

INSPIRATION

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Inspiration by Frederick Watson

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FREDERICK WATSON

INSPIRATION

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BY THE LATE

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VICAR OF ST. EDWARD'S, CAMBRIDGE; HON. CANON OF ELY CATHEDRAL
AND EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF ELY; FORMERLY
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CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY NOTE	iii
I. THE PREFACE	I
II. INSPIRATION, WHAT IT IS—DIFFERENT KINDS OF INSPIRATION—USE OF THE WORD IN HOLY SCRIPTURE— DISTINCTION BETWEEN REVELATION, INSPIRATION, AND THE BIBLE	14
III. HOW ALL TEACHING COMES TO MAN ...	25
IV. WHAT ANALOGY INDICATES AS TO THE GENERAL METHOD OF GOD'S WORKING	39
V. WHAT IS LEARNED BY ANALOGY FROM THE SPECIAL WORKING OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD ...	52
VI. PROOFS OF THE DIVINE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE	58
VII. PROOF FROM THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF SIN	67
VIII. PROOF FROM THE HARMONY OF THE TEACHING ...	74
IX. PROOF FROM THE PURITY OF THE BIBLICAL TEACHING	78
X. PROOF FROM THE ABIDINGNESS OF THE BIBLICAL TEACHING	86
XI. PROOF FROM THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL ...	91
XII. PROOF FROM COMPARISON OF THE RELIGIONS OF BABYLON AND THE BIBLE	103
XIII. PROOF FROM PROPHECY	134
XIV. THE HUMAN ELEMENT IN THE BIBLE	148
XV. THE COMPOSITION OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE A WORK OF MAN	152
XVI. THE CANON AND THE TEXT OF HOLY SCRIPTURE	177
XVII. THE IMPERFECTIONS AND ERRORS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE	189
XVIII. DEGREES IN INSPIRATION	205
XIX. HISTORY OF THE DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION ...	216
XX. CONCLUSION	234

FREDERICK WATSON

ON New Year's Day, 1906, Cambridge lost one of its principal teachers, and the University and Town one of their most prominent members and citizens, when Frederick Watson passed away. His life since he went up to Cambridge forty years ago had revolved round two centres, the cause of the Church of Christ in parochial work and in the teaching of Theology. By these he sought to promote the glory of God and the increase of learning and virtue with a definiteness that gave a marked consistency to a strenuous and vigorous life.

Watson was born in the city of York in 1844, and went to the Cathedral School, St. Peter's College as it is officially designated. His attention was directed principally to Mathematics, and he gained an open Exhibition at St. John's, which was exchanged next year for a Foundation Scholarship.

In his undergraduate days he lived the life of a student, making his Tripos and his religious duties the main business for which he came up.

His Tripos was that of 1868, in which he was placed twelfth. It was a year productive of notable men, no less than four of our Judges being in that Tripos: Moulton (Senior Wrangler), Buckley, Sutton, and Barnes, besides Kennedy, who was Senior Classic.

The Second Wrangler was Sir George Darwin ; the present Astronomer Royal, Christie, was fourth, and the Master of Sidney third, so that it was a remarkably strong year. But Watson immediately turned to Theological studies, taking the Theological examination for Graduates which was afterwards formed into the Theological Tripos : and he won the Hulsean Prize for an Essay on the Ante-Nicene apologies. He then secured in succession the Carus Greek Testament prize, the Crosse scholarship, and the Tyrwhitt Hebrew scholarship, laying the foundations for a most promising academic career. In 1871 he was elected to a Fellowship. He was ordained in 1871 and served the curacy of Stow-cum-Quy, near Cambridge, where he acquired a love for the pastoral work which ever afterwards lay very near his academic interests, even if it was not actually the stronger attraction. He then took the curacy of St. Giles under Francis Slater, whose name is still honoured in Cambridge, and with him Watson had the most intimate mental and spiritual sympathies. As for efficiency, Slater said afterwards when surrounded by three or even more "half-time curates," College Fellows mostly, that the parish was never so well worked as when he and Watson alone were the staff. Money was none too plentiful, and the future had to be provided for, yet Watson's Yorkshire thriftiness did not prevent his expending a sum which came to him while curate, upon a mission room in that parish which no one else came forward to provide. As he had gone up to Cambridge from an Evangelical family a change had in some way been effected in his theological views but inquiries have failed to elicit

any personal sources of influence, and it may be presumed that the tone of Professors Jeremie, Selwyn, Swainson, and Lightfoot, which was effective in Cambridge at that time, was congenial to Watson's temper and led him quietly towards the calm and cautious churchmanship by which Cambridge has been privileged to influence a large number of English Churchmen. But Watson was never an extremist, emphatically never a "Ritualist," for as C. B. D. wrote in the *Church Times*, "he held that ritual divorced from teaching was next to useless, and therefore he used ritual as a means of teaching the Catholic Faith," and though he joined the "English Church Union" he often felt qualms about what was done by that Society, and in the end he felt obliged to leave it.

His Cambridge life was suspended in 1878 when he accepted the College living of Starston in Norfolk: but not for long, as the College required an addition to the Theological staff when the present Master vacated a Lectureship, and Mr. C. W. E. Body went to Canada, and Watson was invited to lecture without leaving Starston. For some years he spent part of the week in College, lecturing in Theology and latterly assisting Mr. Mason in Hebrew. It was an inconvenient arrangement, and he gladly accepted an invitation to be Vicar of Quy in 1887, combining this with his lectures more easily. In 1893 he was appointed by Trinity Hall to be Vicar of St. Edward's, the Church of Maurice and Harvey Goodwin, and became a resident of Cambridge altogether. On the retirement of Mr. Mason in 1904, Watson became principal College lecturer in Hebrew and in Theology, with the further title of Director of Theological Studies

in the College. In the varied occupations of these offices together with those of his parish he was employed, when after several recurrences of exhaustion and heart-trouble he had the seizure on January 1st which laid him on his study-couch and closed his earthly life.

Outside the College, high conscientiousness made his pastoral duties a real "care" to him: the preparation of sermons, frequently two for every Sunday, of addresses and lessons to classes, consumed much energy. All his sermons were prepared with scrupulous attention and delivered with emphasis, and must have drawn considerably on his mental forces. It was in consequence of this, we think we are fully justified in saying, that he was not able to devote time and thought to the laborious historical and critical studies which won favour at Cambridge, and have brought the University into its special position in theology in recent years. He was therefore never elected to a professorship, equipped though he was for studying, lecturing, and writing, with the abilities to which his University record bore witness; and his friends always desired for him the opportunity of leisure and the stimulus afforded by a University Chair. He issued an address to the electors to the Margaret Professorship on the death of Hort, but Lumby secured a wider support.

For University business he had little taste, and instead of it, he took part in such town affairs as bore closely on his duties as one of the town incumbents. In the elementary schools he was keenly interested, and held several laborious offices; and for some years he was one of the local secretaries for S.P.G., and

organized an association for missionary study and intercession. In the diocese his position was recognized by Bishop Alwyne Compton, who conferred upon him one of the honorary canonries of Ely Cathedral, and just before his death Dr. Chase had appointed him one of his Examining Chaplains.

Among his pastoral duties Watson found time—or rather made time—for an extension of his work at St. Edward's by instituting a Sunday afternoon Children's Service designed for the children of households, in all parishes, who were not in the habit of resorting to the ordinary Sunday schools. The response was very encouraging to him, and Sunday by Sunday a large number of the children of University residents and others benefited by his admirable addresses. He never spared himself in preparing them; indeed, he had a special interest in them, and by his keen sympathy with young minds of intelligence and eagerness to learn and know, he won many friends among the boys and girls of Cambridge homes.

Another line of activity was formed by him in the very important part he played in the inception and organization of Cambridge Missions in South London. He was for over twenty years the mainstay of the Lady Margaret Mission in Walworth; between the missionaries, the undergraduates, the people in the district, and the old members of the College he was the principal link—unwearied, hopeful, inspiring.

In his many avocations time was lacking for the production of theology, and Watson's writings do not show what he was capable of doing. They are "The Ante-Nicene Apologies" (his Hulsean Essay), 1870;