

which the books of the Bible carry with them, by which they vindicated their claim to be recognized as containing a Divine message when they were first written, by which they won their way into the Canon; and which places them forever in a position of independence of those traditional props which seem to be in danger of being swept away by the destructive criticism of these latter times. He then deals with "Popular Notions of Inspiration," in which he points out, *en passant*, that the difficulties which are troubling the souls of honest inquirers, and frightening so many who regard themselves as being set for the defence of the truth, are not in the Bible so much as in the misconceptions of men concerning it. If there are difficulties in the Bible, they have put them into it. "*They have put in the place of inspiration itself certain popular notions of what inspiration should be.*" They have assumed without the slightest warrant that if God inspired the Bible, He must have done it in the particular way which appears to them the most fitting. It must be verbally inspired, it must be absolutely infallible, or its style and language must be faultless, or its religious teaching must be perfect from the beginning. At any rate, it must be something which is necessary for a book inspired of God."

But all this is superstitious and wrong. Nay, it is founded in presumption. It assumes that men are capable of deciding how God should proceed in giving a revelation of himself and His will to mankind, and, *a priori*, what attributes a revelation given by Him ought to possess. But the only means we have of knowing what sort of a revelation God would have given, is by the study of that which He has given. This book is a human as well as a Divine production. It did not fall down from Heaven. "It was not, as the old illuminations picture it, copied from golden books held open by the angels in the sky. It was written by men—men inspired by God, it is true, but yet men with human hearts, and human frailties, and human feelings. It was written in the most natural way, with exertion of hand, and heart, and brain, as we ourselves would write. We know that it came from God in the sense that God inspired it for the spiritual guidance of the world; that a noble influence and a Divine teaching emanated from it. But the fact that it was thus inspired of God did not change this living, throbbing human book into a dead, gilded idol. That is what we have done. We have bound together in one volume, and tried to level into dead uniformity a number of separate writings, history, poetry, drama, epistle, prophecy, parable, written by different writers, of different temperaments, at different times, for different purposes, and, for aught we know, with different degrees of Divine illumination. This collection of living utterances given for our use we have almost treated as a fetish for our worship. We have attributed to it every quality that seemed to us an excellence, without asking whether we had reason for doing so. We have made God responsible for its every passing reference to history or science—nay, for even the author's name at the head of every writing. Thus the intelligent veneration for a nobly inspired book degenerated into a foolish reverence for an idol; the faith that should have assimilated the *spirit* of the Bible has become a superstitious worship of letters and words."

The popular notions respecting inspiration which our author sets in the fore-front as chief among the causes of doubt and disquiet, he groups under five heads: "1. The theory of verbal inspiration, that asserts that God is the author of Scripture in the same sense as Milton is of 'Paradise Lost,' every chapter, verse, word and letter being directly dictated by Him. 2. The ignoring of the large human element in inspiration. 3. The belief that the inspired Bible must be absolutely infallible in every detail, even in secular subjects. 4. That the moral and spiritual teaching in an inspired book