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I. THE LATEST INFIDELITY.

A REPLY TO INGERSOLL'S POSITIONS.

THE phase of infidelity most current among those who do not profess to accept the gospel is marked by two qualities: It is aggressive, and it is extreme. It refuses to stop short of that last result, blank atheism, or, at least, blank agnosticism, from which even the skepticism of previous ages recoiled with abhorrence. This ultraism of the present adversaries is in one aspect very shocking; but in another it is promising. They are practically teaching the world that conclusion, on which James Mills justified his atheism, that when once a man's sense rejects the gospel theory, he finds no stopping place between that rejection and atheism; because, as Bishop Butler has forever established, every difficulty which besets the old gospel plan equally embarrasses the deistic plan. This disclosure is useful. Our atheists are teaching people that there is no decent middle ground for them to stand on; but the voice of nature and conscience never permits decent people to stand long on the ground of atheism. This outrages both head and heart too horribly. Were a son to insist, contrary to sufficient evidence of the fact, upon denying and discarding the very existence of his father, we see plainly enough how his position involves every phase of filial transgression, because it involves the absolute neglect of every filial duty. The position may involve, in the form of a sin of omission, the crime of parricide. The atheist discards the very existence of his heavenly Father; so, unless he has justified his denial by sound evidence, he includes in that

II. THE GENERAL DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION.

PLAIN men do not, to make use of a familiar phrase, take the Bible upon trust. It is true they have to rely upon testimony, but they do not accept the Scriptures without warrant. We all have to rely upon testimony in this as in other matters. But the humble reader of God's word may have, and often does have, the most overwhelming and conclusive evidence of its truth. The Bible contains within itself a self-evidencing power that cannot be gainsaid. When this power has once been exerted on any mind, no formal argument, no process of ratiocination whatever, is called for in order to convince that mind of its divine origin and inspiration. It is no mere outburst of poetic enthusiasm that "a glory gilds the sacred page" of which it is declared that it is "majestic as the sun." Theologians, and sound theologians, have differed widely among themselves as to the value of this internal evidence in the case of the unregenerate; but all sound theologians, it is to be presumed, are agreed that, when the eyes of the soul have been opened by the supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost, that evidence becomes not only valid, but irresistibly cogent. It must be conceded that the precise *limits* of the word of God might still, nay, must still, be open to intelligent question. Whether, for example, the book of Esther should be included, and the book of Ecclesiasticus excluded, could not be certainly determined by the internal evidence alone. Here the plain reader is manifestly under the necessity of accepting the testimony of the experts as to what constitutes the metes and bounds of the sacred canon. In this age, when so many have been sufficiently instructed for the purpose, there are few who have received any schooling at all who cannot ascertain for themselves the real force of the considerations so clearly presented in accurate and at the same time popular works on this subject. Do the majority of general scholars, or even of ministers, do any more than this? Circumstances, it is true, often deter good honest folk, and highly intelligent and

thoroughly educated persons as well, from the prosecution of such studies in any degree of detail. What is the recourse in such a case? Precisely as before, reliance on the unanswerable assertions of the witnesses who have pursued the studies, and especially those who have pursued them at first hand. It cannot be denied that the independent scrutiny on the part of a sufficient number of competent scholars of the sources of our knowledge on this head is imperatively demanded on another ground, which will be mentioned somewhat further on in the discussion.

To say that the orderly and progressive proofs of inspiration may in certain cases be dispensed with, is a very different thing from saying that the orderly and progressive proof of inspiration is impossible, or in all cases unnecessary. It behooves the guardian of these holy oracles to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," and to neglect no legitimate methods which have been or which can be used in its defence. That great champion of the truth, Christlieb, spoke unadvisedly when he declared, some years ago, before the Evangelical Alliance, that, like the soldier of this world, the defender of Christianity, upon finding things too hot along the line of the outworks, should evacuate them, and make his determined stand at the citadel. Your true soldier, in either contest, will shed his life's blood before he will surrender to the enemy the most remote redoubt or seemingly most insignificant lunette or salient. He will make a determined stand at the outworks, and so, in all ordinary cases, best defend the citadel.

But assent must be equally withheld from the dictum of another master in Israel. Dr. Fisher, of Yale College, in his masterly "Essays on Supernatural Religion," says that, important as we may justly regard inspiration, it is not so important as revelation. Professor Fisher's obvious motive for this rather dangerous statement is the desire to homologate as against the out and out enemies of our religion with those who qualify or even reject the doctrine of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, but who are ready to acquiesce in the assertion of a supernatural revelation of some sort, and one of divine and Christian truth. That antagonist who yields half the ground to us is, where not taking us

with guile, after the example of the men of Ai, of course less to be dreaded than the one who yields us nothing; the denial of inspiration alone is certainly less alarming than the denial of inspiration and revelation too. But inspiration, as a tenet of the apologist, is vital no less than revelation. Indeed, the denial of the one leads on remorselessly to the denial of the other. This is impressively and yet laughably illustrated by Henry Rogers. A choleric old gentleman imagined in his sleep that he arose one morning to find all the leaves of his Bible blank. Attributing this mischievous alteration (as he regarded it) to the devices of a waggish neighbor, he went to him in a towering rage, but only to find his neighbor's Bible mutilated like his own. What astonished him yet more, every Bible had been treated in the same way. Every printed word had in some unaccountable manner been obliterated from every page. What was to be done in this emergency? How were the lost verses and chapters to be restored? A bright thought struck him—from quotations! But the entire mass of English literature was ransacked in vain for this purpose. Not a quotation, not a reference, not an allusion, not a passage or a line that had been influenced in any way, however unconsciously, by the Bible remained. The effect of this havoc upon the integrity of the works of the several authors was amazing. Milton was nearly all blank from beginning to end. Shakspeare was in hardly better case. Even Byron and Wordsworth, and Tennyson, even Thackeray and Dickens, had been cut to pieces and effectually gutted. At length it occurred to the dreamer that large portions of the Scriptures had been committed to memory, and these, it was happily found, could be recovered. It appeared that no one person knew all or any considerable part of the Bible; one had got one text or context by heart, and another another. A young woman promptly remembered the words, "there is a time *to dance*," and a venerable Quaker was so fortunate as to call to mind the kindred averment that "there is a time *to keep silence*." And so the laborious work of reconstruction went on, but with the result that the measure of success thus slowly attained was provokingly inadequate and tantalizing. Could there well be a more striking, as well as amusing, exhibi-

tion of the state of affairs the world would be in to-day if there had been a purely oral (though supernatural) impartation of truth in the first instance to mankind, and no divinely inspired volume to preserve intact to the latest generations the oracle which had thus fallen once for all like lightning from the firmament!

There is another reason for zealous ardor in this contention, and one that has a special bearing on the time in which we live. It is the historian Froude who remarks that there is more skepticism in the world to-day than there has been since the death of Constantine. This might be literally true, without being significant to the degree a majority of careless readers would suppose. There may have been, there probably was, more skepticism in the world at the time of the Reformation than there was in the time of Berengarius or of Otho the Great. Skepticism is but the backward swing of the pendulum of which the forward swing is intelligent faith. There is more thought of every kind diffused throughout the earth in this the latter part of the nineteenth century than there was when Constantine or either one of his successors for a thousand years was crowned.

Yet a certain measure of baleful significance cannot be denied to the statement of the rationalistic essayist. After such a lapse of ages the final success of Christianity would appear, at first sight, to be incompatible with so wide a prevalence of doubt. It is true this is not the whole case. If we should give heed to Mr. Froude when with Hamlet he cries, "look upon this picture," we may, and we do, continue to exclaim with Hamlet, "and on *this*," pointing at the same time to the unexampled triumphs of Christianity in heathen lands, as well as to the gratifying and steady progress of the church at home. But beyond all question the scowling front of contemporary infidelity to-day is a portentous fact which it is impossible and undesirable for the apologist to blink. And how does the picturesque chronicler of English annals attempt to account for the fact to which he thus calls attention? He does so, not upon the obvious, but even to him unproven, hypothesis of the failure of Christ's religion; but by referring it in part to the recent growth of rationalistic philosophy, criticism and science; still more largely to the shuffling defences made by so many represen-

tative apologists. We quite agree with Mr. Froude that it will not do to belittle certain well-known and formidable difficulties, as is sometimes done by Alford and that school, by calling them "trivial." We keenly regret, too, that not only English and American writers who have been tinctured in various degrees with the insidious poison of German rationalism, but that even so admirable a theologian, as he is in so many respects, as Professor Bruce of Glasgow, should have expressed himself so vaguely, albeit, we trust, only for the sake of argument, concerning a doctrine of an importance so great that we may say, without fear of victorious contradiction, that it is paramount. It is equally, not to say more to be lamented, that the old exploded heresy of Fichte, Schleiermacher, Coleridge and Morell, not to mention William Rathbone Greg and Francis William Newman, should have been lately revived in a more influential form by certain scholars in Germany and in a very specious guise, if we understand his position, by Professor Ladd in this country.

Some of these writers go farther than others. Fichte, for instance, denied the possibility of a supernatural infallible revelation or inspiration of any sort, whether from without or from within; whereas Morell only denied the possibility of an external, and at the same time supernatural and infallible, revelation and inspiration, and Newman only the possibility of an "authoritative supernatural book-revelation of spiritual and religious truth." These views may be more properly considered under the head of objections to the doctrine. But in these days, when the fight is at its thickest, and heavy reinforcements are daily pouring into the enemy's ranks, it is no time for the trumpet in the hands of those who have in custody the ark of Jehovah to give a faint or an uncertain, much less an erroneous or misleading, sound.

Let us now approach the merits of this controversy. There are those who deny the inspiration of the Scriptures outright. For such antagonists, as antagonists, we entertain respect, whatever we may think of them as men, or as theologians, or as logicians; but from this quarter we apprehend no considerable danger. To deny the inspiration of the Scriptures outright is palpably to give the lie to its many respectable, widely separated, independent

and concurrent authors; and that is something which the easy credulity of mankind has never yet been able to stomach. The adversaries to be held in wholesome fear are those who admit the inspiration of the Bible in terms, but deny it in fact; who affirm the doctrine of inspiration, but explain, define and qualify it *ad libitum* until everything worthy of the name of inspiration has evaporated.

Amongst those who admit the doctrine in some sense or other, there are, or have been, two main theories in vogue, the mechanical and the dynamical. Some good and sound men, such as the younger Hetherington, have protested against the propriety of any attempts whatever at theorizing on this subject, and have denied the very possibility of affirming the truth either of the mechanical or the dynamical view. Those who simply deny the truth of the dynamical view are for the most part advocates of the mechanical. It is one of the misfortunes of theological controversy that such "ill-starred distinctions," as Dr. Dabney happily dubs them, and as many of them certainly are, in some cases cannot well, in other cases cannot at all, be avoided. This is abundantly evinced by the history of the formulation of church creeds and church symbols from the beginning, and especially from the history of every one of the great œcumenical councils. The logic of the objection would carry us to the extreme position of Alexander Campbell and the adherents to his unacknowledged system. Without doubt, unnecessary and hazardous, if not clearly unauthorized, precision and refinement may have been given in this way to certain uninspired statements of doctrine on the part of the recognized champions of orthodoxy. But whenever a considerable error is formulated and obtains currency, even when the error is not of the nature or in the direction of heresy, it is incumbent on the advocates of truth to formulate a distinction that shall exclude that error. Where palpable heresy is involved the course of duty becomes still clearer and the obligation yet more imperative.

The mechanical theory of inspiration has this prime advantage over its rival, that it is held, and from the nature of the case can be held, only by the orthodox. It would not be exactly fair to say that, according to this theory, the sacred speakers and writers

were mere *automata*, machines, or speaking-trumpets, in short, nothing but *funnels*. They were rather mere secretaries or copying-clerks, whose function was exhausted when they had transcribed a series of dictated words. And yet so far as the exercise of their own peculiar mental powers is concerned, beyond what was required to retain and repeat the words given them, they were after all, to every intent and purpose, veritably machines; and this fact will explain the application of the term by which those who hold this view are denominated.

The mechanical theory of inspiration was advocated by one or more of the Swiss theologians, and in this country, in an interesting but extreme book, by the late Eleazar Lord. Dr. Thornwell, too, in his grand rejoinder to Morell, from his silence as to the real, rather than merely apparent, employment on the part of God of the individual powers of the human scribes in full and active exercise, might be supposed by some to maintain the same position. We are ourselves by no means prepared to admit this; and the less so, as the language of the great theologian in question is otherwise altogether reconcilable with the dynamical view. The arguments *against* the mechanical theory appear to be decisive, and have been urged with signal force by such writers as Dr. Charles Hodge, Lee, Tayler Lewis, and Gaussen. It has to be granted that the mechanical view is, upon a close examination of the subject, by no means wholly destitute of plausibility. Take, by way of example, the Decalogue. The Decalogue, we know, was written on tables of stone by the finger of God. A literal interpretation of the account in the Pentateuch would therefore seem to preclude the possibility of dynamical coöperation on the part of man or angel. This is a more persuasive instance than that of the old prophets, in whom was "the Spirit of Christ," or that of Daniel, or Caiaphas, or Balaam. The old prophets, and also Daniel and the rest, were not ever, or not always, apprised of the full sense of their messages: in some cases the meaning of their own words may have been wholly hidden from them, as sometimes appears to have happened in the case of Daniel. Caiaphas does not seem to have been aware that he was himself uttering prophecy at all; and, in his own view of the matter, was in that event merely giv-

ing expression to a sagacious worldly maxim. Balaam was undoubtedly in a state of prophetic ecstasy, though, like the other prophets when in that state, he was, so far as we are able to determine, entirely conscious of the divine afflatus; but the differentiating peculiarity in the case of Balaam, as also in that of King Saul, is that he was an involuntary, and reluctant, engine (shall we say, or agent?) of the divine will. Yet each one of these inspired persons, of whom we have any definite information, was left while prophesying to the free exercise of his own individual genius, as is evident from the fact that each of them has expressed himself, notably Balaam, in his own individual style.

And now, to return to the example first adduced, it is pertinent to surmise that the case of the Decalogue itself may not have been essentially dissimilar. The Decalogue, it is stated, came directly from the hand of the Almighty, and yet there are portions of the Decalogue, as, for instance, in the second, fourth, and tenth commandments, where the literary style presents a marked resemblance to the literary style of the Jewish law-giver. Now, one of two things must be true. The first alternative is, that the language which attributes the Decalogue to the finger of God must be taken with sufficient latitude to allow of the subordinate coöperation of Moses. If this interpretation, so far from the one that has been usually accepted, could be sustained, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to make out a single case of mechanical inspiration in the whole Bible, unless, indeed, it was all inspired in a mechanical way. The remaining alternative is that the language in Exodus must be taken with sufficient strictness to render certain the averment that not only in its subject-matter, but also in its literary form, the Decalogue is to be attributed wholly and exclusively to God. This appears to be the only view left that is exegetically tenable. The resemblance between the style of the Decalogue and that of Moses must then either be regarded as a mistaken one, or as accidental, or as exceptional, or as due to subsequent enlargement or redaction on the part of Moses, or as the effect of imitation, or rather as the result of his unequalled intimacy with Jehovah; or must else be considered as part and parcel of an inspiration that was at the same time universally and

strictly mechanical, and yet one which made use of the very same vesture of language and style which Moses himself would naturally have employed. The alleged resemblance in style can hardly be a purely imaginary one, and can hardly be referred to accident. If it be argued that it is an exceptional and solitary instance of a mechanical inspiration, it may be rejoined that Moses in this case was not even a copying-clerk, and that the only inspiration involved in the case was the inspiration of the stone tablets. The office of Moses in this business began and ended with the work of transmission. It would, then, be singular indeed if Jehovah chose to write in the language of the human mediator. It would be far simpler to explain it as the result of the intimate companionship subsisting between the divine and human agents, or, better still, to resolve the apparent resemblance into real identity, and to accept the conclusion that is favored by the varied forms in which the Decalogue appears in the Pentateuch, that Moses either enlarged, by inspiration, on the divine words, or else expressed part at least of the divine thought in his own phraseology.

The hypothesis that the Almighty, for obviously wise and important reasons, saw fit in each instance to communicate precisely such a series of connected words to the human instrument as the man himself would have made use of had he been left to the untrammelled exercise of his own individual faculties, is the only hypothesis on which the mechanical theory, as a general system, is for a moment tenable. This is undoubtedly the form in which Dr. Thornwell held the mechanical theory, if Dr. Thornwell held the mechanical theory at all. The opinion has already been expressed in this essay that there is nothing in what Dr. Thornwell has said and that has been published on this subject that is inconsistent with the dynamical theory as properly qualified and expounded. There is, beyond question, every reason for adopting and maintaining, with or without certain possible exceptions,* the dynamical as contradistinguished from the mechanical view of in-

* Certain short, plain messages of God, and the Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia, *in extenso*, have by some, been regarded as furnishing examples of such exceptions.

piration. According to the dynamical theory the Bible is not simply a divine, but a divine-human phenomenon and product. This fact is brought out and elucidated with great force and impressiveness by Dr. William Lee, in his admirable work on inspiration, and still more eloquently, if somewhat mystically, by that rare scholar and singularly gifted thinker and writer, the late Prof. Tayler Lewis, in his remarkable little volume entitled "The Divine-Human in the Scriptures." Professor Lewis discourses profoundly and strikingly upon the analogy subsisting between the written and the personal Word, between the scriptural Logos incarnated, so to say, through the medium of the sacred oracles, in the *language*, and the self-existent Logos incarnate in the historic Christ, in the *nature* of man.

It is quite obvious, at the first glance, that this general view is liable to indefinite perversion; and it must be promptly admitted that it has been held in common by the adversaries and the friends of true religion. The teaching of those who abet the dynamical theory is uniformly this, that the sacred writers and spokesmen were left to the free use of their own powers, just as much so indeed as though there were no higher and supernatural influence brought to bear upon them. Now this general theory naturally admits of, and has received, a two-fold exposition, and it has accordingly been presented in a heterodox as well as in an orthodox form. The heterodox exhibition of the doctrine makes everything of the human and little or nothing of the divine side of the matter. In its extremest statement no essential difference is made between the inspiration of Socrates or Shakspeare and that of Moses. Such was the view of Foxton and of the late Theodore Parker. Morell, repeating Schleiermacher, rose immeasurably higher than this, and with Greg and Newman, and apparently Coleridge, protested that there was a radical distinction between a merely literary and intellectual and a spiritual inspiration, but allowed only a difference of degree between the inspiration of such a man as Thomas à Kempis or John Bunyan, and the inspiration of an Isaiah or a John. In other words, while unwilling with Parker to resolve the inspiration of the sacred penmen into the mere inspiration or afflatus of human genius, they did confound

it with the illumination of believers under the ordinary gracious influences of the Holy Spirit.

It is with regret that we are unable to attach a substantially divergent sense to the captivating words on this subject of that very able and scholar-like writer, Dr. Ladd. All these men, and a host like them, deny that there can be such a thing as an infallibly inspired *volume*, and define inspiration in such a way as to make the term applicable only to the *men* who wrote, and not to the documents which are attributed to their authorship. Agreeably to this view Morell held that inspiration was simply a quite unwonted elevation of the intuitional and religious consciousness. Of course all these men denied, and were bound in consistency to deny, what that eminent scholar and teacher in the church, Professor Briggs, has happily styled "the absolute inerrancy of the Scriptures." So does Dr. Briggs himself, and multitudes who yet with him refuse to go all lengths with the others. So of course does Dr. Ladd. His view, which is equally the favorite view just now of the heterodox defenders of inspiration in Germany, seems to be, that the Bible *is* not, but merely *contains*, a revelation from God, and that this revelation is not conveyed in infallible terms. In dealing with the idiosyncrasies and aberrations of human minds and human language, God, upon this view, was dealing with material that was intractable even to his own omnipotence; he could not help himself; he did the best he could.

Over against this, which is the heterodox statement of the dynamical view, we set the orthodox exhibition of the same general theory. The orthodox statement differs from its rival in just one point, viz., in the assertion it makes, and upon which it lays momentous emphasis, that the men thus left to the unfettered exercise of their own powers, were nevertheless absolutely controlled, and restrained within the limits of unerring accuracy, not only as respects the substance, but also as respects the language in which, as God's spokesmen, they have conveyed to us God's message.

This is the only hypothesis which, so far from being contradicted by the phenomena, accounts for them and explains them, and is therefore the true one. There is no more difficulty here than in the analogous case of ordinary conversion. The men were

free, and as such worked; but God worked in them, to think, feel, and write, of his own good pleasure.

The only sound doctrine on this whole subject is well set forth in the old-fashioned but precious phrase, the "divine plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures." What is here opposed is the doctrine of a partial inspiration. There can be then, of course, as Lee and Gaussen and Dr. Manly point out, no "sliding scale of degrees" in inspiration. This flows inevitably from the definition and from the main facts. If the inspired men were the infallible spokesmen of Jehovah, they must have been equally and fully inspired for the purpose, since there are no degrees in infallibility; and if it is God who speaks through them, they must be infallible, since God is omniscient and faithful, and incapable of error or mistake. *In hęc nuce* lies the necessity and truth of the doctrine contended for in this essay.

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