

to earth and prevent it from becoming wholly ethereal. They are like the occasional ground wires in the electric system of the telegraph. Most of it is in the air, but these are necessary to complete the circuit. It is utterly absurd to argue that because these occasional touches are literally true the whole of it is intended to be so and must be interpreted accordingly.

What is true of the hundred and fourth psalm is equally true of that other poem of creation in the first chapter of Genesis. The proportion of actual fact that may be discovered in it is probably greater. But to insist on its scientific accuracy or to devise ingenious methods for harmonizing it with science, either ancient or modern, is to mistake the whole purpose for which it was written, and raise imaginary problems through our own stupidity.

There are perhaps no portions of the Bible where these principles need to be more carefully kept in mind than in the interpretation of the prophecies. The prophets were men of poetic mould who were given deep insight into the future through their entire sympathy with the principles of God's moral government of the world. They saw the future, however, not as it was to be in itself but under the forms of things they knew, somewhat as other men's dreams are made out of the stuff of their waking thoughts, though often somewhat fantastically mixed. When stripped of their poetic form the ideas underlying them are few in number—national ruin and disaster as the issue of persistent sin, national repentance as the fruit of their chastisement, national restoration by the mercy of a gracious God, national exaltation through the coming of the Messiah. But just as all the music in the world can be played on the four strings of the violin, so every kind of poetic vision can be built up with these four ideas, through the prophets' imagination. From the very nature of the case some of the details must come literally true. But to insist therefore that all shall be so is simply to miss his point of view, and misunderstand the whole purpose for which he spake. Of course the apocalypses of the New Testament must be treated by the same method as the prophecies of the Old.