

sepulchre. I do fear for you, my son," seeing a smile struggling with respect on Ernest's face; "and I fear the more, because I see that this tolerant sympathy looks generous; and thus you may mistake vacillating indecision for a large wisdom. Will you forever be run away with by each new notion and caprice of other minds?"

"Dear mother," answered Ernest, playfully, "you must plead guilty for some part of my vagaries. You bade me be a Seeker. Dread not the spirit that rose at your bidding. You have not forgotten the lines you early taught me,—

'Yet some seeke knowledge merely to be knowne,
And idle curiosity that is;
Some but to sell, not freely to bestow;
These gaine and spend both time and wealth amisse,
Embasing arts, by basely deeming so;
Some to build others, which is charitie,
But these to build themselves, who wise men be.'

THE DIVINE PRESENCE IN NATURE AND IN THE SOUL.

THE doctrine of divine inspiration is one of no small importance; for as it is received in one form or another, it will bless a man or curse him; will make him a slave to the letter which killeth, or a freeman made free by the "Law of the spirit of life." The doctrine of Inspiration is admitted by the Christian Church. It is commonly believed there have been inspired men, though "open vision" is no longer continued. The Bible, oftener than any other book perhaps, speaks of men inspired by God. Most of its truths, to take its own statement, came directly from Him. Since Christians believe the Bible, they must believe in the power and fact of inspiration, however they may limit its extent.

Inspiration is the direct and immediate action of God upon man. But to understand this the better, we may consider his analogous action upon matter, since in both cases the action is direct and immediate, though in obedi-

ence to fixed and determinate laws. The kind of action on God's part is perhaps the same in both cases; and the effect differs with the powers and nature of the recipient.

God is everywhere present, and at all times. Let us take the fact of his Omnipresence as the point of departure. What results follow from this perpetual and universal presence? He is not idly present in any place, or at any time. The divine energy never slumbers nor sleeps: it flows forth an eternal stream, endless and without beginning, which doth encompass and embrace the all of things. From itself proceeds, and to itself returns this "River of God." The material world is perpetual growth, renewal which never ceases, because God, who flows into it, is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

He fills the world of outward nature with his presence. The fullness of the divine energy flows inexhaustibly into the crystal of the rock, the juices of the plant, the splendor of the stars, the life of the Bee and Behemoth. Here it is not idle, but has an active influence on the world of matter, plants, and animals. The material, vegetable, and animal world, therefore, received this influence according to their several capacities, and from it derive their life and growth; their order and beauty,—the very laws of their being, and their being itself. Since He is everywhere, no part of nature is devoid of his influence. All depends on Him for existence. Hence Nature ever grows, and changes, and becomes something new, as God's all-prevailing energy flows into it without ceasing. Hence in nature there is constant change, but no ultimate death. The quantity of life is never diminished. The leaves fall, but they furnish food for new leaves yet to appear, whose swelling germs crowd off the old foliage. The Dog and Oyster having done their work cease to be seen by our eyes; but there seems no reason for fancying the spark of life once kindled in them is extinguished, or vanished into soft air. Since God is essentially and vitally present in each atom of space, there can be no such thing as sheer and absolute extinction of being. Well says the poet,

"When will the river be weary of flowing
Under my eye?
When will the winds be aweary of blowing
Over the sky?"

When will the clouds be weary of fleeting?
 When will the heart be weary of beating?
 Never, oh never, nothing will die!"

Since God is unalterably the same, and yet with ever active energy possesses the Heavens and the Earth, the law on which they rest must needs be fixed beyond a change, while the face of nature each day assumes new forms. Thus the law of nature is the same at the Pole and the Line, on the day of Adam and at this day; and yet there is unending variety on the surface of things, where the divine spirit never repeats itself.

Now the obedience, which all the inanimate objects in nature pay to this law, is perfect. There is never any violation of it; not even the smallest. The stones and the trees, the sun and the waves, yield perfect obedience thereunto. No provision is made in nature against a violation of this law. Thus, for example, we never see the water and the air change place with each other, nor could the earth exist under such capricious changes.

The same may be said of the animal world, with the single exception of man, who is related to it by the body's side. Here also the obedience is perfect. Caprice has no place, as a principle or a motive. All the works of the elephant or the ape were forecast in its structure and instincts. If this were not so—if this obedience of the elements and animals were not thus perfect, there could be no safety for the human race; no continued existence even to the universe; for its existence continues only on the supposition that its laws are obeyed; and no provision has been made for the evil that would ensue, if any part of the Creation, save man alone, should violate the fundamental law of its nature and act against the will of God.

The imposition of a law, then, perfect in itself, and perfectly though blindly obeyed, is the entire extent of God's influence upon the outward world of nature. In these bodies it would seem there is no individual will; they seem not integers but only fractions of a whole. If they have any individual will it is subordinate to irresistible instinct. Now since there is no partial will, there is no power to oppose the universal will and influence of God, even in the slightest degree. Therefore all the action of the unconscious world is mechanical, or at the highest in-

stinctive and in perfect harmony with God's will. It is an important fact that all parts of nature are in perfect harmony with God's will, and therefore reveal all of God that can be made manifest to the eye, the ear, and other senses of man. In the universe of matter, nothing ever rebels, or revolts from God's authority. All is order, and all beautiful. His laws seem to conflict, but they never clash; growth and decay perpetually intersect, but do not disturb each other; so the rays of light, as reflected from the flowers of a meadow to a thousand eyes, cross and recross, but one never jostles the other. From this obedience it comes that nothing in nature is really deformed when seen from its true point of view. "He hath made nothing imperfect" considered in its two-fold relation of use and meaning.

In this manner the world is filled by God's energy and substance. He is equally present in all parts of the material world; equally active in the formation of a dew-drop and an ocean. Now men of all ages, the rudest and the most refined, have noticed this striking fact; their slumbering spirit has been awakened, and they have gained hints from it. Religious men see an higher proof of God's presence and influence in outward nature, than in the mass of their fellow men. If we would be possessed with devout and sublime emotions, we go to the mountain "visited all night by troops of stars," and not to the crowd of men, that on a public day flow in full tide through the glittering streets of a great city. We say "the Heavens declare the glory of God;" not that the assembly of men bears the same testimony to his goodness or loveliness. Hence do we conclude that the undisturbed presence and unobstructed influence of God, amid the hills and flower-enamelled meadows of the country, are more congenial to the growth of morality and religion, than the close contact of self-conscious men in crowded towns. The reason is plain; the divine energy acts without resistance in Nature, and therefore perfectly realizes its idea; while in man's will it encounters a resisting medium, and does not, in all cases, display itself so clear and so perfect.

But yet God is present in man as well as out of him. The divine energy and substance possess the human soul, no less than they constitute the law and life of outward

nature. God is present in man as well as in matter, and not idly present in him. The presence of God in the soul is what we call Inspiration; it is a *breathing in* of God. His action on the outer world is an *influence*; on self-conscious souls it is an *inspiration*. By this he imparts Truth directly and immediately, without the intervention of second causes. It has sometimes been denied that such inspiration was possible; or that man ever received Truth at first hand from God. But the great mass of the human family has always believed the fact; only a few have doubted it. It was the faith of the ancient Greek, and of the Jew still older. Both had their prophets and sages, men who professed to enjoy a closer intimacy with the Most High, to see higher visions from him, and receive truths not commonly imparted to mankind. These men were held sacred. In times of trouble they ruled the nation by their council; for the people fled unto them, when clouds deep-fraught with ruin hung threatening round the horizon of their time. There was always some seer or man of God, in every primitive nation; some Orpheus or Moses; some Minos or Samuel; some Amos or Tiresias, to offer advice and reveal the will of God made known to him. The Christian church believes the inspiration of certain men that have appeared in history:—that God “of old oraculously spoke” by Moses, the Hebrew Psalmists, and Prophets; that Paul and his fellow-apostles were likewise inspired; that Jesus of Nazareth possessed a sublime degree of inspiration, never before nor since imparted unto mortal man. This doctrine represents a truth; for these sublime persons were doubtless inspired; they ran as they were sent; they spake as the spirit gave them utterance. But were these few men the only recipients of God’s Spirit? Has the Soul of all souls seen fit to shed his light only on some score of men? Has he, who fills all time and all space, and possesses eternity and immensity, spoken only in the earlier ages of the world, to but a single race, and merely in the Hebrew tongue? This is consistent neither with logic nor history. In all ages, from the dawn of time to this moment; in all families of man, the spirit of God, his energy, and substance have flowed into the soul, as the rain falls in all lands. As day by day, year out, year in, the dew descends, so the divine spirit enters each soul of

man; over the head alike of the beggar and the king the unmeasured Heavens are spread; for all eyes the “waters on a stilly night are beautiful and fair;” for all the moon walks in loveliness, the stars shine, the sun from his golden urn pours down the day, and so for all the great Fountain of Life and Truth sends forth the streams of his inspiration. Since every atom of matter is penetrated and saturated with God, it cannot be that a few Hebrew sages, prophets, or apostles—though never so noble—have alone received visitations from the Soul of all souls, and wholly absorbed the energy and substance of God, so that all others must wander forlorn, or catch some faint echo of Inspiration reflected in a Hebrew word.

The bards and sages of our own fathers, in centuries long since forgot; the wise men of other lands, the Socrates, Confucius, Zoroaster, whose influence is writ all the world over; the saints and the sages of every clime; the poor peasant, needy and ignorant, who with faithful breast put up a holy prayer to God—by whatever name invoked; every true and lonely heart has felt the same inspiration; not *similar* inspiration alone, but the same inspiration, as all bodies fall by the same gravity and all violets blossom in the same sun. The spirit descended like a dove, not only on Jesus of Nazareth; not on the banks of the Jordan alone; but on every shore of the wide world, and on each pure and faithful soul; for so far as a man sees with his own soul religious or moral truth, for example, and feels them with his own heart, so far is he inspired and possessed of the energy and spirit of God.

Now to men there can be but one *kind* of Inspiration; it is the intuition, or direct and immediate perception of Truth, in some important mode, for example, religious or moral truth. There can be but one *mode* of Inspiration; it is the felt and acknowledged presence of the Highest in the soul imparting this Truth, the conscious presence of Him as truth, charity, justice, holiness or love, infusing himself into the soul and giving it new life. There can be but one *test* or *criterion* of Inspiration, the truth of the thought, feeling, or doctrine. There may be various *signs* of Inspiration—more or less imperfect though but a single proof. A man may have a deep conviction that he is inspired; he may accurately foretell future events

or do wonderful works; all these are perhaps signs, but not a *proof, test, or criterion* of inspiration.

Now in respect to the *kind, mode, and test* of inspiration all men stand on the same level. But there is a great difference in respect to the *degree* of inspiration. This depends on the quantity of being, so to say, and the amount of fidelity in each recipient of inspiration. All men by nature are not capable of the same degree of inspiration, and by character and culture they are still less capable of receiving the same measure thereof. A man of deep, noble intellect and heart can receive more than one of smaller gifts. Still farther, the degree of inspiration depends no less upon faithful compliance with the conditions on which inspiration can alone be obtained. A man may perfectly observe these conditions, and he will then receive all the inspiration his nature can contain at that stage of its growth, or he may observe them imperfectly, and will receive less. Therefore it depends in some measure on a man's self, whether or not, and to what extent, he will be inspired. He may keep his birthright, or may lose it by his folly and sin. We see in all ages men of humbler gifts obtaining a higher degree of inspiration than others of endowments that were superior by nature. In the end they who are thus faithful become superior in quantity of being, as it were; for obeying God's law, they continually tend to improvement; thus a snail in the right may well beat a racer in the wrong. The truth of this statement appears in the history of some of the prophets in the old Testament, and in that of Christ's disciples, who were evidently men of small powers at the first, but through their faithful obedience became Jameses and Johns at the end. It was so with Bunyan and George Fox, not to mention many others.

Now Jesus Christ was beyond all doubt the noblest soul ever born into the world of time. He realized the idea of human holiness. He did likewise, the most perfectly of all men, obey the conditions and laws of his being. He therefore possessed the highest degree and greatest measure of Inspiration ever possessed by man. Hence he is called an incarnation of God. If his obedience was perfect, then his reason—certain and infallible as the promptings of instinct or the law of gravitation—was the power of God acting through him without let or hindrance. His reve-

lation, therefore was the highest and deepest ever made to man. Because he had in him so much that is common to all, and so little that was personal and peculiar, his doctrines go round the world, and possess the noblest hearts. He will continue to hold his present place in the scale of the human race, until God shall create a soul yet larger and nobler than Jesus, which shall observe the "law of the spirit of life" with the same faithfulness. Then, but not till then, can a more perfect religion be proclaimed to men. Whether this will ever be done—whether there are future Christs, in the infinite distance, but nobler than he, now on their way to the earth, is known only to him who possesses the riddle of destiny, and humble disciples of the Truth can answer neither aye nor no. Yet may this be said; his Revelation is perfect so far as it goes, and this can be said of no other sage or seer.

It was said above, that in nature we see God perfectly realizing his idea, and everywhere realizing it, in the formation of a worm or a world, for *there* is no opposition to God's will, but perfect obedience and infinite harmony. Therefore the outer world is all of God which can be revealed or manifested to the senses. Now in Jesus we see the same obedience; his will was perfectly in harmony with God's will, and at all times in harmony therewith. His inspiration therefore was perfect. He was one with God, the Father in him and he in the Father, and his whole life a manifestation of the Father. All the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him, and relatively to us he was God, so far as his power extended; that is he was all of Divine Holiness which can be revealed in the human form.

Here then is the difference between the inspiration of Jesus and that of Moses, Zoroaster, Socrates, or other sages; not a difference in *kind, in mode, or in the test* by which it approves itself to mankind, but a difference in *degree*; a difference which resulted from his superior natural endowments, and his more perfect conformity to God's will. He—so fully possessed by the divine—has more in common with other men than they have with one another, and less that is peculiar and limited to himself. In him the race after four thousand years of painful effort has reached its highest perfection. All former sages and saints,

what were they to him? So the aloe tree, while it puts forth leaves each summer day, and bears in its bosom a precious though unseen germ, doth spread into a flower and mature into a fruit but once in a hundred years.

Inspiration cannot be infallible and absolute, except the man's intellect, conscience, affection and religion are perfectly developed. Infallible and creative inspiration is the result of the whole character, not of its partial action; and is not therefore to be expected of mortals; for inspiration does not constrain a man and take away his freedom. It is moulded by his own character, and produces various results. In one it appears in the iron hardness of reasoning, which in another is subdued and molten by the flame of affection, and becomes a stream of persuasion that sparkles as it runs. The prophet has power over the spirit that is given him; he may obey it partially, or entirely, or repel it entirely. Thus disobedient Jonah fled from the Lord; Simon Peter dissembled and told an untruth; and Paul the chiefest apostle cursed Alexander the copper-smith. These facts show plainly that their inspiration was not infallible, and that they were free. God's influence constrains nature, so that it can do no otherwise than as it does; but his inspiration leaves human will fetterless and free. This necessity of nature and this freedom of man are the ground of different manifestations of God in the fields and the city. His presence revealed in all that is magnificently great, or elegantly little, renders the world of nature solemn and beautiful. The shapely trees, the leaves which shroud them in loveliness; the corn and the cattle; the clear deep sky that folds the world in its soft embrace; the light which rides on swift pinions, enchanting all it touches, and reposing harmless on an infant's eye-lid, after its long journey from the other side of the universe; all these are noble and beautiful. They admonish while they delight us, those silent counsellors, and sovereign allies. But yet the spirit of God as displayed in a good man is nobler and more beautiful. It is not the mere passive elegance of unconscious things, which we see resulting from man's voluntary obedience. That might well charm us in nature. But here the beauty is intellectual; the beauty of thought, which comprehends the world and understands its laws. It is moral, the beauty of virtue; which

overcomes the world and lives by its own laws. It is religious; the beauty of holiness, which rises above the world, and lives by the law of the spirit of life. Here the Divine takes a form still more divine. What is a tree, or the whole green woods, when matched against a man that is lovely and true? What is the loveliness of this wide world, with its sunny glens, or "long dun wolds all ribbed with snow;" its rivers chiming as they run; its canopy of stars, shining like a city of God, the New Jerusalem in the heavens; what are all these, compared with a man who is faithful to the infinite Spirit, whose open heart receives him as the violets the sun; who loves man as himself and God above all? It is as nothing; for these outward things are transient and fleeting; they know not of their exceeding loveliness. But immortal man knows himself; moves at his own will, and is not in bondage to the elements. Measure the whole sum of lifeless things by the spotless soul of Jesus, and they vanish, and are not seen. "For the world," says a great writer, "I count it . . . but as an hospital and place to die in. The world that I regard is myself. It is the microcosm of mine own frame that I cast mine eye on; for the other, I use it, but like my globe, and turn it round sometimes for my recreation. Men that look on my outside, perusing only my condition and fortunes, do err in my altitude, for I am above Atlas his shoulders. The earth is not only a point in respect to the heavens above us, but of that heavenly and celestial part within us. That mass of flesh which circumscribes me, limits not my mind. That surface that tells the heavens they have an end, cannot persuade me I have any. I take my circle to be above three hundred and sixty. Though the number of the arc do measure my body, it comprehendeth not my mind. Whilst I study to find out how I am a little world, I find myself something more than the great. There is surely a piece of divinity to us, something that was before the elements, and owing no homage unto the sun. He that understands not this much, hath not his introduction or first lesson, and is yet to begin the alphabet of man."

Now all men are capable of this inspiration, though in different degrees. It is not God's gift to the learned alone, or to the great; but to all mankind. The clear sky is over each man, little or great; let him uncover his head,

and there is nothing between him and infinite space. So doth the infinity of God encompass all men. Uncover the soul of its sensuality, selfishness, and sin, and there is nothing between it and God, who, then, will fill the soul. Each then may obtain his measure of this inspiration by complying with its proper conditions. "The pure in heart shall see God." He, who obeys conscience, is simple in character, true to his mind and affections, open-hearted and loving before God, receives divine inspiration as certainly as he that opens his eyes by day receives the light. He that is simple, tranquil, faithful, and obedient to the law of his being, is certain of divine aid. This inspiration must not be confounded with the man's own soul, on the one hand; nor, on the other, must man be merged in the Divinity. The eye is not light; nor the ear sound; nor conscience duty; nor the affections friendship; nor the soul God; these come from without upon the man.

This doctrine, that all men may be inspired on condition of purity and faithfulness, is the doctrine of the Bible. "The spirit of man is—the candle of the Lord." "It we love one another, God dwelleth in us." "If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we [both Son and Father] will come unto him and make our abode with him." This is equally the doctrine of common sense and daily experience. No man thinks the truth of Conscience, the axioms of Reason, or Religion are his. He claims no property in them. They have been shot down into us without our asking, and now stand unmanageable in our minds; irrefragable facts, which we may neglect, but cannot alter or annul. We all of us border close upon God. He shines through, into each pure soul, as the sun through the circumambient air. All the wisest of men have declared the word they spoke was not their own. They were the self-conscious and voluntary organ of the Infinite, as the lily of the valley is the unconscious and involuntary organ thereof. "My doctrine is not mine," said the highest teacher, who claimed no personal authority. Men in distress turn instinctively to this source for aid, and all the religions of the world profess to come from this fountain. Moses and Mahomet could only speak what they found given them to utter, for no man ever devised a religion, as human reason cannot create in

this department; it can only examine and conclude, perceive, embrace, and repeat what it learns. "Where there is no vision [revelation] the people perish." It is through this that we gain knowledge of God, whom no man can find out by *searching*, but who is revealed without search to babes and sucklings.

Every man who has ever prayed with the mind, prayed with the heart, knows by experience the truth of this doctrine. There are hours, and they come to all men, when the hand of destiny seems heavy upon us; when the thought of time misspent; the pang of affection misplaced and ill-requited; the experience of man's worse nature, and the sense of degradation come upon us; the soul faints, and is ready to perish. Then in the deep silence of the heart, when the man turns inwards to God, light, comfort, and peace dawn on him, like the day-spring from on high. He feels the Divinity. In that high hour of visitation, thought is entranced in feeling. We forget ourselves, yielding passive to the tide of soul that flows into us. Then man's troubles are but a dew-drop on his sandals; his enmities or jealousies, his wealth or his poverty, his honors, disgraces, the sad mishaps of life are all lost to the view, diminished, and then hid in the misty deeps of the valley we have left. It is no vulgar superstition to say man is inspired in such moments. They are the seed-time of life. Then we live whole years, though in a few moments, and afterward as we journey on through life, cold and dusty and travel-worn and faint, we look back to that moment as the source of light, and like Elisha, go long days in the strength thereof: the remembrance of the truth and love which then dawned on us, goes like a great wakening light, a pillar of fire in the heavens, to guide us in our lonely pilgrimage. The same thing happens to mankind. Light of old time sprang up as the nations sat weeping and in darkness. Now all may turn to the truths which then burst through the night of sin and wo, and which are still preserved in Holy Books as lights are shut in lanterns, though once kindled at heaven's own fire.

These hours of inspiration are the opening of the flower; the celestial bloom of man; the result of the past; the prophecy of the future. They are not numerous to any man; happy is he who can number one hundred such

in the year, or even in a life. To many men who have once in their lives felt this, it seems shadowy, dream-like, and unreal, when they look back upon it. Hence they count it a dream of their experience; a vision of a sickly fancy, and cease to believe in inspiration. They will say that long ago there were inspired men, but there are none now; that we must bow our faces to the dust, not turn our eyes to the broad free heaven; that we cannot walk by the great central light "which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world," but only by the hand-lamp of tradition. Can this be true? Has the Infinite laid aside his omnipresence and retreated to some little corner of space? Does he now stretch forth no aid, but leave his erring child, wandering in the "palpable obscure," fatherless, without a guide, "feeling after God, if haply he may find him," who is "now only a God afar off?" This cannot be; for the grass grows green as ever; the birds chirp as gaily; the sun shines as warm; the moon and the stars are pure as before; morning and evening have lost none of their former loveliness. God still is there, ever present in nature. Can it be that yet present in nature, he has forsaken man; retreated from the Shekinah in the Holy of Holies, to the court of the Gentiles? No more can this be true. Conscience is still God with us. A prayer is deep as ever of old, and faith remains "the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." Love is still mighty to cast out fear. The soul yet searches the deeps of God, and the pure in heart see him, or else religion were but a mockery; morality a hollow form, and love an hideous lie. The substance of God is not yet exhausted; nor the well of life run dry. Now, as in the day of Moses, or Jesus, he who is faithful to Reason, and Conscience, Affection and Faith, will, through these, receive an inspiration to guide him all his journey through.