

that the holy penmen were bid to write what GOD delivered to them, as Moses and other good men were ordered to do. Deut. xxx. 19. Now, therefore, write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel. Jer. xxx. 1. 2. The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, thus speaketh the LORD GOD of Israel: "Write thee all the words that I have spoken to thee in a book. Rev. i. 11. 19. What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter. And that which was ordered by God to be written, was the same as if it was written by himself; because they spake and wrote as they were moved by the holy spirit." 2 Pet. i. 21.

22. Not all that is contained in the scriptures is of GOD. Some are the words of others: yea, some are the speeches of Satan, and very bad ones too. But now the penmen of those books, in which those speeches are, were moved and directed by the Lord to commit them to writing: so that though they themselves are not the word of GOD, yet that they are written, and are on record, is of GOD; and which was directed to, and done, to shew the malice, pride, blasphemy, and impiety, of that wicked spirit.

There are also speeches of bad men, as of  
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Cain, Pharaoh, and others, ordered to be written, to discover the more the corruption of human nature; and even of good men, as of Moses, David, Jonah, and particularly the friends of Job; and yet these speeches are on record, by divine order, to prove matters of fact, to shew the weakneses and frailties of the best of men. Some of the writers of the scriptures, as Moses, and the historical ones, being eye and ear witnesses of many things they wrote, could have wrote them of their own knowledge, and out of their own memories; and others they might take out of diaries, annals, and journals, of their own, and former times; yet, in all they wrote, they were under the impulse and direction of God; what to leave, and what to take and insert into their writings, and transmit to posterity—so that all they wrote may be truly said to be by divine authority.

In the writings and discourses of the apostle Paul are several quotations out of heathen authors, (viz.) Aratus, Menander, and Epimenides, which were produced *ad hominem* for greater conviction; and which he was directed to quote and write in his epistles and discourses for that reason: so that though the words are not of God, yet that they were quoted and written, was of God.

Let us now proceed, with the utmost care and caution, to state and unfold the true nature of  
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divine inspiration: the matter is infinitely important and useful, and deserves our most intense thoughts, and the severest consideration.—Some writers may have carried the idea of the inspiration of our sacred penmen too high; the doing which is the way to injure the best cause in the world. Other authors, at the same time, have gone much too low, so as to lessen the majesty and grandeur of the sacred scriptures, and diminish that veneration, love, and regard for the holy Bible, which is so absolutely necessary for the maintaining the credit and honour of the word of God, and the support and advancement of true religion in the church of God. But, in whatever divine Inspiration consists, two axioms, or truths, are clear and evident to the understanding of every serious and honest christian.

A X I O M 1.

Something is meant by Inspiration, which is so peculiar to the sacred books, that it cannot be said of any other books or writings in the whole world.

A X I O M 2.

And that this Inspiration, be it what it will, is so common to all the parts of our sacred oracles, that none of them are to be excluded from a share in it, though some of the books may be inspired in a manner and degree higher than others.

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These two remarks, or principles of clear truth, will give us real assistance in searching out the true general idea of Inspiration.

We must assert and maintain, that all the sacred books were divinely inspired, though in different degrees; I say in different degrees: for we believe there is scarce any man of sense but will agree in this, that there could be no need of the same degree of Inspiration to write the plain facts of history, as will be requisite to make a man a prophet to foretell future events. Our enquiry then is this: What sort of divine Inspiration or influence that must be, that was so peculiar to the penmen of the sacred scriptures, that other writings have no just right or cause to pretend to it, and yet so common to these holy books as that they had it, more or less, in all the parts of that sacred volume which we call the BIBLE?—and we will comprize the answer in a few words.

“ THIS DIVINE INSPIRATION implies, that they who delivered the SACRED ORACLES of the old and new testament to mankind, were not only excited by the spirit of GOD to contribute their respective parts for the common good of the church, but they likewise had his special assistance both in the forming their conceptions, and framing their writings: and they had such an assistance of GOD in their several compositions, as effectually pre-

vented their inserting any thing that was FALSE, or omitting any necessary truth out of ignorance, indolence, forgetfulness, or malevolence: so that their report of facts, and representation of things, may be very safely and confidently depended on by the church and people of God, from age to age, and be most abundantly useful and comfortable to them in their path to immortal glory in the kingdom of heaven.”

But it is necessary and extremely useful for us to form our conceptions of this most glorious subject, in the most distinct manner, in the following train of propositions.

PROP. I. Inspiration was an impression of the spirit of God on the understanding as well as the imagination of the sacred penmen. A divine influence actuated such persons as were inspired: God took their immortal minds and reason into his own hands: he touched their rational souls, and they acted as under the influence of the divine being.—To make this grand affair easy to the conception of serious christians, let it be observed, “ that when we converse with our fellow-creatures by our language and voice, the vibration of the air on their ears produces such a motion in the brain, as conveys our thoughts, images, and ideas to that power of the soul which we call simple intelligence, or the understanding;

standing; and from the understanding to the heart and conscience of man.”

Now God, who has a near access to the spirits of all his servants, made such impressions on the imagination and the understanding of those whom he chose to be penmen of the holy scripture, as was sufficient and proper to convey to them the notices of his mind and will, which he intended for the instruction and comfort of the church of God to the end of the world: and he infallibly assisted them to convey those discoveries of his perfections, councils, and operations, so received and revived upon their minds, to other servants and disciples of the most high God.

Should any person curiously or captiously enquire, in what the impressions that were made upon the holy penmen differed, or were distinguished from those inferior impressions which have at all times been made on christians, in all ages, since the age of Inspiration? we cannot see any inconvenience or damage that can arise from our owning it extremely arduous and difficult to assign precisely, and describe accurately, the difference: for we may, upon good evidence, be assured, the difference was very real and great, though we are unable, in a particular manner, to explain it and account for it to a curious and captious enquirer.

PROP. 2. This impressi<sup>o</sup>n of GOD upon the souls of the sacred penmen was such as made it absolutely and undoubtedly CERTAIN, to the persons inspired, that it came most surely and incontestably from GOD: yea, as certainly as it is at any time to us, that we converse with such or such a well-known friend or dear acquaintance, and receive certain notices, impressi<sup>o</sup>ns, informations, images, or instructions, from him. And this must be allowed by all serious, intelligent, and honest men, who have calmly considered the matter.

To make this more easy to the conceptions of my dear young readers, let me desire you to consider, that the greatest speakers and writers in all ages, were always able to distinguish themselves, by their style and manner of speaking, from the vulgar herd of speakers and writers. What think you of Demosthenes and Plato, of Homer, Socrates, and Xenophon, among the Greeks; of Cicero, Virgil, Sallust, and Livy, among the Romans? And what think you of Milton, Mr. Addison, and Dr. Young, amongst the English writers? Or were I to come down a little lower, to Hervey, as a writer; and to a Pitt, and a Barre, as speakers. Could not any of these be distinguished, in their style or manner of expression, and their energy and elegance of thought, from the common class of authors and speakers?

speakers? Could not the glorious Demosthenes be distinguished, in the force and fire of his thoughts and language, from the words or writings of porters and cobblers? You yourselves are not at a loss for a moment what answer to give: you see the difference with an intuitive readiness, and without one single doubt.

But we will return to the sacred scriptures, and give an instance in the greatest and best man then in the world. I mean the glorious father of all true believers. He had a command from God of the most startling and astonishing kind. Nature must recoil, and the bowels of a father could not but relent and yearn over his dear son. And had there been the least room to doubt whether the impression came from God, his refusal to comply had been right and just in the eyes of men and angels, yea, in the eye of God himself. I say again, God himself must have justified and approved of his refusal. But, behold, he freely complies, and God accepts his ready compliance, as a bright evidence of the truth and the victorious strength of his faith.

This is inconceivable, had he not had full conviction and satisfaction in the manner and circumstances of the impression, that it came from God only: and if he could have such full satisfaction in a matter so delicate and awful, so nice and distressing, so as to act upon it without dread.



dread, and without the least hesitation or demur; then it may easily be conceived, that the persons whom God chose as the penmen of the holy scripture might, in the same way, have full satisfaction as to the impressions they felt, that they were really divine, or from the spirit of God.

But lest any sceptic or caviller, or honest enquirer after truth, should apprehend, that, in this way, a door is opened to enthusiasm and delusion, so that we shall never know truth from error, or the inspirations of God from the wild freaks of human imagination; we have an admirable answer ready by one of the most masculine writers in the world: I mean the great John Smith, of Cambridge, in his discourse on Prophecy. Thus speaks that eminent man: "That the prophetic spirit, seating itself in the rational powers as well as in the imagination, did never alienate the mind, but inform and enlighten it; and they that were acted by this spirit, always maintained a clearness and consistency of REASON with strength and solidity of JUDGMENT. For God did not make use of idiots or fools to reveal his will by, but such whose intellectual powers were intire, sound, strong, and perfect; and he imprinted such a clear copy of his wisdom, holiness, and truth upon them, as that it became their own sense, being digested fully into their understandings,

understandings, so as they were able to deliver and represent it to other men as truly as any can paint forth his own thoughts.”\*

But, farther, let us answer the objection by observing, That it is one thing to own such divine impressions, before there was a written rule, and in the case of all those sacred writers who were to bear a part in the compiling of this rule of faith; and a quite different thing to allow of pretensions to like impressions, since the rule has been given, and the whole CANON OF SCRIPTURE fixed and settled.

And, again, 'tis one thing for a servant of God to have such a divine impression merely for his own conduct, and to act according to it; and a quite different thing for a man to pretend, by virtue of an impression he thinks divine, to give rules to others, expecting they should be influenced by them.

In this latter case, some clear and mighty evidence, confirming the divinity of such an impression, has ever and justly been demanded; and God, therefore, did not leave his inspired servants destitute of suitable and glorious MIRACLES, which are the only external and present means to confirm the DIVINITY of those impressions, to which he expected other persons should pay the utmost attention, and the most profound veneration and regard.

PROP. 3.

\* See Smith's Select Discourses, page 190—273, 4to. 1660.

PROP. 3. By such sort of impressions as those mentioned above, the penmen of the sacred oracles were stirred up to write ; for they spake as they were moved, *pheromenoi*, borne on by the holy Spirit. 2 Pet. i. 21. That is, says Dr. Guise, they spake and wrote only such things as were suggested to them by the holy Spirit, whose immediate dictate excited them to utter the ideas which he raised in their minds, and to express them in words that should convey the true sense of them.\*

Our divine oracles consist of divers parts. Some of those parts give light into the doctrines of our holy religion, while others only contain the history of the church and people of God : some contain predictions of future events, while others contain rules and directions for duty and virtuous practice. None of the sacred writers were left to chuse their own part, any otherwise than under the conduct of the holy Spirit, who was the grand overseer, or glorious SUPERINTENDENT of the WHOLE.

They set themselves to writing, and to the particular subjects on which they treated, and in the method which they severally pursued, just as he inclined their hearts, moved on their passions, conducted their understandings, and actuated all their  
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\* See Dr. John Guise's judicious Exposition of the New Testament, Vol. 3. p. 652.

their intellectual or rational powers, and no otherwise.

PROP. 4. They acted under the influence of such impressions of the spirit of GOD, throughout the whole composition of their several writings, from first to last, till their glorious works were compleatly finished, for the honour of GOD, and the good of the church, to the end of the world.

The divine Spirit immediately suggested and dictated to them such things as were matters of pure revelation. He likewise illuminated their minds in the several doctrinal and practical truths which they delivered in writing: he refreshed their memories as to the things they knew in a common way: he helped them to bring forth the things that were divinely impressed on their imagination: and so conducted them in all their compositions, that they neither *omitted* any thing which he thought necessary and expedient, nor *inserted* any thing but what would serve his purposes; but *selected* those ideas, images, facts, and discoveries, that he knew would be most profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction, from one age to another, to the end of the world.

PROP. 5. These divine impressions of the spirit of GOD did not deprive the persons inspired of the use of their reason and understanding, nor destroy the difference of their several natural

faculties and abilities, but were attempered to the different genius and education of the sacred writers. The several penmen of the holy scriptures made use of their rational powers as far as they could be serviceable to their purpose, and the spirit of God supplied their defects: so that the poetical books, and other parts of the Bible, may appear to be the effects of study and meditation, and yet be inspired by God: for Inspiration did not necessarily exclude thought and study in sacred compositions, though it secured from error or all misconceptions and misrepresentations to the people and church of God.

The holy Spirit used the sacred penmen as reasonable creatures, and made use of their judgments, memories, and affections; but they acted under his guidance in the whole of their work.

Their style and language, or the manner in which they expressed their conceptions and passions, naturally differing from each other, the holy Spirit did not hinder or alter this difference in those writings which they drew up under his conduct; but it was of the same strain and manner with what they used commonly in expressing their conceptions, except where God thought fit to interpose in some particular elevations and grandeur of thought, or peculiar strains of majesty and authority.

And though it be allowed and freely owned,  
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that the style of the prophets, and other sacred penmen, was usually the same when they spake, by the order of God, with that which they used in their common discourse; yet still their being inspired, and acting under the divine conduct, in committing their conceptions to writing, is a mighty security and a most delightful satisfaction to our minds; which leads us to the next proposition.

PROP. 6. These divine impressions of the holy Spirit preserved them from error, with which all merely human writings are chargeable. These heavenly influences did so, not only in a way of immediate SUGGESTION, when that was necessary to prevent mistakes and misrepresentations, but also by a superintending direction; when in the writings they drew up, they enlarged or amplified on things and facts which came to their knowledge in an ordinary way, and of which they were eye and ear witnesses.

It has been suggested by an half thinker, who delights in starting difficulties about Inspiration, that a man has no need of Inspiration to relate faithfully what he has seen. It is granted, he has no need of it in writing a common history; but it is otherwise when God intends to make use of a man to draw up a part of the SACRED HISTORY, not only for the use and benefit of his church in all future ages, but with an intention that they should firmly depend upon it.

Then it is not enough that he, who is the historian, be disposed as an honest man, faithfully to relate what he has seen and heard ; but it is likewise necessary that he have the help of the holy Spirit to bring things to remembrance, to enable him duly to select out of many things that might be related, such facts and thoughts as are most important and needful, and that would be most useful ; and to keep from all mistakes and errors whatsoever, both in matter, method, and expression.

The divine Spirit, therefore, so directed our sacred penmen, as not to suffer them to miscarry, or let any dashes of their pen vary from truth, as Faustus Socinus would perversely insinuate ; and as Episcopius, with the same corrupt temper, has asserted. Of this most infallible direction of GOD, we have so clear and good evidence, upon the whole, that we may boldly say, if any particular instances can be produced, that are not to be reconciled with this proposition, it were but a requisite piece of modesty for us rather to suspect the failure may have been in copyers and transcribers than in the compilers and original writers. \*

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\* Let any man say the sacred writers were capable of mistaking, or did mistake in smaller matters ; and they can find out no way for a sufficient security that they might not mistake in greater matters likewise, and in things of the last moment to our souls. Thus you see Infidels, and their patrons, the sceptical professors of the christian religion, attempt to undermine the main support of our faith, and reduce us to the most desperate state of uncertainty : but blessed be GOD, we defy their attempts ; we fear them not.

Upon the whole, when the great and good apostle Paul asserts, that all scripture is given by inspiration of GOD, his meaning is this : that it was drawn up by persons, chosen of GOD, and appointed to that wonderful and most important work ; who, though they used their own natural, rational powers in their several writings, were yet under the influence of such divine impressions, as kept them from all possibility of mistake, or error, and misrepresentation : they were undoubtedly under such an infallible conduct of the holy Spirit, as their reports may be safely and confidently depended on by the church and people of GOD in all ages, to the end of the world.

#### R E C A P I T U L A T I O N .

Let us now stand still for a few minutes, and review the ground we have trod, and the steps we have endeavoured to make good.—We have considered, that it is a possible thing with GOD to communicate ideas to the human mind—that he can make himself known to be GOD alone that speaks, so as to distinguish himself from all other speakers — that GOD worked on all the best springs of action in the sacred writers, and addressed himself to their fears, hope, gratitude, ambition, glory, shame, and pleasure ; and thus stirred up their minds to write—that he infused the ideas and matter of the scriptures into the  
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minds of the penmen, preserved them free from all mistakes in the histories, the sacred poems, the prophecies, the doctrines, laws, and promises.—And now I do, with real gratitude to GOD rising from the depths of my soul, adore his goodness, mercy, and faithfulness, for conducting me thus far through my work. Blessed, for ever blessed be my divine master, that the MAIN DIFFICULTY in this most delicate and important subject is over; and I trust that every sensible and honest reader will acknowledge, that a rational and satisfying account is given of the true nature of Inspiration.

But there is likewise one great and good man to whom, under GOD, I am more indebted than to all the authors in the world besides. I owe a debt of justice and gratitude to Grotius, for his celebrated book, *de Veritate*, 12mo.—to Dr. Stillingfleet, for his *Origines Sacræ*, 4to.—to Dr. Owen, for his *Treatise on the Divine Original, and self-evidencing Light of the Scriptures*, 12mo. 1658; and his *Reason of Faith*, 8vo.—to the great Halyburton, for his *Dissertation on the Reason of Faith*, 4to. at the end of his book against the Deists—to the amiable and excellent Mr. Benjamin Bennett, for his admirable *Sermons on Inspiration*, 8vo. 1730; with many other worthy divines on this subject. But I owe more to one man than to them all; I found in him  
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what I sought for every where else in vain : and I bless God to eternity, that my wants are most happily supplied by a man of a clear, rational head, of a warm, honest, sound heart, trained up in good learning and religion from his youth ; his judgment and taste matured by age and regular studies of the best kind for noble services in the church of God. In this author I found clear, cool, manly reasoning, without the wildness of enthusiasm, or the least scepticism of infidels : in a word, this worthy man appeared to me to have wrote with design to aid my thoughts in my greatest difficulty ; and I speak with more freedom and copiousness on purpose to recommend him to the best and dearest affections of young students of divinity, who feel their hearts warmed with a generous ambition to be of real use and consequence in the church of God. \*

\* The incomparable work on this subject is intituled, *The Inspiration of the Holy Writings of the Old and New Testament, considered and improved in fourteen sermons, preached at the merchants' lecture at Salter's-Hall, by Edmund Calamy, D. D.*

N. B. These sermons were preached at the Tuesday's lecture, beginning August 22, 1704, and finished March 19, 1706. With grief and indignation I declare, that none of all my friends ever spoke one word concerning this work for above thirty years ; nor did it come into my hands till Saturday, Sept. 21, 1771 : then I found what I had been anxiously seeking for ; but in vain every where else. I laid it down for a rule, from which I would never depart, that I would take nothing upon trust, except my own existence ; and that I would submit to nothing but what convinced my understanding by rational evidence. Such evidence I have sought with all the ardour and sweat of my soul ; and such evidence I have found to my eternal satisfaction and delight. And this is the evidence, my dear reader, which I have proposed to you : and this kind of evidence I will propose to your reason, and your heart, in all the subsequent Contemplations.