

sumption is the very opposite of the truth. Theologians and ordinary Christians do not regard and treat the language of Scripture as scientific. No respectable authority can be quoted in support of that idea, while authors without number might be mentioned who assert the opposite. And there is, moreover, no exigency of theological systems, which should tempt theologians to treat the language of Scripture as scientific.

We may also assert, with equal confidence, that they regard and treat the language of the Bible as *literary*. Literature embraces many different styles of composition, each of which can be employed to convey clear and distinct ideas of truth and fact, and each of which should be interpreted according to its own laws—poetry as poetry, prose as prose, parables as parables, historical narratives as history, and statutory enactments as laws. It is admitted that mistakes may have occasionally been made both as to the nature of a given composition, and the laws, or the application of the laws, for its interpretation. To err is human. But to assert that divines, either designedly or habitually, treat the language of the Bible as *scientific*, is to make an affirmation “which cannot be verified.”

The inspiration of Scripture does not destroy the literary character of the language. No one surely can dream that the language of a composition ceases to be literary, because it is free from mistake.

Are we then agreed with Matthew Arnold on the interpretation of Scripture? By no means. He tells us that the language is not only literary, but *passing* and *fluid*, and *fluids* are proverbially *unstable*.

His real object in insisting that the language of Scripture is not *scientific*, but *literary*, is to prove that the Scriptures do not teach definite truth, or fact, beyond what we can verify by our *experience*. And, of course, we can have no certain knowledge of God, or of the mysteries of redemption. We can never get beyond observed *phenomena*.

This position can be maintained, only if it can be shown that the language of common life and literature which we find in the Bible is unable to convey truth clearly and definitely. This no