; there was not even the written Law of God until the days of Moses, 2,000 years after Adam; they had only *occasional* revelations from God, and even after the Law was written, they had little opportunity of hearing it, and it was to most a forgotten Book. They were in a worse case in this respect than were the people of England when the only copies of the Bible to be had were chained to the pulpits in a few jealously guarded churches. We therefore need not wonder at their darkness and ignorance of what was right. We must remember, moreover, that, as the Apostle says, 'The times of this *ignorance* God winked at,' that is, God overlooked, and did not deal with His servants as He would nowadays, when they may walk in the full light of day. When He knew their *hearts* were right, their *motives* true, He overlooked much that was wrong in the moral sense of His servants, but He faithfully recorded their failures and infirmities as well as their excellences."

"I had not thought of it in that light before, and I see the force of it, but still that does not explain many commands said to be given by God Himself."

"With reference to that you must remember that the special revelation of the Old Testament was that of the *Law* of God, as we read, '*The law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*' Men had to be taught the principles of holiness and

righteousness before there came the full revelation of grace ; but you will find *nothing* in the New Testament that has not its counterpart in the Old, and *nothing* in the Old that is in the least degree inconsistent with the New."

"What about the imprecatory Psalms, for instance. Do they not breathe a very different spirit from the spirit of Christ?"

"Not at all. People imagine this because they fail to see that these Psalms are prophetic utterances of the judgment of God upon 'the son of perdition,' and, severe as they are, they are not a whit more terrible than Christ's own denunciations of woe against the religious hypocrites of His time; indeed, the more closely you compare the Old and New Testaments, you will find, as I said, that the character of God is the same all through, the same holiness and righteousness, and the same wondrous love and grace.

"Now the sin-darkened mind of man never did nor could conceive of holiness, and missionaries often tell us that their first and greatest difficulty is to get the heathen to take in even a faint glimmering of the meaning of holiness and sin. Again, the natural heart of man all over the world *hates* perfect righteousness; '*justice and judgment*,' which '*are the habitation of God's throne*,' are too terrible for him; while no other religion has ever had the faintest conception of a God of love. The gods of the heathen, both civilised and uncivilised, have always been monsters of licentiousness and horrid cruelty, and though men in the present

day, living in lands like our own, boast of a higher knowledge, it is solely due to the influence and irradiation of Bible light.

“Is it conceivable, then, that such a Book could *possibly* have been written by man, unless by revelation direct from God—by men, moreover, who lived in the earliest ages of the world’s history? Indeed, is there any answer to the question, ‘Whence came it?’ but this—

THE BOOK IS OF GOD, NOT OF MAN.

## CHAPTER IV.

---

### THE BIBLE, WHAT IS IT?

“ **W**HAT I have said, is enough, I think, to prove my case, but I shall point out to you a few more indelible marks of the hand of God in the Bible, to show that undeniably He alone is the Author.

“ I would ask you, therefore, to consider, What is the Bible? If you study it you will find it is not only a book of ancient history, however true, of poetry, however sublime, or of prophecy and its fulfilment, however wonderful. It is not only a complete compendium of Divine truth, and of the highest morality. All these are there, but they do not answer the question, ‘What is the Bible?’ It is not even a book *about God*; it never *describes* Him, and when it occasionally mentions His appearance in visions, it leaves on the mind only a vague and indefinite sense of glory calling for the utmost reverence and awe,

YET GOD IS THERE.

His presence fills the Book from beginning to end. *God speaking to man, and man speaking to God.* Ah! it is this

great fact which explains the Divine isolation of this Book from every other; for it is not only immeasurably superior to any other book, but it stands absolutely alone. In this also we find again the reason why men hate the Bible; its grandeur they will admire, its ethics they will applaud, but they cannot bear the presence of God in it, nor endure the intense burning holiness that comes from His throne and beats upon their conscience. Did you ever note that the attitude of a man towards the Bible is exactly his attitude towards God? If he loves God he will love the Bible, if he hates God he will hate the Bible, if he *pretends* to love God he will *pretend* to love the Bible, and if you can ever find a man who is *indifferent* towards the Bible, you will find that he is also indifferent about God."

"That never struck me before, father; do you think it is of universal application?"

"Undoubtedly, and you will find that even amongst God's own people the same rule holds good as to the *measure* of their love. Now is not this marvellous? and is it not a strong proof of the Divine character of the Book that it bears the impress of God Himself?"

"The next thing I would like to point out is this.

THE BIBLE *ALONE* SOLVES THE THREE GREAT PROBLEMS  
OF HUMAN LIFE.

The first is the *mystery of suffering*, the second is the deeper *mystery of sin*, and the third is the vast *mystery of man's destiny*.

“ I need not tell you that the first and last have exercised the minds of earth's greatest thinkers all through the ages of the world's history, but no satisfactory solution has been found. Even in the enlightened nineteenth century, the age of the world's matured wisdom, as they think, a multitude of men and women have tried to solve the problem without the Bible, but in vain. The best of those attempts find expression in the well-known lines of Tennyson—

‘ Behold we know not anything,  
I can but trust that good shall fall  
At last—far off—at last, to all,  
And every winter change to spring.

\* \* \*

I falter where I firmly trod,  
And falling with my weight of cares  
Upon the great world's altar stairs  
That slope thro' darkness up to God.

I stretch lame hands of faith and grope,  
And gather dust and chaff, and call  
To what I feel is Lord of all,  
And faintly trust the larger hope.’

“ No man untaught by the Bible, however great his intellect, has ever done more than ‘*stretch lame hands of faith and grope*,’ in face of these dark impenetrable mysteries. Yet the simplest man who intelligently reads and believes the Bible, has such a flood of light thrown upon the subject that his mind is at rest. For the Bible speaks with a clearness and an *authority* which satisfies both heart and intellect.

“Then as to the mystery of sin, how this has pressed upon the consciences of all mankind, and begotten a universal fear. I do not refer to the mystery of the *origin* of sin, but to the fact of the consciousness of it. ‘How shall man be just with God?’ is the inarticulate cry that comes from deep down in the human conscience, and all the natural religions of the world are but vain attempts to answer it. The Bible alone gives the answer, an answer which is perfectly consistent with the holiness, the righteousness, and the love of God; the only answer which gives perfect peace to the conscience, as has been testified by millions upon millions of every age and race from every quarter of the globe. And oh what an answer! The holy God who hates iniquity and cannot look upon evil, the righteous God whose throne is *founded* upon ‘justice and judgment,’ yet loves the rebel sinner with so great a love that to save him from perishing He ‘spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all,’ so that He might be both ‘a *just God* and a *Saviour*.’ If there were nothing else in the Bible to show its Divine authorship, these words alone—when considered in all the height and depth of their wondrous meaning—that fell from the lips of Jesus would prove it could only have come from heaven: ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ If this answer be of man, someone must have ascended to the Throne of heaven and penetrated the secrets of the Ruler of the universe.

“How comes it that a few obscure men whose names are almost unknown to the world, except through this collection of their writings, should have accomplished what the greatest sages in ancient or modern times have failed to do, unless it be that they received it by revelation from on high ?

“There is only one other point to which I would draw your attention, but that is the most important of all, the very miracle of miracles, though I can only now briefly refer to it; I mean the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible sets before us one perfect Life; not only the life of a perfect man, but of God incarnate. The whole book, from end to end, throbs and pulsates with this Life. Take Christ out of the Bible, and, you may say, nothing is left, at least nothing is intelligible. He is the sum and substance of prophecy, psalm, and promise; of offerings, rites, and laws; of history and doctrine. *‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.’ ‘In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was God . . . all things were made by Him.’ ‘I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.’* He is the great central theme round which everything else in the Bible revolves. In the four gospels we have this Life delineated. *‘The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.’* This Life, the life of Him who *‘thought it not robbery to be equal with God,’* has been before a hostile world for nearly nineteen centuries with the challenge He gave to His enemies—*‘Which of you convinceth me of sin?’* and no one has ever found a solitary flaw. Many have

tried, but have utterly failed, and to-day that Life stands forth in all its incomparable beauty, its Divine majesty, its intense purity, and its wondrous grace.

“Is the story of this Life an invention of men’s brains or a reality? If an invention, then who were the men of such transcendent genius whose work towers so far above that of every other human being? They must have been gods, not men. If it was a *reality*, reason compels us to acknowledge that it is in very truth what it declares itself to be, the life of One who was both God and man. He, ‘the Word of God incarnate,’ in His infinite wisdom

‘Higher than the highest heaven,  
Deeper than the unfathomed sea,’

has stretched His hand, as it were, across the Old Testament Scriptures and proclaimed their absolute truth, while He also commissioned and qualified His servants by the Holy Spirit to write the New. On *His authority* we accept the Bible as the Word of God, and resting upon this we can look with pity upon the vain attempts of all those who, whether open foes or professing friends, think to dislodge this immovable foundation. Moreover, the Incarnate Word and the written Word are so interjoined that they cannot be separated. You cannot understand the Bible unless you know Christ, and you cannot know Christ except through the Bible. It is all very well for men to say they would rather believe in a living Christ than in a dead book, after they have learned from that Book *everything they*

*know* about the living Christ. Let them go to lands where the Bible is not known, and try to teach men there about Christ without the Bible, and see how they succeed.

“No; if the Bible were a mere human production, as so many would make it to be, it would be a greater marvel still; the

ONLY POSSIBLE EXPLANATION OF ITS EXISTENCE

is, that it was given by inspiration of God.”

## CHAPTER V.

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### VERBAL INSPIRATION.

“ I HAVE observed, father, that you sometimes use the word *revelation* and sometimes *inspiration* ; do you mean that they are the same ? ”

“ Not quite, there is certainly a distinction, for while *revelation* refers to what is revealed to a man, which he could not otherwise know, *inspiration* covers also the Divine guidance in the selection of materials at hand and the accurate statement of facts ; but I have purposely employed the former word because there are so many strange ideas of what inspiration is. Many regard it as in a greater or less degree merely an *assisting* of the *natural powers* of the writers, and what I wish to impress upon you is, that whether in the communication of Divine truth, or in the narration of history, it is entirely of God. The Holy Ghost, so to speak, assumes the responsibility of it all, as originally given, and it comes to us, therefore, with His full authority.”

“ But does not that destroy the *human* element in the Bible, which you have already admitted to be there, and which, some think, accounts better for the great diversity of the writings ? ”

“Certainly not, for while the Bible is absolutely Divine in its origin, it is intensely human in its form. It was written for man, and God graciously used human minds as a vehicle to reach man’s every need of conscience, heart, and intellect. He, therefore, gave to certain men what are called *natural gifts*, and these gifts He used as the *means*. But the *inspiration* was, in some way, a communicating of His own thoughts, directing, but not in the least depending upon the mind or will or gifts of His amanuenses—at least as I understand it. In this way we have ‘diversities of gifts,’—the high poetic gift, the prosaic narrative, the keen forensic; and diversities of operations—the burning fervour, the plain matter of fact; but ‘it is the same God which worketh all in all.’ This is why I have spoken of it as *revelation*.”

“Then you would not describe the Bible as the *record* of a revelation, as I see it is sometimes called?”

“Not if it is meant that the record is merely human, but I might describe the written Word as

#### THE INSPIRED RECORD

of the revelation which God has given, and of the the history of the people to whom it was first committed. My great object, however, is to prove to you that the Book is *all of God*, and I have been seeking to show you how utterly impossible it is that it could have come from man, for as you know the great attempt in the present day is to account for it as being more or less of mere human origin.

"But are there not some who admit that the whole Bible is from God, and therefore to be accepted as of Divine authority, yet believe that while the *thoughts* are His, the *words* are not, but that the writers were left free to express in their own words that which God revealed to them; for instance, I have heard some say that they believe in *plenary* but not in *verbal* inspiration; what is the difference, pray?"

"None that I can see; if you look up the dictionary you will find that *plenary* means *full, complete*; now it seems to me something like saying that a tumbler of water is brimful, but not full to the brim! However, you have given a very good definition, I think, of what they mean; but it all comes to this—a plea for the presence of error in God's revelation."

"Then do you believe in what is called a *mechanical* inspiration?"

"Certainly not, neither does anyone that I ever heard of; but those who deny verbal inspiration are fond of coining terms of their own to discredit what they are opposed to; inspiration as to *words* is no more *mechanical* than inspiration as to thoughts."

"Yes, I understand that, but in the Bible there seems to be not only so much variety in thought and style, but in many places the words seem so entirely to represent the minds of the writers that it seems hardly credible that the Holy Spirit was, as it were, actually dictating what they said."

"Certainly, but *dictation* and *inspiration* are entirely different things; in the latter we can see the beauty

of the pliancy of the human mind, and—as in all God's dealings with man—we behold mysteriously and incomprehensibly linked together the *perfect freedom* of the human with the *perfect control* of the Divine.”

“I see your meaning, father, but don't you think, then, that on such a difficult subject they take the safest ground who accept the *fact* of inspiration, but don't believe in any *theory* of it?”

“Quite so, all I contend for is the *fact*. I have no *theory* of inspiration whatever, nor do I believe in any, if by theory is meant the *way* in which the Holy Ghost influenced the inspired writers. Those who deny the *fact* of verbal inspiration have plenty of theories of that kind, all more or less nebulous; we are content to accept the *result*, viz., that God directed the words as well as thoughts of the writers—which is all that is meant by verbal inspiration—and we leave all *theories* alone.”

“But do you think it is a question of real *practical* importance?”

“*Undoubtedly*, for the moment you slip your cable from that, there is no other solid ground to hold by; like a rudderless ship in a storm, you are at the mercy of the winds and waves of conflicting human thought, ‘*tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.*’ Abandon belief in verbal inspiration and you have no sure foothold, but are on a sloping path which leads down to an abyss of difficulty and doubt; therefore it is round this point that the battle rages.”

“If that be so, and I now feel sure you are right,

I am anxious to know if you can *prove* the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures?"

"I'll do my best, John, though I may have to tax your patience a bit. Now I want you to bear in mind three things—

"*First.* I must try to explain

#### WHAT IS MEANT BY VERBAL INSPIRATION

and what is not. *Verbal* inspiration means *Divine guidance in the use of words, so as to ensure absolute accuracy in writing down what God communicated as to His own mind and will, what He directed as to history, and in the expression of the writers' own thoughts and feelings.* But it *does not mean* that everything everybody said or did as recorded in the Bible was inspired. This is a common mistake. The *record* was inspired, but often the acts and words even of godly men were far from being according to the mind of God.

"*Second.* Verbal inspiration is only claimed for the original writings, as they came from the inspired penmen.

"*Third.* Every other theory is a plea for the presence of error in the written word of God. The whole question, therefore, resolves itself into this: Was the revelation God gave to man perfect or imperfect? for if it contained the *slightest* error it was *imperfect*.

"Now those who deny verbal inspiration are bound to prove one of two things: either that God *could not* direct the words of the writers, or that He *did not*.

No honest-minded intelligent man, whether Christian or not, will assert that God *could not* do so."

"Not even if the instruments were imperfect, father?"

"No, nor even if they were unwilling instruments like Balaam, for that would be limiting the power of God; we may therefore let that pass, but it is important to note this point, that God *could* have inspired even as to the very words, had He chosen.

"Then it is impossible to prove that He *did not*, for the simple reason that none of the original documents are extant; therefore, there is no evidence to prove the case."

"But doesn't that cut both ways?"

"Exactly, and so we are thrown back upon the *a priori* argument, which is, as you know, that we must consider what is the most reasonable thing to conceive under the circumstances, and what I essay now to prove to you is that

#### THE ONLY RIGHT CONCEPTION

we can have of a *revelation from God* is that it must have been absolutely perfect—in other words, that it was given through verbal inspiration.

"*First.* Because God is perfect Himself, and perfect in *all* His ways, and *all* His works. Is it reasonable, then, to believe that in one of His most important works, the revelation of His mind and will to His creatures, he would do it imperfectly?"

“*Second.* We know that God’s purpose in giving the revelation was a purely beneficent one and for man’s highest good, and as it is undeniable that it is better for man that he should have a perfect than an imperfect revelation of the mind and will of God, and as it is admitted that God *could* have given a perfect revelation if He had chosen, therefore it is *most reasonable to believe that He would.*

“*Third.* Had He given an imperfect revelation it would have been *void of all authority.* You can easily judge of this by a simple illustration : suppose an order were sent down from the Horse Guards to the army, and it was known that the order was full of mistakes on the part of those who transmitted it, and every officer and soldier was to judge for himself what was the real order and what were the mistakes, where would the authority of the document be? Yet some people attribute to God conduct that would be counted egregious folly on the part of men.

“Moreover, if God had admitted error in the writing down of His message, how could we have known what was Divine truth, and what was human error? ‘By our reason,’ they say. But whose reason? yours or mine, or whose else? Did you ever find two men whose reason was exactly the same on all things? Then who is to decide? ‘A general concensus of opinion,’ some say, but if that were any good, how are we to get it? ‘The voice of the Church,’ others tell us. But what is the Church? ‘*A great multitude which no man can number,*’ some on earth and some in heaven. How are

we to ascertain their voice on any particular passage? No, men may deride the thought of an infallible Book, but it is only that they may claim the right to sit in judgment upon the Word of God,

“ But, *fourth*. I contend that if it had been left for man to discern what was God’s truth, and what was not, it would have shown that no revelation was needed at all. I read the other day that what ‘appealed to our inner consciousness’ as being the truth of God we were to accept. But if man by his *natural* inner consciousness, that is, by natural intuition, can tell what is and what is not the truth of God, he *must by nature know beforehand the mind of God*, and

IF BY NATURE HE KNOWS THE MIND OF GOD,  
what need was there of God revealing His mind to him? But if he

DOES NOT BY NATURE KNOW THE THOUGHTS OF GOD,  
how can he be a judge? ”

“ But, might there not be some clearly defined lines on which to expect, and on which not to expect, inspiration? For instance, while for spiritual teaching, for prophecy, etc., inspiration would doubtless be necessary, yet surely it would not be necessary for the writing of history? ”

“ True, but a perfect revelation needs to be clothed in perfect language, and if God has chosen to embody history with His revelation, are we not right in expecting that He would guarantee its accuracy? For though

the fact of history being correct does not prove its inspiration, yet if it were incorrect, it would certainly prove that it was not inspired."

"But is there not clear internal evidence in the historical books that to some extent at least they were compiled from previously existing writings? and are we to suppose that every scribe and chronicler was inspired?"

"That is by no means necessary, but is there anything unreasonable in supposing that those who finally wrote or compiled these histories were divinely guided in selecting the materials, in chronicling events, and writing down just as much as God desired to place on record for future ages, and to show forth His wondrous dealings with the sons of men?"

"None whatever, as far as I can see. But there is one other difficulty I have with regard to verbal inspiration, which is this. In different books there are different accounts, not only of the same incidents, but of words spoken by men; and these accounts vary. Take, for instance, the words of Christ Himself in the three first Gospels: if the Holy Spirit, as you say, inspired the Evangelists in writing down the very words, how comes it that they are different in each? Is it not more reasonable to suppose that the writers, though generally supervised, so to speak, to prevent error, yet wrote simply as they remembered or gathered from others?"

"I can quite understand your finding a difficulty in this, but it is only because you expect too mechanical a narrative from the Holy Spirit. First, however, let

me point out that many sayings of Christ, which are *supposed* to be the same, were obviously spoken on different occasions and to different people, though teaching the same truths. For instance, how often the 'sermon' in Matt. v.—vii. is confounded with that in Luke vi., because there are certain resemblances but also great variations; and this is frequently quoted as a grave discrepancy in Scripture, whereas a little attention to the context would show that they were two separate discourses, one being delivered 'in the mountain,' and the other 'on the plain.' But even where the reports vary somewhat of sayings which were undoubtedly the same, does that necessarily make the reports inaccurate? Has not the Holy Spirit power and authority to give the record in *His* own way? And if we know it is *His* record, then we may be sure that if we have not the precise words, *verbatim et literatim*, we certainly have the *very truth* which Jesus spake, and for this we rely not on the defective memories of men, but on the Divine knowledge and unerring testimony of God the Holy Ghost."

## CHAPTER VI.

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### VERBAL INSPIRATION.

IS IT OF ANY VALUE TO US?

“ I AM glad you have explained this to me, for I think I now realise what I never saw so clearly before, the beauty and value of verbal inspiration. I thank you very much for the patience with which you have dealt with my difficulties, which I may say are now all removed; only there is one thing I should like to be clear about; that is, if the Bible as we now have it is not perfect, is verbal inspiration any good to us?”

“ Unquestionably it is, because it makes all the difference between having a perfect and an imperfect standard to get back to in critically comparing the multitude of copies we have in our possession. Of what real use would be all the time, labour, learning, and research thus spent, unless it were to get as near as possible to

THE VERY WORDS OF GOD HIMSELF?”

“ I see; but meantime does not the fact of the imperfectness of the Bible, as we now possess it, impair its value and invalidate its authority?”

“Practically not in the least, because, *first*, God has so marvellously preserved His truth through the multitude of copies, and the translations into different tongues, that all the various readings and different renderings (and these are legion) taken together, do not contradict or neutralize one solitary ray of Divine light, they only touch the details of diction, and indeed they serve to bring out more clearly the ‘lights and perfections’ of the Word of God.

“*Second*. Owing to the same providential care, all the much talked of discrepancies amount to nothing; many of them, on closer examination, can be explained; others evidently await our fuller knowledge of the mind of the Spirit to see the full beauty of His design; while others are *manifestly* the errors of copyists or translators. Indeed, these last are a strong proof of the *necessity* for verbal inspiration, for if the hands of uninspired men cannot even *copy* correctly God’s handiwork, though with the greatest care, it gives us a glimpse of what fearful confusion would have been the consequence had God permitted His amanuenses to choose their own words in first writing down His Divine thoughts.”

“That is certainly a strong point; but does it not seem strange that God has not exercised the same miraculous care in the *transmission* of the Scriptures as He evidently did in the original writing of them, and thus prevent the entrance of the slightest error or even variation?”

“You may be surprised, but I do not think so, for see what an impetus and a zest this has given to the

close examination of the Scriptures, an impetus of which our sluggish natures stand sorely in need; but whatever were the reasons—and who can fathom the mind of God?—we *know* that in the plenitude of His wisdom He committed His oracles to the keeping of men—imperfect and fallible men—to preserve and transmit; and when we consider the tremendous difficulties attending the correct transmission (of some parts for thousands of years) and translation, and the imperfectness of the instruments, the marvel is that we should now have this treasure so wonderfully pure, another proof of its Divine origin and of the Divine care that has preserved to us so intact the ‘wonderful words of life.’ ”

“I acknowledge the truth of that, but seeing the importance to be attached to verbal inspiration, I wonder the Bible has not itself some definite statement on the subject, something so clear and indisputable that no one who believed in the Bible at all could find room for doubt. At least, I have often heard it said that the Bible makes no claim to *complete*, still less to *verbal* inspiration.”

“I know this is frequently said, but it is a most unwarrantable assumption. If you receive a letter from a friend, you believe that it is all his, *every word of it*, although he makes no special declaration that it is so; or if a book is published in any man's name, it is accepted as all his, *every word of it*; and if anyone declares it is not, the onus of proof lies upon him. So also with the Bible; it comes to us in the name

of God, and we are bound to accept it as *all His, every word of it*, even although it contained no specific declaration to that effect; and if any declare that it is not, *they* are bound to prove their case.

“But even in this matter God has not been slack, and over and over and over again, in both Old and New Testaments, declarations are found making it abundantly clear that the words as well as the thoughts are His. It would take far too much time even to mention every one, but I will refer you to a few. For instance, when we read, ‘Thus *saith the Lord*,’ surely it means that the words as well as the thoughts are the Lord’s. Again, in Exod. iii. 12, God said to Moses, ‘I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.’ In 2 Sam. xxiii. 2 David says, ‘The Spirit of the Lord *spake* by me, and *His word was in my tongue*.’ How often do we read in history, in prophecy, in psalm, of ‘the *words* of the Lord,’ ‘*My words*,’ ‘His *words*,’ etc., etc.? Whenever the Lord Jesus referred to the Scriptures, He always did so as being all the words of God; and you remember that remarkable statement of His, ‘The Scripture cannot be broken.’ Could that be said of any *human* writing? Then, in Acts i. 16, Peter says, ‘The Holy Ghost *spake* by the *mouth of David*;’ and in Heb. i. 1 the Apostle writes, ‘God who at sundry times and in divers manners *spake* by the prophets;’ and throughout this chapter a number of passages of Old Testament Scripture are quoted and referred direct to God as the speaker, without so much as naming the human instrument

who wrote; and again in chap. iii. 7, quoting from the Psalms, 'The Holy Ghost saith.' In 2 Peter i. 21, 'Holy men of God *spake* as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' In 2 Tim. iii. 16 (R.V.), writing of the Hebrew canon of 'Holy Scriptures,' Paul says, 'Every scripture (or *writing*) inspired of God,' etc., showing clearly that God inspired the *writing* of the words. And the marginal rendering is still more emphatic: "*Every writing* (referring, remember, only to the 'holy scriptures'—see verse 15) *is inspired of God*;" and in 1 Cor. ii. 13 he affirms, 'which things we speak, not in *words* which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.'

"Declarations like these abound in the Bible, all affirming this great truth; and I ask you to consider if any claim could be stronger than such words to any reasonable mind, that that which was spoken and that which was written was inspired by the Holy Ghost, and regarded as the authoritative words of God? *And those who deny this have to prove their case, as I said—a thing they will never be able to do.*

To say that the Bible only *contains* the Word of God; that is, that the thoughts of God are there mixed up with the errors of men; to say that God, in revealing His mind to man, allowed the revelation to be conveyed in a mass of legend, myth, and fable; or to say that the men who wrote in His name were permitted to mis-state history, to misunderstand prophecy, and to express in their own words, as best they could with their imperfect understandings, the truths He

taught them, are statements so utterly unreasonable that we may well be amazed that they should be made by men who profess to believe in a God of wisdom and of truth.

“Nay! ‘*the words of the Lord*’ are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth seven times purified.’ In them we have a treasure of inestimable value, more lasting than the earth itself or all the starry host. ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away, but *My words* shall not pass away,’ saith the Lord; neither earth nor hell can shake them; but men’s faith may be shaken, and an awful responsibility rests upon those who cause even ‘one of the least of these’ to stumble, yet ‘*the word of the Lord endureth for ever.*’ I do not advocate a blind, unthinking credulity, but I trust I have given you sufficient ground for intelligently and firmly believing that the Bible not only *contains*, but *is in very truth* the Word of God.”

THE TWO GENEALOGIES  
OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IN  
MATTHEW & LUKE.

*The following, which first appeared as an article in "The Christian," is now reprinted both because of the interest it aroused and because it is an instance of how a seeming discrepancy in two passages of Scripture may be found to be in beautiful harmony when examined in the light which the Word of God throws upon them.*

## THE GENEALOGIES OF OUR LORD.

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WE hear much of supposed discrepancies in the Bible, but perhaps there is nothing that more clearly shows forth the wonderful beauty of the Holy Spirit's design in the Scripture narrative than when we come upon passages which, at first sight, seem to be at variance with each other, but by careful comparison and study in the light which the Bible itself gives, we find that, instead of contradictions, they present a perfect harmony, a harmony all the more striking because evidently undesigned on the part of the different writers.

Nothing can be drier than genealogies ; yet when we know more fully the mind of the Spirit, we shall doubtless find in the driest of these a value of which we had not dreamed, especially when we discover the bearing they had upon Him who was Son of David and Son of Man. Perhaps no part of our Lord's earthly

history has been studied less than the two genealogies in Matthew i. 1-17 and Luke iii. 23-38, and at the same time nothing probably has caused greater perplexity to those who have compared the two. Sceptics have triumphantly pointed to these two passages as being irreconcilable, while a modern writer upon the subject of inspiration thinks to solve the problem by supposing that the two Evangelists had each a different pedigree before him, and either one or both were wrong. A close examination of these two apparently conflicting passages in the light of other parts of Scripture will well repay the study.

Luke alone gives the line from Adam to Abraham. From Abraham to David the lines in both Matthew and Luke are identical, but from David to Joseph the lines are almost entirely different. It can easily be seen that Matthew, who writes of Jesus as King, gives us the Royal pedigree of the heirs to the throne through Solomon, while Luke, whose narrative sets forth our Saviour as the Son of Man, gives the direct lineal descent through Nathan, another son of David. But a difficulty here arises. Each line numbers Salathiel and Zorobabel (or Zerubbabel) in the genealogy, while we read in Matthew that "Jacob begat Joseph," but in Luke that "Joseph was the son of Heli" (Eli).

It is exactly here that the beauty of what we might call the Divine mosaic is brought out, when we piece

it with other portions of Bible story. Let us set the two lines parallel :

<i>Luke.</i>	<i>Matthew.</i>	<i>Luke.</i>	<i>Matthew.</i>
	David.		Zorobabel.
Nathan	Solomon	Rhesa	Abiud
Mattatha	Roboam	Joanna	Eliakim
Menan	Abia	Juda	Azor
Melea	Asa	Joseph	Sadoc
Eliakim	Josaphat	Semei	Achim
Jonan	Joram	Mattathias	Eliud
Joseph	Ozias	Maath	Eleazar
Juda	Joatham	Nagge	Matthan
Simeon	Achaz	Esli	Jacob
Levi	Ezekias	Naum	
Matthat	Manasses	Amos	
Jorim	Amon	Mattathias	
Eliezer	Josias	Joseph	
Jose	Jechonias	Janna	
Ez		Melchi	
Elmodam		Levi	
Cosam		Matthat	
Addi		Heli	
Melchi			
Neri			
	Salathiel		Joseph
	Zorobabel		JESUS.

A careful comparison of the genealogy in Matthew with the line of kings in the Old Testament will show that the term "begat" has not here the ordinary meaning, but denotes the succeeding heir. Now let us turn to Jer. xxii. 30, where we find that the Lord said of Jeconiah, "no *man* of his seed shall prosper sitting upon the throne of David and ruling any more in Judah." Salathiel, therefore, could not be his son, but was, as Luke says, "the son of Neri," descended from Nathan. But as he was not in the line of succession, how could he inherit the throne? Light

is thrown upon this by two passages in Numbers. In chapters xxvii. and xxxvi. we read, in connection with the daughters of Zelophehad, "of the families of Manasseh, the son of Joseph," that the Lord commanded that when a man died leaving daughters but no sons behind him, his daughters were to be his heirs; but to prevent the inheritance in such cases going by marriage to another tribe, "every daughter that possesseth an inheritance . . . . *shall be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father*, that the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his father." Now, what at first sight seems to be only the solution of a family difficulty, has really an important bearing upon the genealogy of our Lord. Jeconiah had no son who outlived him to succeed him, but in all likelihood he had a daughter, who would be heir to the throne; and as she must marry a kinsmen, she married Salathiel, who was therefore not *son*, but *son-in-law*, to Jeconiah, and heir to the throne through his wife. Thus the line of Solomon by *male* descent was broken off according to the word of the Lord to Jeconiah, the heirship being continued through the female, and the succeeding heirs being not of Solomon's but of Nathan's line.

But from this point the lines in the two Gospels again differ, the one in Matthew being the line of succession through Abiud, that in Luke the lineal descent through Rhesa.

There is nothing at all improbable in the thought

that just before the birth of our Lord, when the two lines again meet, "history repeated itself" in the providence and by ordination of God. Jacob, the last man in the line of succession, evidently had no son, so his daughter Mary was his heir. She, in obedience to the commandment above referred to, "was espoused to Joseph," her kinsman, "the son of Eli," of the family of David, who would thus be Jacob's son-in-law, and, like Salathiel, heir to the throne by virtue of his marriage. Thus the Lord Jesus was the Son of David, and heir to his throne both by royal succession and lineal descent, according to the double promise to David in 2 Sam. vii. 12, 13, referred to in Acts ii. 30, "that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the *fruit of his loins*, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to *sit on his throne*."

There is yet another striking coincidence, to say the least, at the point where the two lines previously meet. Zerubbabel was, as we know from the prophecies of Zechariah, in a very special manner a type of our Lord. Now, it appears from 1 Chron. iii. 19 that he was not *really* the son of Salathiel (or Shealtiel, as he is called in Ezra v. 2); he was the son of Pedaiah, and therefore only the *reputed* son of Salathiel, so our Lord also was only the *reputed* son, as it is said of Him, "Jesus . . . being (*as was supposed*) the son of Joseph."

In all the Divine plans there is a deep meaning, and doubtless a closer and deeper study of these genealogies

will show us more of "the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God," and cause us to exclaim, "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor?"

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