

variety like Falstaff's recruits, as they have been marshalled by what is so incorrectly termed "Christian Consciousness," opinions which are in harmony neither with each other nor with the Bible. The great and honored men I have named have not so abused this theory of degrees of inspiration; but I think it must be patent to all, that logically it leads to this, that by it every man can make out of the Bible his own God, his own method of salvation, and his own preconceived view of human destiny; and for poor, distressed humanity the Bible becomes more uncertain than the Delphic oracles.

4th. This leads to the mention of one more erroneous view, which lies in the opposite direction to the views already named, and is known technically as *the mechanical theory*. Previous theories have subtracted from the authority of the Bible. This needlessly adds an element of superstition, which this age of all ages will least tolerate. It makes the sacred writers the mere pen, and, in many instances, the unconscious instrument in the hands of the Almighty. Such a theory silences all criticism, and demands a blind, unquestioning submission. It is a theory now held by no representative theologian that I know of, although at the Reformation it became enshrined in one of the most important Protestant creeds, the *Helvetic Consensus Formula*, which went so far as to assert the inspiration of the very Hebrew vowel points, whose introduction most eminent Hebraists locate later than the seventh century of the Christian era.

It is significant, however, that this mechanical theory, which is now generally abandoned, is thus favorably referred to by Bellows, an eminent authority in American Unitarianism, who candidly says: "The ordinary popular view of religious inspiration, which makes man the mere tool or pipe of the Almighty, with all its mechanical defects, is, after all, truer to the reality of the case than the so-called advanced view, which confounds inspiration with the possession of superior natural insight and purer gifts of mind and heart."

The view which commends itself to me I will now strive to indicate, not by any formal definition nor technical terms, but by specifying the elements which it involves.