

**WHAT IS INSPIRATION?: A
FRESH STUDY OF THE
QUESTION WITH NEW AND
DISCRIMINATIVE REPLIES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649389612

What is inspiration?: A fresh study of the question with new and discriminative replies by John De Witt

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

JOHN DE WITT

**WHAT IS INSPIRATION?: A
FRESH STUDY OF THE
QUESTION WITH NEW AND
DISCRIMINATIVE REPLIES**

WHAT IS INSPIRATION?

*A FRESH STUDY OF THE QUESTION
WITH NEW AND DISCRIMINATIVE REPLIES*

BY

JOHN DE WITT, D.D., LL.D., LITT. D.

A MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN OLD TESTAMENT REVISION COMPANY,
AND FOR MANY YEARS PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL EXEGESIS
IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT NEW BRUNSWICK, N. J.
AUTHOR OF "THE PSALMS; A NEW TRANSLATION WITH
NOTES," ETC.

NEW YORK
ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH
& COMPANY
(INCORPORATED)
182 FIFTH AVENUE

COPYRIGHT, 1893, BY
ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY,
(INCORPORATED).

PRESS OF
EDWARD O. JENKINS' SON,
NEW YORK.

Dedication.

This volume is inscribed to the memory of one who was here when it was planned and large portions of it were written. It has received precious consecration from her deep interest in its purpose and progress, and her pleasure in anticipating its publication. Yet she could not wait for the end, but is gone to the reward of her faithful, patient, loving, self-sacrificing, and gracious life.

PREFACE.

THIS essay is a response to an imperative demand. Any questioning that bears upon the inspiration of the Bible is of like interest and vital importance to all Christians.

The arraignment of two theological Professors for heresy on the ground of their opinions upon this subject, has created great anxiety,—yet not so much the fact of their arraignment, as the vindicatory statements in their defence, and the acceptance of these as satisfactory, if only by a large minority. Opposite decisions have been reached in the lower tribunals, and by many upon both sides the outcome is awaited with apprehension. I am neither a partisan nor an opponent of plaintiff or defendants, and only refer to these proceedings as historic facts that involve principles and results of the deepest concern to us all.

Whatever be the issue as respects the individuals impleaded, it has been claimed and is not denied, that Christian scholarship in this specialty is nearly unanimous in discrediting the *verbal* inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures. It cannot be doubted that unprofessional intelligence will be greatly influenced by those who have studied the documents as experts, and in whose ability, attachment to the Bible, and unimpeachable Christian excellence it has absolute confidence.

It is not at all strange that many are greatly distressed. They have never before had a doubt that

every word of this treasured Book is divine and faultless, and honestly think that the foundations of their faith are destroyed. "What is inspiration," they ask, "that leaves errors behind it?" They demand something positive,—some conception of the grace that has given us the Bible, that shall reassure them against this appalling negation.

In fact, the question is pressed from all sides: "What definition of inspiration will you substitute for that which scholarship has disparaged?" It is vaguely claimed, some will say, by these adepts and their friends, that the Bible, released from the misconceptions that have obscured it, is a grander book than before. But what proof have we of this, and on what intelligible ground can it be claimed that we shall gain more than we lose?

An answer to these appeals must not be refused. For the opinion gains ground and is strongly expressed, that widespread injury will result from these trials and resultant discussions, unless clear, definite, and conclusive statement shall very soon bring relief to those they have disturbed. A prosecutor in the New York case indignantly exclaims: "Is our doctrine to be thrown aside on the demand of a body of critics who have as yet found nothing to put in its place?" *

The same thought is expressed more fully by a writer in a religious journal † in connection with the case of Prof. Smith: "The least that can be demanded is the concession from the Professor and his class of scholars, that this is an unsettled question. The theory is yet in

* Dr. Lampe's reply to Dr. Briggs.

† *The Interior*, Chicago.

the raw. The doctrine has not been wrought out so that one holding it can identify the alleged human from the admittedly divine in Scripture. . . . Has he not run before his tidings were ready? Has he not broken down before he was ready to rebuild? It is undoubtedly true that the question is one of fact, which lies within the field of scientific research; and if it be found to be true, the church will be forced to reconstruct her theory of inspiration."

In a different tone, but assertive of the same necessity, is an article in a leading New York daily journal on the ethics of the Briggs trial. The writer takes a hopeful view of the future. He refers to all that has recently been said and written on the subject—as "embraced in a campaign of education that will in a reasonably short time change the attitude of the whole Christian world toward the Bible," and he expresses his confidence that it will not end in the depreciation of its contents, nor the refusal to regard it as of divine authority. But he speaks emphatically of "the shock which millions of devout people are receiving, as they find that they have put an estimate upon the Bible that is altogether different from what a knowledge of its character and claims will sustain, as greatly to be regretted. . . . The pressure of the heresy trials in the Presbyterian body has hastened the distress of these people, and done nothing to supply the loss which has been caused by partially destroying their confidence in the Bible."

Nothing can be clearer than the obligation of those who have rejected the theory of verbal inspiration, as not in accordance with what they find by the most careful scrutiny of the contents of the Bible, to furnish with the least possible delay a definition that shall re-