

Mount Tabor Record

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NO. 9.

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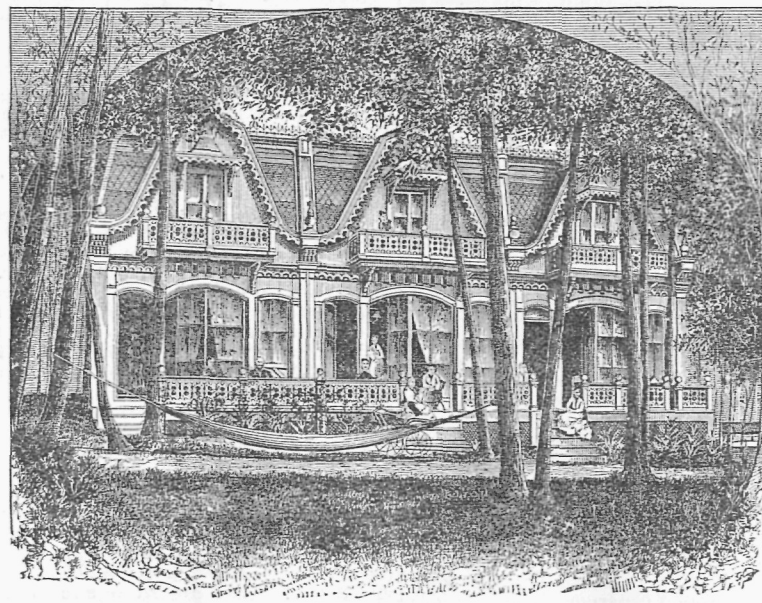
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THE RECORD'S ILLUSTRATIONS.

RESIDENCES OF DR. J. W. COSAD, REV. A. CRAIG AND J. S. RICHARDSON, ESQ.,
Trinity Park, Mt. Tabor.

No property, or more properly properties, on Mt. Tabor, attract more attention and provoke more comment than the dwellings we illustrate to-day. We suppose them to have been built under a tripartite agreement, for they are virtually three in one, the dwellings of Dr. J. W. Cosad, Rev. A. Craig and J. S. Richardson, Esq., of Jersey City. They are neat, compact, and combined as they are form a strikingly handsome appearance.

Their main front is on Trinity Park. We say "main" for in point of fact they have two fronts, the property running through to Wesley Place, a park enclosed by a neat fence, built more for ornament than protection, filling the space from building to Avenue on what would naturally be the rear. This park, which is but just laid out, is traversed by paths laid in blue stone and is destined to be the crowning ornament of the property and of that portion of the Avenue on which it fronts.

As may be imagined the dwellings are furnished in most excellent taste, we may say luxuriantly. They are provided with bath rooms, lavatories and other modern improvements on both floors, and taken as a whole form one of the most prominent and pleasing building features of Tabor.

Friday's Services.

At the morning service Prof. Strong of Drew Seminary, gave the following discourse on the "Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures." We reproduce it in full:

That the Bible is divinely inspired in some sense and to some extent is, of course, the belief of all Christendom. Even if the statement of the Apostle, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," be interpreted to signify only certain portions of Holy Writ and varying degrees of supernatural influence, still the fact of inspiration, be it more or less, is conceded, and therefore need not here be proved. The limitations, however, remain for us to consider. The importance of such a discussion is obvious, for upon this point depend the credit and authority due to the Bible in whatever line it professes to teach and command. The question indeed is fundamental, not only to theology in general, but also to many departments of historical and scientific research upon which the Book directly or indirectly touches at various points. If we hold a vague or dubious position as to the inspiration of the Scriptures we will assuredly take doubtful and untenable ground not only respecting the central doctrines of Christianity, such as the Atonement and future retribution, but we will be equally weak in defending the outlying stations, such as prophecy and miracle, and will especially endanger the allied relations of philosophic and literary truth. The modern contest on this subject rallies, like all the phases of present skepticism, around this problem at the core, namely, how far and in what way we may reconcile as well as distinguish the divine and the human in the Bible. That these two elements coexist there, is evident not only from the current title of the Book, "the Holy Bible," and its traditional place in the church and the world, but from the manifest peculiarities of its contents, such as their unexampled reach into the otherwise unknown, yet singular reticence on curious, romantic and egotistic details, and especially their marvellous and ever-growing hold upon humanity at large; but the compatibility of these elements still continues a puzzle to the profound not less than to the shallow mind, to the believer as well as to the infidel. The difficulty of reconciliation has unfortunately been enhanced by the extreme views too often entertained, whether by friend or foe, of superstitious verbalism on the one hand and of free-thinking sentimentalism on the other. A calm but searching reexamination of the facts in the case, and of their necessary conditions, both linguistic and psychical, is eminently called for by the modern crisis of theological and literary controversy; and we may hope, even in the brief compass of the present paper, to contribute something towards the settlement of this deep-rooted and ever-recurring question. The Bible was written by men; how, then, can it be the word of God? Three theories or positions have in substance been advanced and maintained on the subject, which it will be our aim fairly to state and freely to criticize.

The oldest and perhaps still the most widely prevalent opinion is what is most fittingly designated as the *mechanical* view of inspiration, namely, that the Holy Spirit dictated to the sacred writers the identical words which

they have penned. Thus some of the early Christian fathers, especially Justin Martyr, following the Jewish lead of Josephus, Philo and others, represent the prophets, apostles and evangelists as the "organs" of the divine power, and they use various figures to this effect, such as a musical instrument, the harp, etc. Certain modern authors, particularly, Gausson, are fond of calling the Biblical writers the *amanuenses* of God. It is claimed that the Scriptures themselves favor this view in their phraseology on the subject, e. g. that "men speak as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," that "the word of the Lord came unto them, etc. But a more careful inspection of the language of these sacred and ecclesiastical authorities renders it more than doubtful if they really intended to set forth the view in question; for they elsewhere so qualify their terms and employ such dissimilar phrases and statements as to disprove any idea of mere passivity, much less unconscious possession of the *musical* faculties by diverse influences. The first Christian council that ever pronounced on this topic expressly condemned the idea of any phrenzy on the part of the sacred writers as a heathenish tenet, and the most violent advocates of the mechanical theory continually declaim upon the entire self-possession of the subjects of inspiration and the normal exercise of all their idiosyncracies. The inconsistency of these two positions is indeed apparent at a glance, for if the exact language and the precise form of the Scriptures were directly and imperatively prescribed by the Spirit of God, it is difficult or rather impossible to see what room is left for the personal style of the individual men. The latter have no more choice than the copyist in transcribing or the short-hand notetaker in reporting. Hence the vitiousness of the comparison so frequently made of the sacred writers to scribes inditing a communication made through them, for these have no freedom nor discretion allowed them, nor play of thought or fancy or habit; and the introduction of their own peculiarities would be an unheard of impertinence. The Bible does not so represent inspiration, for in their loftier flights "the spirits of the prophets," are subject to the extraordinary cases at Corinth Paul insists upon full self-control and entire naturalness in the utterance of the Divine communications, especially as to phraseology.

A common name for the mechanical theory is *verbal* inspiration, a phrase which, while perhaps it accurately characterizes the view in question, at the same time exposes its untenableness. In the strict sense words are incapable of inspiration; it is only the *person* who utters them that can properly be said to be inspired. Words are merely signs of ideas, conventionally employed for inter-communication, and consist of visible or audible symbols, such as vibrations of the air, inflections of voice, marks written or printed on paper, etc. In any of these, therefore, inspiration is out of the question. All that can be meant by verbal inspiration "is that the writers or speakers were inspired to use the exact words which they have employed. In a qualified sense every one will admit this, namely, that there

was a divine or providential superintendence over the sacred writers, preserving them from all serious inaccuracy; but this is a very different thing from an absolute and explicit prescription of the identical phraseology, so that no variation or spontaneity should be possible. That this latter was not true in point of fact is evident, not only from the native peculiarities of style exhibited by each individual, as above noticed, but still more conclusively from the imperfections which lie upon the surface of many expressions employed, and which become still more striking when the language is critically examined. There are solecisms in grammar, blemishes in rhetoric, and faults in logic, which we cannot attribute to the Holy Spirit; they are obviously defects arising from the imperfect channel of communication. In short, they are plainly features of human composition, and disclose the origin of the phraseology in which they are imbedded. The same conclusion results from a comparison of the doctrines and even of the historical statements of the various sacred writers: for instance if Paul and James on the subject of justification, whether it be faith or by works, in which they only seem to disagree; or the several Gospel narratives, whether apparent discrepancies occur; or even of the two versions of the decalogue itself, which we do not exactly tally in their verbiage: all such variations must be ascribed to the free play of the human faculties acting under their natural and circumstantial impulses and associations, and they are utterly inconsistent with the theory of direct and minute verbal inspiration. The sacred writers themselves claim no such immediate and explicit dictation of their words. Whatever may have been the case in a few special communications which the prophets and the apostles orally made, the books as we now have them, were certainly composed in private by their authors in the ordinary way of human literature, saying, of course the general divine guidance which they everywhere assume. Neither Moses in his autograph of the law, nor David in his titles to the Psalms; neither Isaiah in his poetical flights, nor Ezra in his editorial labors; neither Luke in his prefaces, nor John in his Apocalypse, neither evangelist in his record, nor apostle in his letter, gives the slightest countenance to the idea that the particular words which they wrote were prescribed to them by special divine suggestion.

At this point it is essential that we draw two distinctions, which, important and obvious as they are, have often been strangely overlooked in this discussion. The first is the difference between revelation and inspiration, i. e. between the communication of unknown and otherwise undiscoverable truth to the sacred writers, and the disclosure of that truth to others. Not all which the Bible contains is revealed; much of its information was known to the writers by the ordinary means of experience, observation and reflection, and the natural faculties of memory, judgment and imagination were sufficient to bring it to mind when needed. But the Bible is all inspired, even those passages which relate to the most common affairs. What Moses rehearses concerning his own life and labors is as truly inspired as what he discloses concerning the creation of the world, although the knowledge was derived by him from very different sources; and what the apostles record of their Master's life and sayings is just as much inspired as their epistles for the guidance of the church. The Revelator saw all the visions equally, but some of them he was forbidden to divulge; and Pharaoh had revelations in dreams which only Joseph could interpret, and which neither of them was inspired to write. The second distinction therefore which we must bear in mind is the difference between the original affluence which enabled the prophets and the apostles to utter their teachings orally, and the later influence which qualified them to write down what they have left on record. We are treating of the inspiration of the Bible as a book, and not of the men, whether the same or others, who spoke or did what is therein recited. Some of the latter possessed the gift of prophecy and super-natural insight, and others did not; some of the things related required preternatural information, and others did not; but all equally needed divine guidance as to what and where and how the *writing* should be. For example, Paul was just as much inspired to tell Timothy to send on his cloak from Troas, as in any of his directions for the government of the church under his care; but the previous spiritual authority requisite for the latter was not needed for the former. Paul himself explicitly refers to this difference between what he enjoins as of divine appointment, and what he advises as of his own judgment; yet in both he was equally directed by a divine impulse as to whether he should or should not say it, and as to the manner of his saying

it. There are a great variety of common place matters in the Bible; but these are not on that account any the less there by divine appointment. Among all the mass of things present to the sacred writers minds at the moment of writing, whether stored up by their own powers or gathered from any external source, be it human or divine, be it in the past or just then occurring, they needed, and they experienced, minute supernatural guidance as to what to include and what to exclude, and also in what spirit and aspect to state it. This we understand by the inspiration of the Scriptures, and it applies equally and truly to every portion of them. This cuts up, root and branch, all the fanciful distinctions, made by the Jews and some of their Christian imitators, between the inspiration of the law and that of the Prophets, between the words of Jesus and those of Paul, between the record of Matthew or John and that of Mark or Luke, between the books of a noted prophet and those of an obscure or unknown writer in the canon, between the essential and the incidental declarations of Scripture. Whatever may have been their original source or their degree of revelation, they all now stand precisely on a level of authority as parts of Holy Writ, since they were finally penned, as we have them, under exactly the same influence of the Holy Spirit. This view of the case also eliminates many elements of difficulty from the whole discussion and prepares us to examine more distinctly the real question at issue.

We return therefore to the main point by asking, did the inspiration of the Biblical writers extend so far as to prescribe the particular words employed by them? We answer in the negative, for the following reasons besides the above. In the first place we gain nothing of any value for the Holy Scriptures by making such a demand upon the faith of their recipients. All that we need in this regard for their successful circulation and evangelical or scientific use is the maintenance of the entire truthfulness and paramount authority of their contents; their verbal minutiae may safely be left to critical, lexical and grammatical investigation as being of human origin and therefore of secondary importance and relative accuracy. Nay we greatly hamper the latter modes of inquiry, if we do not altogether supersede them, by claiming the direct and explicit dictation by the Holy Spirit of the very words under inspection. It is sufficient if the facts, principles and doctrines set forth in the Bible are true and of divine sanction, without undertaking to show that the precise language is also of celestial origin and supernatural perfection. The infidel will certainly worst us in any encounter on the latter ground, but the former is impregnable. The day is past for repeating the folly of teaching that even the Hebrew vowel points are inspired, or that the New Testament Greek is of classical purity. Protestants may be content with averring that the Bible is the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice, without holding it up as a paragon of rhetorical or linguistic faultlessness. Beautiful and forceful as it usually is, often exquisitely so, yet it was not designed as a text book or model of style or language. It has a far higher aim and a wider plan as a guide of human belief and conduct. We can therefore afford to overlook these microscopic blemishes, which after all serve to bring it closer to our human sympathies and to develop our faith and diligence. There is still enough left of the divine in its guise and fashioning to distinguish it from every other book on earth, and to excite our warmest admiration even as a literary production.

In the second place, if the inspiration of the Bible consists in the prescription of the precise words in which they are couched, no translation can with any propriety be said to be inspired; and as comparatively few can read the original languages, it necessarily ceases to be the word of God to the mass of mankind. This would be a very grievous misfortune. It is idle to say that the meaning is retained and transferred; not a single word is the same. At this point all the advocates of verbal inspiration are guilty of a tergiversation and equivocation unworthy of the holy book. They silently shift their position to an asseveration of the identity of thought and idea, but the language is certainly and wholly changed so as to be utterly undistinguishable to the vast majority of readers. The Mohammedans may consistently refuse to have the Koran in any but the Arabic original, for they maintain its verbal inspiration and point to its phraseology as the one miracle of its author; but it is frivolous and suicidal in these days of Bible Societies, of missionary activity and of revision labors to set up any such preposterous plea for the text of Scripture. Nay more, we cannot be sure that we have the *ipsissima verba* of the Hebrew, Chaldee or Greek original in any extant manuscript or edition; the myriads of various readings, while indeed they do not—all put together—affect in the slightest degree the truth of any doctrine, nor essentially vary the purport of any important passage, do nevertheless wholly invalidate in thousands of cases the certainty of the identical words. If the autographs had been written and not merely dictated by God himself, it would have been a useless task, without a miraculous tran-

scription of all the copies, and an inspired translation into every human tongue. Nobody nowadays pretends these last, and it is equally vain to claim the former.

Such confusion and misconception on this subject has been occasioned by the assertion that we are incapable of thought without language, and that therefore the words of Scripture are an essential part of their inspiration. This is simply an error. We often have ideas which we cannot put into words, nor adequately express in any way. It is the commonest thing in the world to say, and to say truly, "I am at a loss for words to convey my meaning." It is equally a mistake to suppose that the Holy Spirit cannot communicate thought without at the same time dictating language. We often express ideas by signs merely. The very brutes tell each other and even us what is passing in their mind (so to speak) without articulate speech. The Bible itself repeatedly speaks of the Holy Spirit as inspiring the believer with emotions and sentiments that cannot be uttered. It is a precious privilege for human beings to exchange mute signals, and sometimes even unconsciously to affect one another with new impressions. All nature speaks to us without a tongue, and God talks with the devout soul chiefly in silent communings. It is absurd and almost impious to limit the Holy One to language in the communication of his will. It is true that the reduction of thought to language compels us to greater exactness in its expression, but we may easily give another a conception to be communicated to a third party in his own terms. In such a case its essence is still to be credited to its original source, while the final form is the product of the channel through which it has passed. The invention may be patented, but the trade mark is separately copyrighted.

There is nevertheless a sense in which the words of Holy Scripture may be said to be inspired, and thus the Bible becomes truly the word of God; but it is only so because its language conveys the mind of the Spirit, and has been guarded in its utterance by a special inward providence. This is quite different from affirming a direct and exact dictation or suggestion of the very words employed. In short we use a rhetorical figure—called *metonymy*, by which something is predicated of a subject, which is strictly attributable only to something else closely related to it or associated with it. It is the thought that is properly inspired, and the words naturally follow.

Another objectionable expression frequently employed in lieu of verbal is "plenary inspiration" as applied to the Bible. This is not a Scriptural phrase, nor is it a correct one. It is not only weighted with all the difficulties named against "verbal inspiration," but it has other serious ones of itself. The principal objection is that it implies far more than is true or than can be substantiated. No man was ever plenary inspired except the Lord Jesus, and he wrote nothing now extant, nor are we sure that we have his identical words even in the gospels. Yet he declined to reveal much that he knew, and on some subjects he actually pleaded ignorance in his subordinate capacity as the Messiah. The prophets and apostles certainly advanced no claim that they knew everything, not even on the topics of which they wrote; on the contrary they often speak quite diffidently in some respects, and they omit—whether from ignorance or design—very much that we would like to know. Their information was necessarily limited, and their range of thought and apprehension was in a multitude of cases evidently very narrow. It is quite enough for us to maintain their substantial accuracy on the matter which they have actually declared, without undertaking to prove that they were plenary inspired in anything. They wrote what they were directed to write and nothing more. They needed and they took no further liberty than to exercise their godly discretion as to the manner and language of their communications in the divine name. Inspiration, beyond the subject matter selected and the general form of its presentation would have been as superfluous as incongruent. God never does for a man what he can do for himself; he certainly works no gratuitous miracles, nor bestows any plenary gifts upon mortals. Christians greatly weaken their cause by such super-orthodoxy; the soundest theologians have never thus exposed themselves, and the best divines have wisely abstained from the use of superlative or extravagant language on this subject.

Diametrically opposed to the mechanical theory of inspiration is what may appropriately be called the *rationalistic* view, which not only denies that the words of Scripture are in any peculiar sense inspired, but makes such a low estimate of the divine influence present with the sacred writers as to admit that they may have fallen into actual error in what they have written. The advocates of this theory range all the way from the cautious and comparatively evangelical school, who restrict the possibility of error in Holy Writ to what they term important or immaterial points, such as scientific or secular matters, but vigorously defend the accuracy of the Bible on moral and religious questions, down to the broad class of free-thinkers, who maintain that the Scriptural writers were liable to mistake in everything, that in short they were on a plane little if any higher than the mental or spiritual exaltation of any good and enlightened man now-a-days, especially in his favored moments of sacred communings; in a word they fluctuate between the thinly disguised latitudinarianism of such critics as Schleiermacher, Stanley and Bushnell, and the semi-irreligiosity of such authors as Ewald, Colenso and Robertson Smith. The Broad-church party in Great Britain, and the New England wing in America are thoroughly tainted with this laxity of opinion on the subject of inspiration, and it is the core of their cancer, which, as we have intimated, diffuses its *pyæmia* through their whole theological system. Its symptoms are as varying and insidious as those of malaria, but the infection everywhere shows itself in an unloosening of the hold of the Bible upon the convictions and reverence of its patients. The Word of God becomes practically the mere word of man, and is treated in a like cavalier manner. Its so-called blunders, imperfections and discrepancies are magnified and paraded in contrast with the precision of modern science and literature; and wherever the two seem to come into conflict, the Bible of course is wrong and must give way before the superior light and truth of arctological, philosophic or aesthetic discovery. It is only the old story in another

phase—making void the divine word through human tradition; not now Rabbinic or Catholic or Romish superstition, but none the less a subtle trickery of man's self-conceit. This set of men speak indeed with external respect of the Bible, and often bestow great labor upon its philology, its history and its other literary aspects; but they never develop its *hypnopia* or inner meaning—that which addresses the soul and they ignore its spiritual power. To them it is a mere volume like that of Herodotus or Homer or Æschylus, to be discussed, explained, dissected and corrected as any other purely human composition. Such a view of Scripture does not meet the wants of the heart of man, and can never satisfy the ends of a divinely sanctioned code for the pious individual or the Christian church. The instincts of the regenerate soul will forever reject it as a "cunningly devised tale," and will feel that in the Bible "we have a more sure word" of sacred instruction than this theory leaves to us.

There is neither room nor occasion here to recite the general arguments in favor of an infallible canon of Scripture, much less to detail the proofs of the claim of each book to a place in it; we can only point to a few considerations which go to show the essential defectiveness and inconclusiveness of the latitudinarian view of inspiration. The practical difficulty in applying it is shown in the great discrepancy above noted in the extent to which it has been carried by its votaries; they agree in scarcely anything except their destructive tendency. Who shall decide what is essential or important in the Scriptures, so as to confine inspiration to that part? Who can say what fact, or statement or principle belongs to the moral, the religious or the ecclesiastical sphere, so that it shall come within the purview of the divine Spirit? The most trivial circumstance or casual intimation often turns out to be of signal value and significance in settling some vitally interesting question in ethics and spiritual economy, no less than in history and science. Any discrimination of this kind must be arbitrary and fluctuating. Every man will thus accept what he pleases, and an objective rule of faith becomes wholly impossible. The purpose of revelation is defeated, and inspiration itself is a chimera. Moreover if we are at liberty to discredit one passage or declaration of the Bible, we are equally free to doubt any and every one; nay, we cannot help doing so more or less, and we soon come to lose all confidence in the truth of the word of God. This is actually the effect of the position in question: its whole bearing is pernicious, and only the sentiments engendered by early associations or by professional interests preserves its votaries from an outright rapture with an outthrust. Such views are antagonistic to a deep religious experience, and they are the ally of popular unbelief. They tend both logically and practically to exclude God from his own Book. This theory of inspiration, if such it can be called, denies rather than solves the problem of the union of the divine and human elements in the Bible; it cuts the knot which it cannot untie. It fails by adopting the other alternative from the verbal theory, which virtually eliminates the human agency, as this does the divine. It is hard to say which horn of the dilemma goes the worst. We seek a channel safe from either extreme.

A mediating line between these opposite dangers has already been indicated in this discussion, and it remains for us more distinctly to develop it. It is known as the *dynamic* theory of inspiration, and it consists in maintaining that while the substance of Scripture is of divine prescription, and therefore of paramount authority, its particular form and verbiage are of human origin, and consequently subject to the ordinary imperfections of earthly productions. In general terms, we may say that the meaning is inspired and the language spontaneous. This view alone meets the facts in the case, and harmonizes the otherwise incompatible elements. It is moreover in keeping with all the other spiritual experiences of the soul which are uniformly in the line of normal activity, however supernaturally induced; the power is of God, but the faculties or operations are those of man. In regeneration, for example, the emotions are consciously and characteristically human; yet they are the effect of a hidden divine influence; and in sanctification likewise the habits are personal traits and exertions, while they are at the same time the result throughout of heavenly grace. The whole Gospel scheme is a system of divine and human co-operation, and this synergism prevails no less in the external than in the internal sphere of salvation; it eminently distinguishes the Bible from all other books, whether profane or professedly sacred. Its inspiration is neither the unconscious raving of the Delphic oracle, nor the spontaneous rapture of poetic genius, but a calm enthusiasm, which intelligently utters the mind of the spirit. God supplies whatever is essential to making known his will in a way consistent with his deliberate purpose, but he does not override nor supersede the usual methods of each messenger's expression. Had he seen fit, he might have commissioned an angel to deliver his truth directly from the skies, as he did on Sinai; or he might have written it, as he did the Decalogue, with his own finger on tablets of enduring material; but he has preferred to entrust the treasure to earthen vessels, in order that in the end the excellency might be the more evidently of God. Probably the sacred writers themselves could have given no more intelligible account of their own inspiration than this, that they were actuated and guided in general in their writing by a divine impulse, but expressed themselves freely in their usual style. More than this would have degraded them to automata, and would have robbed them of the sympathy of their fellow-men as readers. The beautiful play of divine light and human shade would have been wanting in the picture of truth, the variety and delicacy of natural taste and temperament would have been marred, and a constraint thrown over the Book, leaving it stiff and repulsive. Even its blemishes contribute to its usefulness by trying the patience, eliciting the diligence and testing the candor of its readers. While the word is sufficiently plain that no one need err therein, it is not so clear that none can blunder. God's great design is to cultivate our faith, and he writes no lesson so as to render this superfluous. We must ever take heed how we read, as well as what we read. For this reason He has chosen human channels of communication, with all their peculiarities, defects and liabilities; and he has only con-

trolled, supplemented and energized them so as to obviate fatal damage. What the men already knew, if sufficient for his purpose, he simply adopted and authorized; and what they did not know, it essential to the end in view, he preternaturally furnished. The writers themselves must be preserved from error in their conceptions of the truth to be communicated, but it was neither possible nor desirable to protect them from so expressing it that they could not be misunderstood. We must therefore exercise our best judgment in expounding their meaning, assured that when we have really and undoubtedly ascertained it we have attained a correct and trustworthy knowledge in the case. We have thus, we trust, reached an effectual and satisfactory solution of the problem with which we set out, namely, to discriminate between the divine and the human in sacred scripture, and although neither here nor anywhere can we trace the connection of these two elements to its ultimate *veritas*, yet we have arrived at a conclusion, which, while it conserves all that is important in the authority of Holy Writ, at the same time dissipates the incongruity attaching to crude conceptions and unscientific positions on the subject.

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