



THE BIBLE
AND HOW TO
INTERPRET
IT

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D. O. TEASLEY

The Bible **and** **How to Interpret It**

By
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Preface

The Bible is the greatest book in the world. Ever since there has been a Bible, men have endeavored to fathom its unfathomable depths of knowledge. What we do know of the Bible is so extremely satisfying that we constantly thirst for more.

Even though no man has ever known all about the Bible, yet we never tire in our efforts to understand it.

This work is one more effort to explain the Bible as a book, and to place within the reader's grasp the laws that govern its interpretation. It is not at all probable that I have exhausted a subject so great as The Bible and How to Interpret It, yet I feel confident that the contents of this volume, gathered through years of study and experience in teaching the Bible, will prove a blessing to those who need assistance in the study of God's Word.

The subject-matter of this book is not new. I have gathered information from every source available to me, and have used it freely. I am especially indebted to an excellent little treatise on Biblical Hermeneutics, translated from the French by Elliott and Harsha, for information contained in Part 2.

With a sincere prayer that this book may be of assistance to students of the Bible, I am

Yours for truth,

D. O. Teasley

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Part I

The Bible as a Book

Chapter I

Name

Bible.—The word “Bible,” by which God’s word is known today, comes from the Greek word *Biblos*. The Greek word originally meant the inner bark of the linden, or teil tree, from which papyrus, or writing-paper, was prepared. Since the papyrus, or prepared bark, was used in writing the ancient roll or book, the word *Biblos*, following the natural growth or expansion of language, soon came to mean not only the bark of the linden tree and the writing-paper prepared from it, but also the roll, or written book, composed of the papyrus. Our word Bible, following another well-defined law of language by which words contract and lose their old meanings, no longer means papyrus, or paper, nor books in general, but one specific book—the Book of God’s word.

Holy Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15).—“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” The terms “scriptures” and “holy scriptures,” often used in the Bible, here mean literally, the holy writings. The word “scripture” is used to

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mean a single quotation (see Luke 4:21), “And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” But “scriptures” used collectively includes all the inspired books of the Bible.

Testament, or Covenant.—The word “Testament,” or “Covenant,” goes beyond the meaning of the words “scripture” or “book” and conveys an idea of the character of the writings or book referred to. The Bible is permeated with the idea of a covenant between man and God. God first made a covenant with Noah, then with Abraham, with Isaac, and Jacob, with the Israelites, and finally with all men through Christ. The Old Testament includes all the books of the Bible from Genesis to Malachi inclusive, and the New Testament includes those from Matthew to the Revelation, inclusive.

Chapter II

Form

Oral Traditions.—Such knowledge as men possessed of God previously to the giving of the law from Sinai, was possibly transmitted orally from father to son. Even the law given to Moses was first communicated unto him orally, for we read, “And God spake all these words, saying” (Exod. 20:1), the words of the law following. The gospel was first communicated to the disciples by word of mouth. “And he [Jesus] opened his mouth and taught them” (Matt. 5:2).

Tables of Stone.—The first written form of God’s word to man was the two tables of stone containing the Ten Commandments, given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. “And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God” (Exod. 31:18).

The Ancient Roll.—The ancient writing-paper was made from the bark of a tree, the skins of animals, or similar material. Upon this crude paper the scribes copied by hand the law and the prophets. The written copy was then rolled on two stakes, or rods, so that the reader could unroll it from one and roll it on to the other. Even in the days of Christ and the apostles printing was unknown.

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Manuscripts.—Even the Gospels, Paul's letters, and other writings that now compose our New Testament were formerly written on papyrus or parchment and made into a roll, or more often fastened together at the upper left-hand corner of the pages much like we would prepare a manuscript for the printer.

None of our translations of the classics have back of them such a wealth of MSS. as our New Testament.

The oldest complete MSS. of Homer in our possession date from the thirteenth century A.D. All that we know of Sophocles' writings comes from a single MS. of the eighth century. But of the New Testament we have in all nearly four thousand MSS. Many of the MSS. contain only parts of our New Testament, but we have a few copies of the entire New Testament, some of them dating back as far as the fourth century.

Printed Book.—The first printed books of the Bible appeared in the early part of the sixteenth century. The first printed edition of the New Testament was Tindale's version, published by William Tindale in 1525 A.D. The first printed version of the whole Bible was published by Miles Coverdale in 1535 A.D.

In the nearly four hundred years that have elapsed since the publication of Tindale's and Coverdale's books, many and important changes have been made in printing and bookbinding, and even the English language itself has greatly changed; but no change has been made in the general form of the Bible.

Chapter III

Language

Most naturally, the Bible was written in the language most prevalent among the people to whom it was originally given. Hence, those books of the Old Testament written prior to the time of Ezra were written in Hebrew. Long before the birth of Christ, however, Aramaic, the language of Aram, a district including northern Mesopotamia, Syria, and a large part of Arabia Petraea, had become the prevailing language of the Jews. At the time of Christ, the old Hebrew language had been supplanted by Aramaic as the language of the people, and Hebrew was known to the scholars only. In the days of Christ and his disciples, therefore, the Jewish people in general did not speak Hebrew, but Aramaic, which was the language of the common people.

Ezra 4:8; 6:12; 7:12-26; Dan. 2:4; 7:28 and Jeremiah 10:11 only were not written in Hebrew. These were written in Aramaic. All the other books of the Old Testament were written in Hebrew.

At the time the New Testament was written, Greek had become the universal language of literature throughout the Roman Empire. The New Testament was therefore written in Greek. Even the Old Testament had been translated into Greek previously to the birth of

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Christ. The Greek translation of the Old Testament was the one used by the apostles.

Hebrew, Chaldee, and Greek, then, are the languages in which the Bible was originally written. Had the Bible remained in the form and in the languages in which it was first given to man, none but scholars would now, and during much of the time since its writing, have access to its holy teachings; but it has been translated and retranslated until the literature of every important language on earth includes the Book of God.

Chapter IV

Authorship

The Bible is preeminently the Book of God; he is its author, yet it was written by men, and in some senses man is its author. God, through his Spirit, so operated upon the minds of men that they conceived the thoughts of God and recorded those thoughts for the enlightenment and guidance of mankind. Just how God and man were associated in the transmission of divine truth is the subject, not of authorship, but of inspiration. Suffice it to say here that the great stream of Bible truth starts from God, its fountainhead, and flows through inspired men, its channel.

The number of men used of God in writing the books that now compose our Bible is not definitely known, but scholars have estimated that between thirty-five and forty men have had a part in the writing of that wonderful Book.

It is estimated, too, that from the time the first book was written until the writing of the last one, there elapsed a period of about fifteen hundred years.

Chapter V

Canon

Definition.—The canon of scripture means the complete collection of the books that are accepted as of Divine authority. Those ancient religious writings among both Jews and Christians that are not considered as of divine authority are designated by the word “Apocrypha.” “Canon” and “Apocrypha” are directly opposite in meaning. A particular book is spoken of as either canonical or apocryphal, the former meaning that it is genuine, the latter that it is uninspired.

Method.—Canon is not the result of human legislation or of any decisive action on the part of priest or ecclesiastic; it is the result of a gradual growth. Books have not been put into the canon of Scripture by ecclesiastical authority; all it could do was to express approval of those books that, by their tested value to the human soul, had gradually won recognition as divine.

Old Testament Canon.—The fixing of the canon, having been a gradual process, no exact date for its settlement can safely be given, but it is highly probable that the canon of the Old Testament was practically fixed at the time the Hebrew scriptures were translated into Greek—about two hundred and seventy years before the birth of Christ. As early as 457 B.C. Ezra made an arrangement

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of the Hebrew scriptures that contained nearly all of the books of the Old Testament as we have it today. The books of Nehemiah and Malachi, however, were not in existence at the time of Ezra's compilation; hence those books were later added to the canon. It seems reasonably clear, then, that the canon of the Old Testament was practically fixed sometime between 457 B.C. and 277 B.C.

New Testament Canon.—The settlement of the New Testament canon, like that of the Old Testament, was a gradual process. Each book was tried—not only by the usual methods of ascertaining the genuineness of a book, but in the fires of human need and experience. Beginning with the Gospels and then adding the Pauline epistles, the Acts, the general epistles, and the Apocalypse (Revelation) a collection of sacred Christian writings grew into a divine unit. Finally, those books which bore all the other marks of genuineness and apostolicity, and besides, proved their divinity by their appeal to and satisfaction of the Christian consciousness, were accepted as divine. In other words, the divine in man—his need of and craving for God and eternal life—could be satisfied by those books, and by those books only, that had been inspired by God, the only source of immortality and eternal life.

The canon of the New Testament was not settled until three or four hundred years after the birth of Christ. Although many of the books of the New Testament were afterward disputed, the Council of Carthage in 397 A.D. published a list of books, then considered as genuine, which contained all the books of the New Testament as we have them today.

At different times down through the Christian era the genuineness of certain books of the New Testament has been attacked and is still attacked by unbelieving and biased critics; even the friends of the New Testament have sometimes feared the

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onslaughts of its enemies; but, in spite of the attacks of enemies and the fears of friends, every book in the canon still holds its place, unmoved and unshaken. To those who will honestly investigate, every book of the New Testament holds unmistakable proof of its divinity.

Chapter VI

The Apocrypha

“Apocrypha” is the term applied to those religious writings that have not proved themselves worthy of a place in the canon. They are interesting to us as history, in some instances, but probably their chief value lies in their affording a striking contrast to our canonical books. For the most part, the New Testament Apocrypha is made up of myths and unbelievable nonsense.

Old Testament Apocrypha.—The apocryphal books of the Old Testament may be found in the Septuagint (LXX) Version, the Latin Vulgate, and in the Douay Bible—the authorized Bible of the Roman Catholic Church. The unguineness of the Old Testament Apocryphal books will appear to the Christian mind when we consider that out of about two hundred and sixty-three direct quotations and about three hundred and seventy-six other allusions to the Old Testament writings, found in the New Testament, not one of them is from the Apocrypha.

Following is a list of the fourteen books of the Old Testament Apocrypha:

1 Esdras

2 Esdras

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Tobit

Judith

Parts of the Book of Esther

The Wisdom of Solomon

Ecclesiasticus

Baruch

The Song of the Three Holy Children

The History of Susanna

Bel and the Dragon

The Prayer of Manasses

1 Maccabees

2 Maccabees

New Testament Apocrypha.—The Apocryphal books of the New Testament are too manifestly spurious and too unimportant to deserve extended mention.

Chapter VII

How Our Bible Came to Us

The Bible as we have it today is one of the great miracles of the ages. Starting from the great fountainhead of all things Divine—The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the stream of revealed truth has, by means of its divinely appointed human channel, flowed down through the ages of past history to where we stand today. During the Old Testament period the channel of truth was often so narrow that only a very small stream could flow through to man; but with the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the uniting of the world in the Roman Empire, and the universality of the Greek language, the channel suddenly widened and the truth intended for “every creature” of “all nations” flowed triumphantly on.

During the Dark Ages, from the fifth to the sixteenth centuries of the Christian era, Satan again succeeded in narrowing the channel of truth; the Bible was practically taken from the masses by a misguided clergy who were too steeped in ignorance and superstition to publish the truth they possessed. Beginning with the sixteenth century, however, the channel of God’s revealed word has been cut wide and straight and deep. Now we are blessed above all people of all times, for the healing stream of gospel truth flows out to all the world, and soon the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. We now have reason to believe,

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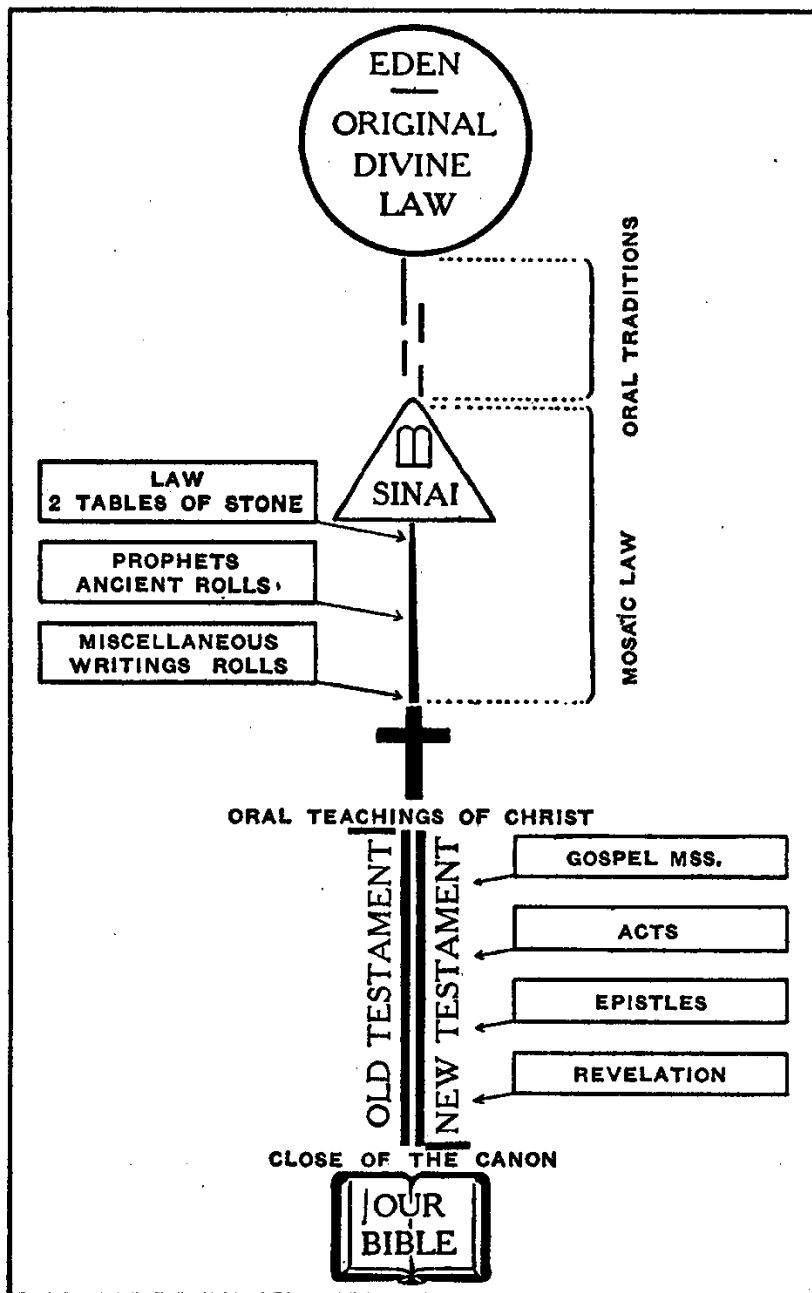
too, that this river shall flow on until man no longer needs its healing power, and its identity is lost in the wide sea of eternity.

But how the truth in its present form came to us—how we got our volume, the Bible, is the question we want answered. Of course, our Bible can have only the remotest relation to the ancient oral traditions and the Tables of Stone delivered to Moses. The Revised Version of our Bible—probably the most perfected version of revealed truth ever given to man—is derived immediately from two sources: the ancient manuscripts and the early versions. Archeology also has indirectly contributed many valuable side-lights to our translators. When we speak of the MSS. of the Bible, it must be remembered that none of the original autograph copies have been preserved. Our MSS. are careful copies of those lost originals.

Ancient Manuscripts of the Old Testament.—The few existing Hebrew MSS. of the Old Testament that have come down to us show unmistakable signs of untiring diligence and painstaking care in the ancient copyists of the Hebrew scriptures. The earliest MSS. of the Old Testament are (1) the latter prophets, dated 916 A.D., and (2) the entire Old Testament, 1010 A.D. Both of these MSS. are preserved in the Library of Leningrad, Russia. Between the days of Ezra, the great Hebrew scribe and compiler of ancient times, and these MSS. there is a gulf of about 1,500 years. Though we cannot follow the stream of Old Testament MSS. backward as near to their original source as we can that of the New Testament, the precision and exactness of the MSS. we do have convince us that the Hebrew scriptures have been preserved by their divine author and handed down to us exceptionally pure.

Versions of the Old Testament.—The Babylonian captivity resulted in a change of the popular language of the Jews from the ancient Hebrew to Aramaic. This necessitated a translation of the

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Scriptures into the popular tongue. For a long time, these translations, or Targums, as they were called, were used orally only, but finally they were written down.

The Septuagint is among the earliest known versions of the Old Testament Scriptures, and the copy of it now in the Vatican at Rome is the oldest known MS. of the Old Testament. This translation into Greek was made for the Great Alexandrian library early in the third century B.C. Tradition says that the Septuagint was translated by seventy-two Jews, six from each of the twelve tribes, sent to Alexandria by Eleazar at the request of Demetrius Plalareus, the king's librarian; and that the whole was completed in seventy-two days. This version is probably the one used by Christ and the Apostles. Their quoting from the Greek instead of from the Hebrew may account for the fact that quotations in the New Testament do not always follow word for word our Old Testament, which was translated from the Hebrew. From its having been translated by seventy Jews (more exactly seventy-two) this version is called the Septuagint—a Latin word meaning seventy—and is sometimes written LXX.

The other important versions of the Old Testament are: the old Latin version, probably made in the second century from the LXX; and the Syriac version, made direct from the Hebrew. Neither time nor place of the Syriac, or Peshitta version, as it is called, is known. There are other versions of the Old Testament Scriptures, but they are relatively unimportant.

MSS. of the New Testament.—The earlier MSS. of the New Testament were perhaps written on some rather fragile material, but in the fourth century (A.D.) vellum, a very durable material, came into use. This may explain why our oldest MSS. do not antedate the fourth century. New Testament MSS. were written in two kinds of

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characters—uncial, or capitals, and cursive, or small letters. Since the cursive form of writing did not come into use until about the ninth century, the uncial MSS. are, generally speaking, the oldest. The most important MSS. of the New Testament are:

a) **Codex Vaticanus**, the oldest of all known MSS. of the New Testament, now in the Vatican at Rome in the keeping of the Roman Catholic Church, where it has been for the last five hundred years, belongs to the fourth century.

b) **Codex Sinaiticus**.—In the Library of Leningrad, Russia, is the second oldest MS. of the New Testament. It derives its name from the fact that it was recovered from some monks on Mt. Sinai. These ignorant monks were using the old MS. for fuel.

c) **Codex Alexandrinus**, the third oldest MS. of the New Testament, is in the British Museum, London, England.

Copies of all these MSS. may be seen in our principal public libraries.

Versions of the New Testament—The most important of the early versions of the New Testament are: the Syriac, in the British Museum; the Latin Vulgate, at Turin; and the Gothic, at Upsala, Sweden. Of these the Vulgate has had the most influence upon our present translation of the New Testament

Early Versions of the Whole Bible.—There were several of the Old Latin versions of both the Old and the New Testament prior to the time of Jerome, but the Latin Vulgate, translated by him about the close of the fourth century, is the most important and has contributed most to our Bible. This version derived its name from the Latin word “*vulgus*,” meaning “the common people.” This was the Bible that was in general use from the fifth to the sixteenth century. Previously to the invention of printing (fifteenth century),

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all the books of the Old and New Testaments could not conveniently be bound in one volume, but from the first appearance of the New Testament writings, they were naturally associated with the Old Testament. The Vulgate was brought to the British Isles by the early Christian missionaries and became England's first Bible.

Later English Versions of the Whole Bible.—Since our chief interest is in the English Bible, we shall take no notice of the later versions in German, French, and other languages, but shall pass directly to English versions.

a) **Wyclif's Version.**—John Wyclif, called “The morning star of the Reformation,” translated the Bible into English toward the close of the fourteenth century. This translation was from the Latin Vulgate of the Old and New Testaments. This was the first translation of the Bible into English.

b) **Tindale's Version.**—William Tindale gave his life to the translation of the Bible into English, and because of this he was exiled, and finally martyred in 1536. No one man has ever made a better translation than Tindale's, and his version has been of great value to later translators. Printing having been invented by Guttenberg in 1450 A.D. and introduced into England by Caxton in 1476, Tindale and later translators were enabled to produce their works in print. Tindale's was the first English New Testament in print.

c) **Coverdale's Version.**—Using Tindale's version, and the German and Latin versions, Miles Coverdale translated the Bible into English and published it in 1535 A.D. Coverdale's was the first complete Bible in print.

d) **The Great Bible.**—The Great Bible was prepared under the direction of the English Prime Minister, Thomas Cromwell, in 1539.

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It received its name from its size, and from the fact that a copy of it was to be placed in every church in England. The Great Bible was the first English Bible published with the sanction and authority of the government.

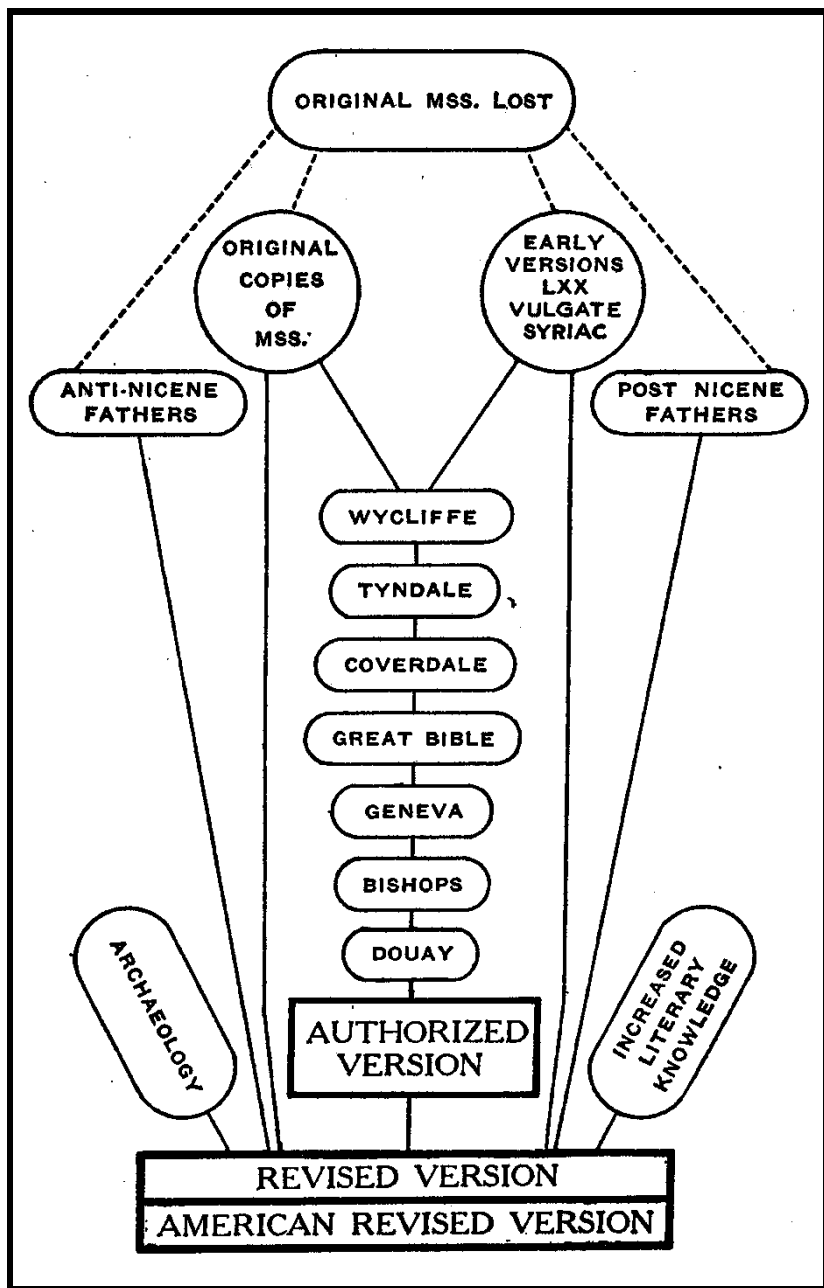
e) **The Geneva Bible.**—The Geneva Bible was translated by English Protestant exiles at Geneva, Switzerland, about 1560. It was the first Bible printed in Roman characters and the first in which the Scriptures were divided into verses.

f) **The Bishops' Bible.**—Matthew Parker, Archbishop of the English Church under Queen Elizabeth, with eight bishops prepared The Bishops' Bible. Though not widely circulated, it was the official English Bible from 1572 to 1611.

g) **The Douay Bible.**—The six foregoing versions of the English Bible were all the work of Protestants. The Douay Bible, on the contrary, is the work of Roman Catholics. Consequently, it is decidedly Roman Catholic in spirit. Its name comes from Douay, in Flanders, where the major part of it was translated from the Latin Vulgate of Jerome by Catholic scholars, who were forbidden by Protestants to pursue their work in England.

h) **King James Version.**—The Bible that is in common use among all English-speaking people of today is the King James, or Authorized, version (abbreviated A.V.). In the reign of King James 1, of England, many different versions were in circulation. For the sake of uniformity, he ordered a new translation. In 1603 A.D., fifty-four scholars were appointed to make the new translation, but only forty-seven undertook the work. The new version appeared in 1611 A.D. The version thus prepared by order of King James 1 soon supplanted all previous versions and it has become the Bible of the English-speaking world.

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i) **Revised Version.**—A revision of the Authorized, or King James, version was long discussed, its beautiful language and dignified style throughout long deterred scholars from undertaking its revision. Still it contained obvious errors in translation. Finally, the task was undertaken by sixty-four English scholars. Later a company of thirty-four Americans also began the work. The Revised New Testament was published in 1881, and the complete Revised Bible in 1885. The Revised version is not a new translation, but a careful revision of the King James version. In the revision, however, the scholars had many advantages from the discoveries of archeologists and the general advance of the knowledge of ancient languages. The American Revised Version is by far the best translation known to the English-speaking people, if not the best in the world.

How We Got Our Bible.—We now have near at hand the answer to our question—How did we get our Bible? It was first spoken by God the Father on Mt. Sinai, by the Son during his incarnation, and by the Holy Spirit through the prophets and apostles. It was then committed to writing and preserved by Providence and the care of holy men. Though the tables of stone upon which the law was written and the original MSS. of the prophets and the New Testament have long been lost, yet through copies and versions of those sacred originals we have handed down to us the Word of God. The accompanying chart will show at a glance how all the information contained in the ancient copies and versions and in the later versions is correlated and combined to produce our Bible.

Chapter VIII

Divisions of the Bible

Under Divisions of the Bible we shall consider the physical divisions into Testaments, books, chapters, and verses and the literary divisions according to the general character of the writing.

I. Physical Divisions

a) **Testaments.**—The largest and most important divisions of the Bible are the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament Scriptures are those given to the Jewish nation as the chosen people of God during the pre-Christian period of the world. The two Testaments form two complete and separate, yet related, books, and for convenience they are bound in the same volume. The Old Testament contains all the books from Genesis to Malachi inclusive; the New Testament, from Matthew to Revelation, inclusive. In our modern Bibles the New Testament is plainly marked by a printed title-page, so that it is easily distinguished from the Old Testament.

Books.—Our Bible is a book made up of what was originally many books. The Old Testament contains thirty-nine books and the New Testament twenty-seven. The Bible, therefore, has sixty-six books. The books of the Old Testament are named in some instances

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from the first words of the book, in other instances books bear the names of their authors, while in still other instances the books are named according to the nature of their contents. The books of the Old Testament in the order in which they appear in our Bible are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

The books of the Old Testament do not appear in our Bible in the order in which they were written, nor are they arranged as the Hebrews had them. The most ancient and most consistent arrangement of the books of the Old Testament is:

1. The Law of Moses,
2. The Prophets,
3. The Psalms or miscellaneous writings.

Jesus mentions this division of the Old Testament Scriptures, as recorded in Luke 24:44, “And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me.” The Old Testament books divided according to this rule would stand as follows:

1. *The Law* (five books): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

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2. *The Prophets* (eight books): The former Prophets (four books), Joshua, Judges, Samuel (1st and 2nd books), Kings (1st and 2nd books).

The latter Prophets (four books): Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Minor Prophets.

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi—all counted as one; the order not being always the same.

3. *The Psalms or Other Writings* (twelve books): Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles (1st and 2nd books).

Total—25 books.

We shall notice another division of the Old Testament according to literary content in another place.

Books of the New Testament.—The books of the New Testament derive their names from their authors, from the nature of their contents, from the geographical location, from the national name or personal names to whom they were originally addressed. The four Gospels and the general epistles, for instance, bear the names of their writers. The Acts and Revelation are named from the nature of their contents. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians, the Ephesians and others are named from the geographical location of those to whom they were written. Timothy, Titus, and Philemon bear the names of the persons to whom the epistles were written. The books of the New Testament in order as they appear in our Bible are:

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, Corinthians (1st and 2nd books), Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians,

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Thessalonians (1st and 2nd books), Timothy (1st and 2nd books), Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, Epistle of James, Peter (1st and 2nd books), John (1st, 2nd, and 3rd books), Jude, Revelation.

The books of the New Testament are not arranged in our Bible in the chronological order in which they were written. The following lists will give the probable dates at which the several books were written, as far as dates are approximately known.

1. The Four Gospels

<i>Book</i>	<i>Writer</i>	<i>Time</i>
Matthew	Matthew	38
Mark	Mark	62
Luke	Luke	63
John	John	80

2. The Book of Acts

The Acts	Luke	64
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3. The Pauline Epistles

Romans	Paul	57
1 Corinthians		57
2 Corinthians		57
Galatians		57
Ephesians		62
Philippians		62
Colossians		62

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1 Thessalonians	53
2 Thessalonians	53
1 Timothy	65
2 Timothy	66
Titus	65
Philemon	62
Hebrews	66

4. The General Epistles

James	James	61
1 Peter	Peter	64
2 Peter		66
1 John	John	90
2 John		
3 John		
Jude	Jude	66-70

5. The Book of Prophecy

Revelation	John	96
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e) **Chapters.**—The Bible was first divided into chapters by Cardinal Hugo in 1250 A.D. His object was the formation of a Latin concordance. Though very convenient, these chapters sometimes divide expressions that should appear together; they are, therefore, apt to mislead us unless we remember that originally there were no

such divisions. In this respect the Revised Version is better, for it follows the original MSS. and makes no divisions at the end of chapters. There are 1,189 chapters in the whole Bible.

d) **Verses.**—The chapters of the Bible were first divided into verses by Sir Robert Stephens in a Greek New Testament published by him in 1551 A.D., three hundred years after Cardinal Hugo introduced chapter divisions. The first English Bible, in fact, the first whole Bible in any language divided into verses was the Geneva Bible, published about 1560 A.D. There are 31,173 verses in the entire Bible.

II. Literary Divisions

The Old Testament may be divided into five classes, as follows:

a) **The Law of Moses.**—The Pentateuch, or fivefold book, contains the law of Moses and is made up of the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. Some modern scholars include in this division the Book of Joshua. This division is then called the Hexateuch, or sixfold book.

b) **History.**—The historical books of the Old Testament are twelve in number: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel (1st and 2nd books), Kings (1st and 2nd books), Chronicles (1st and 2nd books), Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.

c) **Poetry.**—Several whole books of the Old Testament and parts of others were originally written in poetic form. The five poetical books are: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon.

d) **Major Prophets.**—There are five of the books of the Old Testament that are termed the Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel.

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e) **Minor Prophets.**—There are twelve of the Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

The New Testament also has five literary divisions.

f) **Biography.**—The first four books of the New Testament contain a biography of the life of Christ.

They are: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.

g) **The New Testament History.**—The New Testament has but one book that is strictly historical, which is the Acts.

h) **Pauline Epistles.**—The epistles of the apostle Paul are fourteen in number. They comprise the following books: Romans, First Corinthians, Second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, First Thessalonians, Second Thessalonians, First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews.

i) **General Epistles.**—These books are so named because most of them were addressed to the general church, and not to any special church or person. They are: James, First Peter, Second Peter, First John, Second John, Third John, Jude.

j) **Prophecy.**—The one prophetic book of the New Testament is the Revelation.

The five divisions of the Old Testament and the five divisions of the New Testament have been illustrated by the ten fingers and thumbs of the hand, the one representing the Old Testament and pointing forward to the cross, the other representing the New Testament and pointing backward to the cross.

Chapter IX

The Bible as Literature

It may not have occurred to the beginner in Bible study, that the Bible is full of most interesting reading-matter, even from a literary point of view. Yet the Bible contains very many of the literary forms found in our secular classics.

An exhaustive study of the Bible as literature would fill a whole volume as large as this one; such is, therefore, beyond the purpose of this chapter. Our purpose here is to give a bird's-eye view of the Bible as literature that may serve as a kind of index to the literature of the Bible, and stimulate a more extended study of the subject.

1. **History.**—By far the greater part of the Old Testament belongs to history, and one book of the New Testament is historical. According to the subject-matter, Bible history may be classified somewhat as follows:

a) **Primitive.**—The Book of Genesis is the only authentic record of the origin of the universe, the origin of man, and the history of primitive families.

b) **Constitutional.**—Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers contain a history of the law and institutions of the ancient Israelites.

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e) **National.**—Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Ezra, are a history of the rise and progress of the ancient Israelitish nation.

d) **Ecclesiastical.**—The two books of Chronicles are the history of the kingdom of Judah from a religious or priestly standpoint.

e) **Apostolic.**—The only historical book of the New Testament is the Acts, which contains a history of the work of the apostles and the struggles of the church of God just after the ascension of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit.

2. **Personal Narrative.**—The Old Testament contains many passages that give the history—not of a nation, but of an individual; prose epics, they are called by scholars. This class of literature is represented by such stories as those of Joseph, Balaam, and Elijah.

3. **Poetry.**—Much of the Old Testament is poetry, but in our Authorized Version it is not apparent. The Revised Version is far superior in this respect, for it makes the poetic form more discernible. We point out three poetic styles.

a) **Odes.**—The song of Miriam (Exodus 15), of Deborah (Judges 5), and the Book of Lamentations are Odes.

b) **Lyric Poetry.**—Most of the Psalms are Lyric poetry, or songs of emotion, intended to be sung or chanted.

c) **Dramatic Poetry.**—Job and the Song of Solomon are dramatic poetry, or poetry illustrative of action.

4. **Oratory.**—The Old Testament abounds in oratory. Almost the entire Book of Deuteronomy, the speeches in the Book of Job, and many of the discourses in the prophetic books are orations.

The New Testament also has the oratorical style. Stephen's apology before the Jewish Sanhedrin (Acts 7) is a fine example of

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forensic oratory, and Paul's sermon on Mars' Hill (Acts 17) stands among the world's masterpieces in oratory.

5. **Prophecy.**—Prophecy is a distinct form of literature in the Bible. The Old Testament contains seventeen books that are mainly prophecy, and parts of the other books contain prophetic passages. Revelation is the only prophetic book of the New Testament, but other books contain prophetic passages.

6. **Philosophy.**—The Book of Proverbs is essentially a book of moral philosophy, and Ecclesiastes contains essays on human life.

7. **Stories of Love.**—Though primitive in form and expression yet none the less beautiful are the stories of love, courtship, and marriage in the Bible. Read, for instance, the story of Isaac and Rebecca (Genesis 24) and the Book of Ruth.

8. **Drama.**—The Book of Esther is a fine example of dramatic literature.

9. **Correspondence.**—Of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament twenty-one are letters—fourteen Pauline epistles and seven general epistles.

Read and study the Bible as good literature as well as the Word of God, and it will hold a renewed interest.

Chapter X

Historical Periods of the Bible

Bible history has been differently divided by different scholars, but the most logical treatment is that offered by Jesse L. Hurlbut, in his excellent little work, *Revised Normal Lessons*. This treatment divides the Bible history into ten periods; five in the Old Testament and five in the New Testament. Though the same terms are not used to designate the same periods, the general divisions as used by Mr. Hurlbut follow:

I. Old Testament

1. Period of The Lost Race, from the fall of man to the call of Abraham.
2. Period of the Covenant Family, from the call of Abraham to the Exodus.
3. Period of National Formation, from the Exodus to the crowning of Saul.
4. Period of the Political Kingdom, from the crowning of Saul to the captivity.
5. Period of Subjugation, from the captivity to the fall of Jerusalem.

II. New Testament

1. Period of the Dawning, from the birth of John the Baptist to the baptism of Christ.

2. Period of Christ's Personal Ministry, from the baptism of Christ to his ascension.

3. Period of the Judean Church, from the ascension of Christ to the choosing of the seven deacons.

4. Period of the Transition, from the choosing of the seven deacons to the council at Jerusalem.

5. Period of the World-Wide Church of God, from the council at Jerusalem to the end of the New Testament history.

The foregoing outline divides the entire history of the Bible first into two great periods, that of the Old Testament and that of the New Testament. Each of these greater divisions is then divided into five periods, making ten periods of Bible history. In a detailed study of Bible history, the Bible student will find great profit in studying the following subdivisions of each period.

a) Time covered by period, b) Main divisions of period, c) Important places, d) Prominent persons, e) Notable events, f) Form of government or political conditions, g) Religious conditions and tendencies, h) Books of the Bible that belong to the period.

It will be readily seen that when the student of Bible history has learned the time covered, the main divisions, important places, prominent persons, the notable events, the form of government, the religious conditions and tendencies, and the books of the Bible, belonging to each of the ten periods of Bible history, he will have at

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his command a vast store of valuable information that will help to illuminate every page of the Bible.

Chapter XI

Three Ages of Bible History

The foregoing outline of Bible history is based on history proper, but the three ages of Bible history are based upon the absence of written law and upon the manner of God's written law to man.

Pre-Mosaic Age.—The Pre-Mosaic Age of Bible history reaches from the beginning to the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. This was an age without a Bible. To us, the world without books, and especially without the Bible, is almost unthinkable, but during that long period of more than two thousand years the world had no Bible.

Mosaic Age.—The Mosaic Age reaches from the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai to the New Testament. This age was the age of ceremonial worship and of animal sacrifice, and the age of types and shadows.

The Gospel Age.—The Gospel Age reaches from the beginning of the New Testament, in the early years of Christianity, to the end of time. This is the age of divine sacrifice, spiritual worship, and human redemption.

Chapter XII

Three Days of Bible History

The division of Bible history into three days is based upon man's position and responsibility relative to the law of God.

Day of Promise, extends from the veiled promise of God to Adam that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, to the glorious fulfilment of that promise, and all the other promises of the Old Testament, in the birth of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

The Day of Grace.—The day of grace extends from the day of Pentecost to the day of judgment. This is man's day of opportunity and of salvation. All the promises of the past are best realized during the day of grace. During this time man must fix his destiny.

Day of Judgment.—Though the day of judgment is not a historical period, it is, nevertheless, a subject of the Bible. That day will not be man's day of promise nor of grace, but the day of the Lord, the day of reckoning, the day of final rewards and retribution.

Chapter XIII

Three Dispensations of Bible History

The three dispensations of Bible history arise out of relation of the persons of the Trinity to the work of man's redemption.

Dispensation of the Father.—The dispensation of the Father reaches from the beginning to the birth of Christ. During this long period of Bible history, it is Jehovah, God the Father, who works for the redemption of a lost race, lays the great plan of salvation, and develops the idea of a spiritual religion in the minds of men, and teaches man—through the revelation of the law, the messages of the prophets, the ceremonies of the temple, and in the school of experience—that God is a spirit and those that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Dispensation of the Son.—The dispensation of the Son begins with the birth of Christ and ends with the day of Pentecost. God the Son, in the person of Jesus Christ, reveals the true religion, teaches it to man in person (teaching the plan he revealed by the sacrifice of his blood), rises in triumph from death, and ascends in glory to the throne of his Father.

Dispensation of the Spirit.—God the Father formed the plan of man's redemption. Christ died to reveal that plan to man. But it is the Holy Spirit's part to perpetuate and to extend that plan

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throughout the Holy Spirit dispensation, which reaches from the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost to the end of time.

God will never make another plan for man's salvation; Christ will never again suffer and die to save the lost; hence, in this dispensation of the Holy Spirit is man's only opportunity to be reconciled to God. Since the dispensation of the Father has passed forever, and Christ will never die again, there is but one hope for the forgiveness of sins, and that is through the Holy Spirit, who reveals God's plan of salvation and leads the sinner to the fountain of Christ's blood. Therefore, he who blasphemes the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, for there is no other plan of salvation and no other atoning blood to wash away the guilt of sin.

Part II

How to Interpret the Bible

Introduction

Biblical interpretation in general presents for our consideration three subjects about which the minor parts of the study group themselves; namely, the interpreter, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit is a person and not a subject of study, and since he is ever ready and willing to lead us into all truth, we have only the man and the Book to deal with. First we will study the man, or the interpreter, then the Book under Grammar, History, Scripture, Doctrine.

Hermeneutics is the technical term used in speaking of the laws or science of interpretation. Since we shall have frequent need of its use, the student should become acquainted with the word at once, if he has not already. It is accented on the first and third syllables—her-me-neu-tics. It is defined as: “The science of interpretation; especially that branch of theology which defines the laws whereby the Scriptures are to be ascertained.”

An outline of our study gives us five main divisions, as follows:

1. Psychological Hermeneutics.
2. Grammatical Hermeneutics.

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3. Historical Hermeneutics.
4. Scriptural Hermeneutics.
5. Doctrinal Hermeneutics.

Before going further, we wish to make plain that the study of hermeneutics cannot in any way take the place of the Holy Spirit's guidance in the interpretation of the Bible. This study represents only man's part. When we have done our part diligently, we must look to God prayerfully for the illumination of the Spirit. Since the revelation of the truth is expressed to the human mind in the language of men, it becomes the duty of an interpreter to study the means by which truth is revealed; to place himself in the channel of revelation, so that God, through him, may make known His will to others. So long as we study with a feeling of our inability and, with devout faith in God, we cannot learn too much.

It is not our intention to present an exhaustive treatise on exegetical theology nor even to exhaust the subject of Biblical hermeneutics. It is our intention, rather, to present in condensed form and as simply as possible the principal laws that govern the interpretation of the Book of God. Let us pursue our studies with a zest that will glorify God, reward us with the revelation of truth, and bless others, for whom we labor, with light and salvation.

Importance of Biblical Hermeneutics.—Perhaps no branch of study is more important to the Bible student than hermeneutics. Be a man ever so pious, he cannot be a faithful interpreter of the Bible unless he goes to the Book with an unbiased mind and with no intention but to obey, and allows God to speak to him from the sacred pages. Further than this, it is important that the interpreter of the Bible should know how rightly to divide the Word of truth—know what part of the Bible is history, what part is poetry, what part

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is biography, what part is law, what is prophecy, etc. He should be acquainted with the political, the social, and the religious conditions existing at the time when each part of the Bible was written; should, through diligent search and study of the Bible, make himself acquainted with the several writers. The Biblical interpreter should understand how to make the Bible its own interpreter. He should familiarize himself with its language, its laws, its history, its manners and customs, its geography; in a word, he should grasp everything within his reach that will aid him in correctly interpreting it. There are some things outside of the Bible, yet related to it, which, if known, greatly aid the interpreter.

The interpretation of the Bible should be at the same time spiritual and literal. The two witnesses—the Word and the Spirit—should be allowed to testify to the truth of God. Interpretation should harmonize with both reason and experience; it should appeal both to the intellect and to the heart. Without the aid of the Holy Spirit, a person cannot rightly interpret the Bible; yet he cannot depend on the Holy Spirit to do what he is expected to do for himself. We must search the Scriptures, give attendance to reading and study, and show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth. It will be realized as we progress, that the importance of devout and diligent study of the principles of Biblical interpretation cannot be over-estimated.

The Church and the Individual in Biblical Interpretation.—

On the question whether the church or the individual has the supreme right of interpretation, Catholicism holds one extreme and Protestantism the other. The result has been a despotism in one case and confusion and division in the other. Rome usurps the supreme right to interpret the Bible and to bind her interpretation upon the consciences of men. Thus she destroys individuality and places a

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legislative body between the soul and its God. Jesus said, “When he [not the church] the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). Protestantism, revolting from the assumed infallibility of the Church of Rome, has lost sight of the relation that should exist between the body of Christ and the individual members of the church. Individual rights have been exercised to the degree of independence, and the individual has interpreted the Scriptures contrary to the accepted doctrine of the church, and by propagating his interpretations without due respect for the accepted belief of the church has caused division and confusion. If the Holy Spirit shall guide us into all truth, we shall be guided aright and shall all finally reach the same conclusions and find ourselves, through the unity of the Spirit, led into the unity of the faith. The church is not given the supreme right to interpret the Bible for the individual, nor is the individual given the right regardless of unity and peace to interpret the Bible contrary to the general belief of the true church and force his interpretation upon others. The church should not interfere with the leadings of the Holy Spirit in the individual, and the individual should not force upon the church what he conceives to be the leadings of the Spirit faster than the body in general can comprehend and accept the truth.

Definition of Biblical Hermeneutics.—Before entering upon our studies let us again refer to the definition of hermeneutics and to its distinction from exegesis. It is important that this be well understood. Hermeneutics is the science which treats of the principles of interpretation. Biblical hermeneutics, in particular, is the science which deals with the principles of the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. Hermeneutics should not be confounded with exegesis. Hermeneutics is the study of the laws of interpretation; exegesis is the application of those laws to interpretation. The former is a science; the latter is an art. General hermeneutics is

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sometimes distinguished from special hermeneutics. The former embraces the entire science, lays the foundations of the true method of interpretation, and, setting out from the very nature of the act of interpreting, establishes the general principles of interpretation of whatever kind, and proceeds thence to the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. Special hermeneutics investigates the rules applicable to the different characters of the particular books of the Bible.

In the following chapters we shall give more particular attention to general hermeneutics, which is, we think, more important than special hermeneutics. We shall, however, apply the principles of general hermeneutics to the special subject of Scriptural interpretation. Our study will, to a certain extent, partake of the character of special hermeneutics.

Chapter I

History of Hermeneutics

It is important, before we enter upon the particulars of our study, that we give a brief sketch of the history of hermeneutics during the Christian era.

PERIOD I. From the beginning of the Christian era to the end of the second century.—The principles employed by Christ in his interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures are illustrated by the many passages from the Old Testament quoted in the four Gospels. His spiritual application of the Old Testament prophecies in proof of his Messiahship was an innovation upon the legalistic and materialistic religion of Judaism. The study of these texts and the development of the principles they illustrate will be taken up in a later chapter.

The church of the apostolic age, that is, the time immediately following the ascension of Christ, was so near to the personal ministry of Christ that time was occupied mostly in recording and repeating the exact words of Jesus. The apostles based their claim to a revelation superior to that of Moses upon the prophecies of the Old Testament and the fulfilment of those prophecies in the life of Christ. Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost and Stephen's apology, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, are interesting studies

of Scriptural interpretation. Nearly all the New Testament writers constantly interpret the Old Testament Scriptures and the oral traditions of Christ. Paul is especially profound in his interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures. His letter to the Galatians and the one written to the Hebrews are masterpieces of Old Testament interpretation.

PERIOD II. The Church Fathers. From Origen to the Middle Ages—the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Centuries.—Soon after the death of the apostles the fathers of the church began to drift away from the simple, direct, and spiritual interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures and of the writings of the apostles. A scientific spirit sprang up and developed itself. Greek philosophy and a vivid imagination exerted considerable influence upon interpretation during this period. Certain principles of interpretation, though unformulated, are discernible in the writings of the fathers. The most prominent are:

1. **The divinity of the Bible.**—The Bible was accepted as divine, and therefore it could contain nothing unworthy of God. Nothing false, absurd, or immoral. This fundamental principle is admitted by every true Christian as the basis of Biblical interpretation.

2. **A multiple sense of the Bible.**—By multiple sense is meant that the Scriptures have more than one meaning. It is thought that this erroneous principle had its origin in the logic and imagination of the East, especially of the School of Alexandria. The conflicts between the Oriental-Greek philosophy and the religion of the Jews gave rise to a system of allegorizing and the platonic philosophy, so prevalent in Egypt, and affected the interpretation adopted by the Alexandrian Jews. Particularly speaking, they disregarded the literal sense, and sought after a hidden one which would coincide with their

philosophical ideas. The system of allegorizing owes its origin to a pious feeling which sought to introduce into the Scriptures more than sound judgment sanctions or the Bible itself approves. Agreeably with their theory of a multiple sense, they attached to the Scriptures a variety of meanings, which have been classed under the following heads: Grammatical, moral, anagogical or mystical, and allegorical. This supposition of a multiple sense of the Scriptures gave rise to many fanciful theories and paved the way for the numerous heresies that sprang up, and finally ended in the great apostasy.

3. Mystic force of the Holy Scriptures.—Some attribute to the Bible, not only to its teaching, but also to the book itself, an inherent and secret virtue having the power to strengthen, edify, and console those who read it, although they might not understand its sense. This superstition was pious, but imminently dangerous. It all but deified and idolized the words and rendered the true sense superfluous.

Grave as was this error, it concealed a sacred truth which we shall do well to recognize. It is that the believer who meditates upon the Bible, with a yearning heart, pious disposition, and a love for the truth, is edified and blessed of God in the effort he makes to comprehend it. This effort places him in the presence of God, and reanimates whatever pious and elevated sentiments he may possess. This pious approach to the Word of God opens the soul to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. Though the Bible should not be used as a charm, yet we do well to approach it with a sense of its holiness and divinity. The man who approaches the Bible with a deep feeling of his dependence upon it for divine guidance and light will leave it a better man, even if he misunderstands the details of its teachings. Many modern divines go to the opposite extreme from the superstitious belief of the early fathers, and approach the Word of

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God with a feeling of self-sufficiency that seals the sacred Book and leaves them still self-sufficient and darkened.

Origen, born in the latter part of the second century exerted a great influence on Scriptural interpretation. He studied rhetoric, philosophy, and mathematics under Clement of Alexandria, and at the age of eighteen he was appointed to the office of catechist. He was of a mystical turn of mind, and he became very ascetic. Many of his interpretations of Scripture, notwithstanding his piety and wisdom, are extremely fanciful. The wide influence of his writings introduced the principle we have mentioned into general use.

During the latter part of the fourth century and the first part of the fifth century principles of Scriptural interpretation were greatly influenced by St. Augustine. He introduced three new elements—first, the qualifications necessary to the interpreter; second, the analogy of faith; third, the authority of tradition. These three principles did not immediately gain favor, and consequently we must refer to other eras to notice their development.

PERIOD III. The Middle Ages. Sixth to Fifteenth Centuries.—During this period, as in those previously noticed, hermeneutics was not recognized as a science, but all the principles of the preceding periods were put into practice. This has been called the period of the reign of authority. This, to a great degree, arrested progress; for the principle of authority in its absolute sense, as usurped by the bishops during this period, could but arrest all progress. The church usurped by degrees the supreme right to interpret the Scriptures and rendered personal examination and interpretation unnecessary. Tradition, the decisions of the councils, and the edicts of the popes greatly interfered with personal liberty and with the leadings of the Holy Spirit. Under the dominion of such a system the Bible fell into disuse among the common people and

by the clergy was perverted to suit the passions and interests of the chiefs of a corrupted church. The revelation of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the apostles were obscured by the erroneous doctrine and despotic rule of a fallen clergy. The few who dared to interpret the scriptures and to make their interpretation public were hunted like wild beasts, tortured, put to death, burned as heretics. Even in this dark age there were undoubtedly many pious and honorable men who are not recorded in history; for the ruling power of the world was the apostate religion, and not the pure virgin church of Jesus Christ. The greatest record of those dark ages is a book of martyrs. Someone has remarked that Christianity gave us the New Testament; Catholicism, a book of martyrs; and Protestantism, a mass of conflicting doctrines.

PERIOD IV. The Reformation.—We must mention first in this era those distinguished interpreters who preceded a little the time of the Reformation. Influenced by the revival of learning and the intellectual movement of the age, as well as by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they had much in common with the spirit of the new era that was soon to follow, and though they did not yet employ exactly the principles of interpretation that were soon to be developed, they nevertheless presented them, and thus contributed toward bringing them into use.

The Reformation exercised a great influence on the principles of Biblical interpretation. The Reformation, a revolt of human reason from the intolerance of Rome, was a spirit of examination. Hence hermeneutics derived from this event more independence and more originality. In fact, it was not until this era that the laws of Biblical interpretation assumed any definite form. As is often the case, one extreme followed another. In this revolt from the ignorance, superstition, and traditions of the Church of Rome,

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examination became more intellectual than spiritual. Interpretation for a time became rigid and cold, to the neglect of the lively, emotional, and poetical character so strongly characteristic of the Bible. The authority of tradition was annihilated, and the multiple senses attached to the Scriptures in early ages were considerably diminished. With the Reformation some new principles were introduced, three of which we shall mention:

1. The inspiration of the Scriptures taken in its absolute sense.—The successors of the Reformers, rather than the Reformers themselves, laid much stress upon the doctrine of inspiration. The principle of literal interpretation was generally admitted in theory by the interpreters of the Reformation, but often contradicted by them in practice. The inspiration of the Scriptures was granted a much more exalted plane by the Reformers than it had been given during the Middle Ages. There sprang up, however, a difference of opinion as to the relative activity of the human element and the divine element in the inspired writers. Some were inclined to believe that under the spell of inspiration the writers were entirely unconscious; others believed that there was complete freedom of the intellect. It is clear, however, that, whatever the difference of opinion may have been, the inspiration of the Word of God was held in high esteem.

2. The analogy of faith, or the rule that each passage of Scripture should be interpreted in conformity with the whole tenor of revealed truth, was by the Reformers given a prominent place in the interpretation of the Bible. This principle, according to how it is explained and applied, is a fruitful source of error or of truth. If the plain and simple scriptures are taken as the tenor of the Bible, and the figurative and the obscure passages are explained in harmony with them, we are reasonably safe in accepting the rule; but if the

method is reversed, and the figurative and the obscure passages taken as the tenor of the Scriptures, we are in danger of much error.

3. Comparative study of the Scriptures.—There came to the Reformation a decided tendency to compare scripture with scripture, and this tendency did more than anything else to encourage a conscientious and logical exegesis. This was the beginning of an effort that has since placed the interpretation of the Bible upon a better foundation than had been granted it since the days of the apostles. As the church, and not the Holy Spirit, is the dominant power in Biblical interpretation in the Church of Rome, we can hardly expect them rightly to interpret the Scriptures. There soon developed among the Protestant reformers of the fifteenth century a difference of opinion with respect to the interpretation of the Scriptures. Instead of waiting upon the Lord and looking to the Holy Spirit for divine guidance, the interpreters allowed the intellectual tendency of the period to gain the ascendancy. As a result, Protestantism was almost from its birth divided against itself. Sects, the curse of Protestantism, rapidly multiplied, and they are still multiplying. If Christianity is ever brought out of confusion, it will be when the simple laws of Scriptural interpretation are better understood by Christians and when the Holy Spirit is allowed to perform his office-work of guiding them into all truth. Whether or not it may be hoped that the majority of the professed Christians will sometime agree upon the interpretation of the Bible, there is a decided tendency of late years to return to that simple interpretation of the Scriptures which characterized the apostolic age.

PERIOD V. Seventeenth Century.—The seventeenth century was marked by a number of changes in the interpretation of the Scriptures. The principal sects that exerted an influence upon Scriptural interpretation were: the Socinians, who demanded that the

Bible should be interpreted in a rational sense; and the Quakers, who wished to subject the written Word to the “Inner Word,” that is, to an individual revelation. The Socinians and the Quakers represent two opposite extremes. The interpretation of the Scriptures should have in it both the rational element and the individual revelation.

To this era belongs another principle, which is the product neither of the reformation nor the century, but of the eccentric tendencies of an individual. Cocceius, a Hollander, undertook, in his hermeneutics, to pull down all the barriers that still controlled the imagination of interpreters; to give full liberty to their assiduity and if necessary to their extravagance. He tore down all the barriers of reason and common sense, and declared legitimate all the senses that it is possible to give to Scripture. He practically regarded as true and divine all the vagaries of the most fanciful interpreters. This was doubtless the result of the Reformers’ having preserved in their interpretation so many of the fanciful allegories of Origen and Augustine. It is due Cocceius to say that he gave prominence to the relation between the Old and the New Testaments.

PERIOD VI. First Part of the Eighteenth Century.—One writer on hermeneutics has divided the first half of the first two-thirds of the eighteenth century with respect to the development of hermeneutical principles into three schools: the logical school; the pietistic school; and the naturalistic school.

1. **The logical school.**—The adherents of the logical school, tired of the imagination of the age, adopted the principle that the Holy Scriptures ought to be explained like other books—by the aid of logic and analysis. It combated successfully the double, mystic, allegorical, and anagogical senses. It broke the despotism that had been attached to the analogy of faith and enabled theology to make a great advance toward sound and true principles of interpretation.

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It was nevertheless at fault in neglecting too much a very essential element. One extreme again followed another, and by being preoccupied with the logic succession of ideas, these interpreters paid too little regard to aesthetic development. They did not recognize the warmth, the sentiment, and the depth of emotion in the Sacred Writings, so necessary to the understanding of them.

2. **The Pietistic school.**—The part neglected by the logical school was in some degree supplied by the pietistic school. They demanded two things of the interpreter of the Holy Scriptures, both of which are of great importance in the accomplishment of his task: (a) sufficient learning; (b) feelings in harmony with those of the writer whom he wishes to understand and explain. This school has been accused of mysticism; and it may not be entirely free from the charge. Spencer, one of the representatives of this school, said, in opposition to the notions of the Quakers: “Our feelings are not the norm of truth, but divine truth is the norm of our feelings. The norm of truth exists in the Divine Word apart from ourselves.”

3. **The naturalistic school.**—Naturalism, as pertaining to Scriptural interpretation, was the almost inevitable and very dangerous reaction caused by the prevailing opposition of mysticism during the preceding century. The naturalists went even farther than the rationalists. The latter mutilated revelation, subjected it to the sovereign sway of reason; nevertheless, they loved it or thought they loved it, and in a certain sense admitted it. The former were peculiar to Germany. They have shown themselves the enemies of the Holy Scriptures and of their teaching, have disguised their contents, denied their value, and attacked them with hatred. The German naturalists of the eighteenth century were distinguished from the French and the English deists only by their more scientific character and by their theological pretensions. Pernicious as was the effect of

this naturalistic school and deep as are the wounds that it has left upon the religious literature, especially in Germany, it has made apparent the necessity of carefully interpreting the Scriptures—a necessity that was almost entirely lost sight of in the preceding century.

PERIOD VII. The Scientific Era. The Latter Part of the Eighteenth and the Beginning of the Nineteenth Centuries.—

During this period we find the chief activity in hermeneutics in Germany. England and France rested in traditional routines and took but little interest in Biblical hermeneutics. The Roman Catholic countries shunned examination and were afraid of thorough investigation. In the United States we notice considerable interest in the interpretation of the Bible. Attention here, however, was devoted to exegesis and exposition more than to hermeneutics. During this period, we find in Germany the department of hermeneutics represented by two great opposing schools—the school of grammatical hermeneutics and the school of historical hermeneutics.

Ernesti, founder of the grammatical school, based interpretation upon the logical study of the text. Ernesti has been considered a pious man. Inadequate as was his system, its fruits were more commendable than those of the historical school.

Semler, founder of the historical school, has been called the father of German rationalism. The fundamental principle of this school was the exposition of the Holy Scriptures by the facts, the usages, the prejudices of the times. This principle, when employed exclusively, becomes extremely dangerous. The tendency that grew out of this method of interpretation, was to attach to the Scriptures the idea of human fallibility and error. This naturally led to rationalism. This school is said to have “filled Germany with a

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crowd of theologians without piety, without faith, and without life, with now and then original thinkers and keen critics distinguished only by their rashness and fickleness of their theories, and by the superficial and vain levity of the hypotheses which they advanced with zealous rivalry.”

The rationalism of the historical school has been distinguished by three principal hermeneutical phases: (1) The old, stiff, ridiculous rationalism represented by Paulus explained all the miracles by natural causes, and in so doing tortured the words and phrases of the Bible until it imposed a sense upon them suitable to its aims. (2) Logical rationalism, which laid down the principle that the Bible has no authority and that it contains less truth than error. (3) Pietistic rationalism, which assigned great value to faith, but placed its foundation elsewhere than in the Bible. Pietistic rationalism laid considerable stress upon the words of Christ, but little upon the Sacred Writings.

It was during this period that “Kant introduced the system of moral interpretation, according to which preachers and schoolmasters ought to explain Scripture, without regard to its original historical meaning, in such a manner as is likely to prove useful to the moral condition of the people, and also to put such useful matter into passages which do not contain it.” Kant considered that the historical part of the Scriptures was unable to contribute anything to make men better and that therefore it was to be treated with indifference and disposed of at pleasure. During this period there were undoubtedly many pious interpreters who sought to expound the Bible according to the will of God, but the great majority of those whom history mentions were remarkably devoid of faith and piety. History, however, is often partial in recording the activities of the majority to the neglect of the better minority. We

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must say, then, that the great tendency of the age was to discredit the divine origin of the Bible and to contend against rather than for the faith once delivered to the saints.

PERIOD VIII. The Present Era.—Biblical interpreters and teachers of hermeneutics are yet much divided among themselves. In this era, however, there are some favorable tendencies. Leaving the wrecks and ruins of the past, we discover a pious attempt on the part of many to establish right and consistent principles of Biblical hermeneutics and to give them a place of respect. Every Christian reformation must be a reformation backward in point of time rather than forward. Therefore, in order to discover the true principles of Biblical interpretation, we must return to the days of Christ and the apostles rather than go forward to the speculative realm of the unknown future. We need not deprive ourselves of the assistance of modern science, but we should constantly hold in mind that the Bible, though not a textbook in science, is superior to all science. The Bible is a divine revelation and its principal subjects are those pertaining to the soul and to the future destiny of man, rather than the laws of the material universe. The grammatical school and the historical school each continues its work, though in a somewhat modified form. It is now generally recognized that both grammatical and historical principles should be combined in the interpretation of the Bible, and that, when separated, they are insufficient. There is another step far in advance; that is the particular requirement that the interpreter should possess dispositions in harmony with those of the authors he seeks to interpret. We shall not attempt here to give a catalog of those prominent in the development of hermeneutical principles during the present era. Suffice it to say that despite the efforts of Christian (?) critics, skeptics, materialists, naturalists, there is a noticeable development of true regard for the Word of God.

Remarks

In this brief sketch of the history of hermeneutical principles we note the same tendency of the human mind so noticeable in the study of church history—the inclination to swing like a pendulum from one extreme to another. The two great controlling powers of the human mind, intellectuality and emotion, have driven interpreters first into rationalism and then into mysticism. Some interpreters have been devout, but ignorant; others have been wise, but impious. The ideal is reached by combining piety with intelligence, a pure heart with an active and educated mind. Development of emotions and feelings to the neglect of intellectual development leads to fanaticism, error, and deception. Development of cold intellectuality to the neglect of the finer feelings and instincts of the soul leads to heartless rationalism, materialism, and infidelity. Only when God's two witnesses, his Word and the Spirit, are allowed to speak unhindered, and we approach these two witnesses intelligently and piously, can we hope to understand God rightly.

Chapter II

The Unity Of The Sense Of Scripture vs. A Multiple Meaning

Before we can be sure that any rules for interpreting the Bible can be laid down, we must determine whether or not there is such a thing as the unity of sense in the Scriptures, or whether a multiple meaning may be attached to the will of God. In other words, we must determine whether the language of the Bible is intended by its author to convey definite ideas or only to approximate the truth, leaving us to choose between two or more meanings, none of which is definitely fixed by the text.

General View of the Text

If the Scriptures have a multiple sense, then no rule of interpretation can be laid down and no one meaning can be certain. Before concluding that the Scriptures have a multiple sense, let us ask ourselves these questions: (1) Do words have an exact meaning, and do they convey definite ideas? If not, then how can we be certain about anything that we read or hear? (2) What object could God have in giving the words of his revelation to man a multiple sense? Why would God wish to obscure his meaning or make difficult the comprehension of truth? If the words of Scripture do not have a clear and definite meaning, how can the Scriptures be called a revelation?

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To reveal himself is the nature of God. Throughout the history of God's dealings with man God has ever sought to reveal himself and make himself known in a clear and definite manner. The finite mind of man can grasp but little of the Infinite even when the divine revelation is put in the most simple and direct way. How, then, could God, desiring to reveal himself to man, couch his ideas in words of multiple meaning? To accept the theory of a double sense is to take a position opposed to the very nature of revelation, to say that words do not convey definite meanings, to outrage human reason, and to set us adrift on the sea of confusion.

Results of Supposing a Multiple Sense

1. To suppose a multiple sense would put at variance Biblical interpretation and other branches of study; would put God at variance with human experience, with science, and with everything known to man.

2. It would make it impossible to be sure that we are right. No one could say with John, "We know."

3. It would license sectarianism and division.

4. It would make it impossible for any but those of a superior and learned mind to grasp the best of the many probable meanings presented by the Scriptures.

5. It would outrage our faith and open an avenue for doubt.

6. It would leave us to choose that meaning which favored our selfish desires, and as a result would lead us to self and not to God.

7. Preaching, instead of being the simple "Thus saith the Lord," would depend more upon the wit and ability of the preacher to glean from the various scriptures what is most striking. Such preaching

would tend to lead men not to Christ, but to the preacher. Under the influence of such preaching one would be made to feel as did a certain theologian, “who, having listened to a sermon without piety, said with the weeping Mary: ‘They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.’ ” (John 20:13).

8. It would mystify and obscure the simple directions of the gospel of Christ, leave us in doubt about Biblical history, and finally result in our discarding the Bible altogether.

Causes Which Have Led to the Supposition of a Multiple Sense

The causes which have led to the supposition of a multiple sense may be grouped under two heads: first, Biblical facts that seem to favor it; second, human tendencies that have fortified it.

The Biblical facts that seem to favor a multiple sense are: (a) language, (b) symbols, (c) prophecies, (d) typos.

Language.—The language of the Bible may sometimes express thought too profound for us and yet have but one true meaning. Our inability to understand at once the language of the Bible is not justification for supposing a multiple sense. The truths of the Bible are sometimes clad in the popular language of the East. Being unacquainted with the prevailing manners and customs of those days, we may not always readily understand the thoughts in metaphors, poetical language, and other figurative styles.

Allegories, so common in the East, are used very sparingly in the Bible and are accompanied with such explanations as make them readily understood. A prophecy may have a literal fulfilment which, in its turn, becomes a type of some similar spiritual idea; but such is a sequence of analogous ideas, not a multiple of ideas or teachings.

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We are safe in saying that every allegory and every other figure of speech in the Bible is given for some definite purpose and conveys but one meaning.

Symbols.—Symbols have by some been supposed to convey a double sense. There is no good reason, however, for such a conclusion. Undoubtedly, every symbol in the Bible was originally intended to convey one and only one idea; but, like the parable and the allegory, they have often been taken to convey a multiplicity of ideas. Concerning the nature of symbols, F. G. Smith, author of *The Revelation Explained*, says:

“Commentators generally unite in attaching a definite meaning to certain symbols, and they tell us that these cannot be applied otherwise without violating their nature. They may not give us their reasons for thus applying them (in fact, they generally do not), yet it is evidently assumed that such reasons do exist. Now, if reasons actually exist why a definite signification must be applied to the symbol in the one case, why do they not exist in another case, and in all cases? If any law exists in the case at all, it is a uniform one, for a law that does not possess uniformity is no law; otherwise, it would be an unintelligible revelation, and the only possible thing left for us to do would be to attempt to solve it like a riddle—guess it out. It would be as if the writer were to use words with every variety of meaning peculiarly his own attached, without informing the reader what signification to give them in a given instance. No man has a right thus to abuse written or spoken language; and we may take it for granted that the God of heaven would not make such an indiscriminate use of symbolical language when making a revelation to men. There is no other book the wide world round in which language is as carefully employed as in the Bible; and we can rest assured that when God gave this Revelation to Jesus Christ ‘to

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show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass,' he made choice of proper symbols whose meaning can be definitely evolved, provided we can but ascertain the great underlying principles upon which their original selection was based.

“In the ordinary communication of our thoughts we employ arbitrary signs and sounds to which we have universally agreed to fix a definite meaning. Thus our entire spoken language is made up of a great variety of sounds or words with which by long practice we have become familiar. We call a certain object a horse, not because there is any similarity between the sound and the animal designated, but because we have agreed that that sound shall represent that object. So, also, we have agreed that the characters h-o-r-s-e shall, represent the same thing; and by the use of twenty-six characters, called the alphabet, placed together in various combinations, we are able to write our entire spoken language.”

We would not think of saying that certain letters of our alphabet, grouped to form a particular word and used to express an important command, convey a multiple sense. No more should we conclude that the figures and the symbols of the Bible used to express God's will to man carry with them a multiple meaning. Every time a symbol is used, it conveys a definite idea, whether we have attained to its understanding or not.

Prophecies.—As with other forms of language, so with prophecies. The fact that we do not understand their meaning is not a sufficient reason for concluding that they have a multiple sense.

The prophecies of the Old Testament quoted by the New Testament writers are sometimes used as the writer's own words and are not intended in such cases to be an interpretation of the prophecy. This is a mere matter of accommodating the words of the prophet to the expression of the writer's idea. Hence such quotations, if found

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to vary from the obvious meaning of the prophecy, should not be construed as favoring a multiple sense.

Types.—Types, more than any other Biblical language, seem to favor the theory of a double sense. Careful investigation, however, reveals that types and antitypes are only different phases of the same idea. The type is the outward, or natural, form; the antitype is the inward, or spiritual, form. The tabernacle in the wilderness or Solomon's temple may be taken as a type of the New Testament church; but, after all, the idea is one. Whether we think of the idea conveyed as Solomon's temple or as God's spiritual house in the gospel dispensation, it is one and the same idea—God's dwelling-place among men. So with all types that have a literal and a spiritual signification: they are only two forms of the same idea.

Summing up what we have said concerning the facts in the Bible itself that have seemed to favor the theory of a double sense, we would say that the imperfection of human language and the inability of the human mind fully to grasp the ideas expressed in the Bible are not sufficient ground for the conclusion that there is attached to the sacred Word a sense of double (variable) meaning. We have learned, and in our Bible study we should hold in mind, that there is a divine relation between the Old and the New Testament. The one is typical truth on a lower plane; the other the antitypical, or the same truth on a higher plane. It is impossible rightly to interpret the Bible without appreciating the connection between the Old and the New Testament, or without discovering the development of the plan that unites the two in one harmonious whole. The Old Testament types and the New Testament antitypes are not the expression of different ideas, but different expressions of the same idea.

Tendencies Which Have Favored the Theory of a Double Sense

The principal tendencies in man that have favored the theory of a double sense are these: intellectual, moral, and religious.

Intellectual Tendencies.—Especially the age immediately following the time of the apostles was characterized by men with speculative minds. This we noticed in Chapter I, in our historical sketch of Biblical interpretation. This speculative turn of mind combined with a lack of practical and rational views gave rise to many fanciful theories. Origen and other so-called church fathers gave themselves over to unbridled imagination in the interpretation of the Scriptures. These speculative interpreters, concluding that every word and every phrase of the parables and figures of the Holy Scriptures must have an exact counterpart in its spiritual meaning or application, proceeded to put upon the words of Scripture a variety of meanings, some of which were often extremely fanciful and even ridiculous. Had the speculative turn of mind been confined to the age in question or even to the Middle Ages, there would be less confusion among the interpreters of today. Unfortunately, men who are of the same type as Origen, and some of them without his commendable piety, still continue to wrest the Holy Scriptures and to found upon these misconstrued passages many peculiar and destructive doctrines, quite different from the simple, practical, and soul-saving truths of the gospel of Christ.

Moral Tendencies.—Of the many moral tendencies which have favored a multiple sense of the Scriptures, we will mention lack of reverence for the Scriptures, in submission to the will of God, and love of praise.

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Unwilling, on account of the evil of their own hearts, to submit to the will of God, men have eased their consciences by ascribing to the Word of God a multiple sense and then choosing that meaning which best suits their self-love.

The desire to attract by mere novelty of interpretation and thereby to draw attention to self has been a productive cause for the supposition of a multiple sense of the Scriptures. Since human nature is peculiarly responsive to the novel, the man who can bring out odd and unexpected things from the Scriptures may attract attention to himself; but such interpretations will lead few souls to the cross of Christ.

Religious Tendencies.—Astonishing as may seem the assertion, it is nevertheless true that religious tendencies have added to the misconception that the Scriptures have a multiple sense. If a man goes to the Bible to teach and not to learn, he cannot hope to understand its teachings and the will of God. The man who goes to the Bible with a preconceived idea, in order to find something to prop up his own notions, finds the theory of a double sense peculiarly convenient. He seeks to evade the true and natural sense, and to place upon the Scriptures a construction that will favor his ideas. There is but one way rightly to understand the Bible, and that is to go to it without dictating what it shall say to us, willing to hear and to do anything that God may wish to tell us.

From the foregoing facts we conclude that the theory of a double sense is a fallacy and that the Scriptures have a sense, unique, positive, and capable of being investigated. This being admitted, we consider hermeneutics, or the law of Scriptural interpretation, possible.

Chapter III

Introduction to Hermeneutics Proper

Having considered in the preceding pages the history of Biblical interpretation, and having settled the question as to the unity of the sense of the Scriptures, we now come to the subject of hermeneutics proper, or the laws of Biblical interpretation. We shall now review and enlarge upon the outline of our study, so that the relation of each chapter to the study as a whole may be well understood.

In the consideration of Biblical interpretation there is both a subjective and an objective side. In other words, we must consider the interpreter, the subjective element, and the Bible, the objective.

The interpreter must possess certain qualities of mind and character, and maintain a certain sympathetic relation to the Scriptures, if he would interpret them according to the will of God and in harmony with the original intention of the sacred writers. This division of our Study we shall call *Psychological Hermeneutics*.

Coming now to the objective side of hermeneutics we have language as a first consideration. The books to be interpreted were written in different languages and at different ages. It is therefore necessary, first of all, that the interpreter should have a knowledge of the peculiar meaning of the words and phrases employed. A study of the original languages in which the sacred books were written is

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valuable, but is not possible to us all. In many cases, therefore, the interpreter must content himself with a thorough study of the Bible as translated into his own language.

There is constantly going on in our language, as in all languages, a development and change. Many of the words and phrases common in 1611, when the King James version was issued, have changed their meaning wholly or in part. The interpreter should carefully observe the exact Biblical meaning of words. Most important of all, the interpreter should make the Bible its own dictionary. Words and phrases should not always be interpreted according to the present meaning given them in our language, but they should be carefully compared with their parallel usages throughout the Bible. The peculiar usages of each author also should be made a careful study. This department of Biblical interpretation we call *Grammatical Hermeneutics*.

Another important method in Biblical interpretation is that of reasoning from cause to effect. This method inquires about the influence exerted upon the thoughts and the expressions of the writer by his social, religious, and political circumstances and by his external environments in general. This constitutes *Historical Hermeneutics*.

Still another department of hermeneutics employs the method of reasoning from effect to cause. By this method we arrive at the thoughts and intentions of the sacred writers from their recorded words. A class of rules deduced from this method of studying the several portions of the Sacred Writings and their relation to each other we call *Scriptural Hermeneutics*.

But the work of Biblical interpretation is not yet complete. One might approach the Bible in the right attitude of mind, that is, conform in every way to the psychological laws of interpretation;

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one might fully understand the meaning of language; might consider fully the historical setting, or the environments of the sacred writers; might compare scripture with scripture; in a word, one might employ all the laws of psychological, grammatical, historical, and Scriptural hermeneutics and yet be one step short of an undeniable conclusion; for unless we can prove that the Scriptures are inspired, that the words of the Bible are the words of God, we have labored in vain. This division of Scriptural interpretation we call *Doctrinal Hermeneutics*. This department deals with the nature and the extent of inspiration.

Chapter IV

Psychological Hermeneutics

I. Its Necessity

Psychological hermeneutics is the investigation of the moral and intellectual conditions, and without the knowledge gained in such an investigation the interpreter is unable rightly to accomplish his task. What has already been said, and what shall be said, in this book is sufficient to make clear its necessity. It is a self-evident fact that one cannot rightly interpret what he does not understand. Furthermore, one should not only theoretically understand for the moment the meaning of the passage he would interpret, but should assimilate the meaning which he hoped to clearly interpret. When one has thoroughly assimilated the ideas he wishes to express, they become a part of him. Then when he seeks to express them and interpret them all the process is a natural one. Hence in the interpretation he does not merely repeat, parrot like, the ideas that he has found, but expresses thoughts and ideas with which he is in heartfelt sympathy. This brings us to another thought. Religious writings especially require that the interpreter enter into sympathetic relation with the writer. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." One cannot

rightly interpret the writings of an author with whom he cannot sympathize.

II. Faculties Required in a Bible Interpreter

Intellectual Faculties.—The principal intellectual faculties of a Biblical interpreter are judgment and imagination. Only when these two faculties are evenly balanced does the interpreter possess the necessary qualifications of a Biblical interpreter. Without a clear understanding and sound judgment, one cannot discriminate between truth and error; without vivid imagination, one will be cold and formal in his interpretations. Good sense, cool deliberation, and thorough investigation should at all times characterize the Biblical interpreter. Reason, logical analysis, and thorough examination, though inadequate alone to constitute one a good interpreter, will often save a man from wild speculation and fanciful conclusions. Logic to the preacher is like ballast to the ship: it prevents him from being tossed too high on the waves of emotion.

The language of the Bible is often strongly colored with imagination. It was addressed originally to readers accustomed to the language of poetry and habituated to the exercise of the imagination. The Oriental mind, to which the Bible was originally addressed, is capable of strong and deep emotions. Treacherous and misleading as emotions and imaginations are without proper control, they are an essential part of religion. The cold and learned theologian who analyzes the language of the Bible as a formula must be often deceived. He has been compared to a blind man who discourses upon colors. However, though a certain degree of imagination is necessary to Biblical interpreters, an excess of it is pernicious, for it outrages reason and judgment.

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An excess of imagination is more to be feared in the study of the Bible than in any other study, for upon every page of the Bible is presented to the interpreter the supernatural and the mysterious. This calls into play the imagination and invites the mind to enter into the deep mysteries of the spiritual world. Elevating as this may be, it exposes the interpreter to grave errors unless he knows how to regulate it.

To cultivate a vivid imagination, a keen spiritual insight, and depth of emotion, and to exercise at the same time cool judgment, common sense, and calm deliberation, is the perfection of attainment. Always and everywhere this equilibrium of faculties is to be diligently sought for. Without it, we are not worthy ambassadors of truth and are in constant danger of deceiving ourselves and others.

Moral Faculties.—Without the possession of certain moral faculties, no interpreter can perfectly understand the Word of God. The high ideals of righteousness, of purity, of humility, of self-denial cannot appeal with the greatest force to a mind and heart corrupted by sin and selfishness. Many passages of Scripture can be understood only on condition of their being felt. They are sublime when they affect the heart, but absurd when subjected only to logical analysis. Job exclaimed in a moment of deep emotion and heartfelt confidence, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.” Here we have a proposition logically absurd. It is the cry of a heart, and as such it is sublime. The writings of Paul are filled with expressions of deep emotion, which can be appreciated only by one whose heart and mind are resigned to the will of God. For instance, Paul’s expression, “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live,” cannot be fully comprehended when subjected to logical analysis, but when regarded as the expression of a spiritual experience, it is a profound

and wonderful truth. The Psalms are a storehouse of admirable expressions of love, of grief, of suffering, and of praise, which cannot be understood by being reduced to a logical formula; but how clear and how comforting they come to the heart capable of sympathizing with the pious and persecuted poet of Israel! It is evident to every reasonable mind that the Scriptures were written as much for the heart as for the intellect. Necessary as it is for the interpreter to study and search the Scriptures, it is equally necessary that he should possess a heart susceptible of deep feelings; otherwise, his conception of the Bible can never be real, and his interpretation of the Bible cannot appeal to the human heart. The interpreter of the Holy Scriptures should seek the aid of his heart as well as that of his intellect, if he would understand God and save men.

III. Disposition Necessary to the Interpretation of the Bible

First, a Love of Truth.—We are not inclined to accept that for which we have no love. Therefore, in order to rightly comprehend the truth, we should have a love for it. In order to find the truth, we must prefer it to our own way. If we really love the truth, we will gladly exchange our own ideas and theories for the truth. We are not inclined to accept that which contradicts our opinions or disagrees with our ideas. Therefore, if we would understand the truth, we must divest ourselves of all preconceived ideas and opinions. It is a rare attainment to be able to divest oneself of beloved opinions and ideas and to approach the Bible without any dictation as to what it shall say to us. That this attainment or disposition is rare, facts most conclusively prove. Hundreds of denominations, having different doctrines and creeds, appeal to the Bible as the foundation of their beliefs. Roman Catholics, Protestants, Mormons, and Socialists,

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appeal to the Bible as the foundation of their beliefs. Void of this disposition and of an unselfish love for truth, one goes to the Bible and reads there what one wishes to find, in the same frame of mind in which one attends religious services and hears what one wishes to hear, but hermetically seals his ears to that which he does not wish to believe. Only when the interpreter possesses sincere and unselfish love for truth can he hope to arrive at the truth.

Not only should the mind be free from traditions and preconceived opinions, but impartiality of mind should be joined with impartiality of heart. If preconceived opinions form obstacles to honest examination, much more are the fear of man, the desire to please, the love of reputation, the desire to be well thought of by the church and by society, destructive to the love of the truth. This evil is astonishingly prevalent. How many visionary hypotheses have had their origin in a desire to attain prominence or to attract attention! Only when we possess a sincere desire to be, not servants of men, but of truth, can we hope to discover the truth and to interpret it unmixed with our own errors and opinions.

Not only do preconceived ideas and selfish interests affect the work of the interpreter; but he is also affected in a greater or less degree by a moral defect. The interpreter should not only be free from preconceived opinions and avowed selfish interests, but also be morally perfect. A man who is proud or independent will not easily renounce his opinions even though they be proved false. A heart not cleansed by the blood of Christ may not be impartial in his application of truth, but may seek for those things in harmony with his feelings. A pure heart, therefore, and a mind whose motto is, "Thy will be done," are indispensable requisites to an interpreter of the Holy Bible.

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Search for Clear Ideas.—We should spare no pains in our search for clear ideas; we should be diligent and tireless in our efforts to attain the truth. The superficial mind is liable to be satisfied with too little clearness; is liable to avoid the necessary labor and diligence to attain perfect clearness. One cannot clearly understand everything, but the interpreter should clearly understand all that he attempts to explain. In other words, clearness of understanding is necessary to right interpretation.

One should never be satisfied or contented with traditional interpretation, but should continue a diligent search until he is thoroughly convinced that he has arrived at the ideas expressed in the passage under consideration. Thousands of men have been led astray by merely accepting someone else's interpretation. By this we do not mean that we should pay no attention to the labors of others. We may often derive much benefit from other men's interpretation, but we should not be satisfied, by merely taking someone's interpretation, without thorough examination and diligent comparison with the Word of God.

Lack of diligence causes many interpreters to stop short of clear and definite ideas of truth. Diligence, zeal, and industry are necessary to the interpreter no less than to men in every walk of life. Every construction put upon a text should be compared and recompared with other texts upon the same subject. Thorough analysis, diligent comparison, earnest prayer, and prolonged meditation should be repeated over and over again until we are sure that we have reached a positive degree of clearness.

There are, of course, some questions which surpass our intelligence. But the fact that some things are beyond our intelligence should not hinder us from believing them. We cannot

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believe what is contrary to reason, but we should not, in any instance, refuse to believe what is beyond our reason.

Faith and Piety.—The interpreter, in order to accomplish well his task, has need of faith and piety. By this we do not mean that the interpreter, in order to understand the Bible in any degree, must be enlightened by the Holy Spirit; that in the absence of this supernatural illumination the Bible will be to him a sealed book. This conclusion would give no place to the human faculty of the interpreter, and there would be no reason for distributing the Bible among the unconverted. It does mean, however, that in order fully to comprehend the richness and the beauty of the Sacred Book one must have faith and piety and the assistance of the Holy Spirit. But the unconverted who approach the Bible with honesty of heart and sincerity of purpose may comprehend its teachings sufficiently to be led to salvation. Every sincere person that comes to the Bible to learn of its precepts and to conform his life to them may understand the way of life. In order, however, to interpret its deep meaning and to enjoy the rich blessings its promises hold out, one must live in conformity with its teachings.

Interpretation of the Bible is in some respect progressive. “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth” does not mean that we shall be led into all truth in a day. As the interpreter meditates, prays, and studies, and conforms his inner man to the spirit and teachings of the Book, the Holy Spirit leads him still onward into greater mysteries of truth.

Some persons are inclined to believe everything and everybody; others are inclined to believe nothing and nobody. Someone has said: “Christianity stands between two great rocks—superstition and infidelity. Superstition believes everything; infidelity believes nothing. Christianity believes some things, but does not believe

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everything.” We need have no fears in approaching the Bible with utmost confidence. It is to be regretted, however, that we cannot repose this degree of faith in everyone who claims to be an interpreter of the Bible.

To sum up, the immoral man is unqualified for the test of Biblical interpretation, and the religious man must learn to use his intelligence, lest he be exposed to the danger of deceiving himself. The duty that Biblical interpretation imposes upon a man is that he be logical; that he be pious and moral; that he combine in the same heart and mind true piety and religion, with careful, logical examination.

Duties of the Interpreter

The principal duties of a Biblical interpreter may be summed up in these few words: thoroughness and a feeling of his own weakness. Founding a conclusion on one or two texts is a source of much error. When the interpreter has found a few texts bearing upon a particular subject, his work is only begun. His next duty is to search the entire Bible for other texts that may either support or modify the supposed teaching of these few texts. Moreover, thorough examination should be many times repeated. Lack of diligence is inexcusable in anything, but more especially in the interpretation of the Bible. The Bible deals, not with things material, but with the human soul. It is therefore exceedingly important that diligence and thoroughness be practiced by the interpreter.

To approach the Bible with a feeling of reverence for it and with a distrust of oneself will do much to make one thorough in his examination. A feeling of self-sufficiency is liable to lead to conclusions that a more thorough examination would greatly modify. Distrust of oneself will aid greatly in avoiding dogmatism.

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It is remarkable that many persons who are the most dogmatic and absolute in their interpretation of the Bible are those who have not been very diligent in their study and examination of the Bible. This same tendency is often true in other things as well as in Biblical interpretation. A man, for instance, who has only a limited education is frequently more dogmatic in his conclusions and more certain that he is right than a man who has had a more thorough education.

Study of the Bible is not alone sufficient to constitute a man a good Biblical interpreter. His study should be mingled with prayer and deep meditation. Further than this, the interpreter should have experience in leading men to Christ; should be acquainted with the sufferings and the perplexities of humanity. A careful study of history and of human nature will also do much in a secondary way to throw light upon the Bible.

Chapter V

Grammatical Hermeneutics

Being the principal means of conveying thought, language is of primary importance to the Biblical interpreter. God has revealed his will to men through the Bible. In order, therefore, to learn the will of God, we must begin with language.

Difficulties

There are not a few difficulties to be encountered in grammatical hermeneutics. First, the Bible was written by about thirty-six different authors. Each writer having his own peculiar style causes, in some instances, a variation in the meaning of words.

Second, the Bible was originally written in a number of different languages, such as Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. This variety of language sometimes presents grave difficulties in comparing words in different parts of the Bible. For instance, the Hebrew word for God used in the Old Testament in speaking of the Being who commands reverence, means one who surpasses all others in power and grandeur. The Greek word for God, *theos*, unlike the Hebrew word, expresses a physical instead of a moral idea. The Hebrew word, however, is not used exclusively with reference to the true God. The English word God, “the good,”

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indicates the Supreme Divinity whenever it is not used in the accommodative sense with reference to idols or pagan gods. Like variations occur in many other words. Since in this elementary study of Biblical hermeneutics we shall not take up the study of the original languages, such differences as just mentioned will not be of so much consequence to us.

Third, the meaning of words is constantly changing. The Bible was written at various times throughout a period of about fifteen hundred years. It is, therefore, to be expected that the use of words would be different in different parts of the Bible. Even the books written at different periods in the same language would naturally contain some variations in the use of words.

Fourth, the particular circumstances surrounding each writer, his individuality, and sometimes a particular occasion affect the shade of meaning attached to his words.

Fifth, words of the same language employed by the same author and at the same time are sometimes employed differently, according as they are used literally or figuratively.

When we consider that the Bible was written by so many authors, at different times, and in different languages, its unity and harmony is strong testimony to its divine origin. The discrepancies of the Bible are so few in comparison with its harmonies that its discrepancies only point out the human channel through which it has come, while its harmonies testify to its divinity and inspiration.

Resources for Determining the Grammatical Sense of the Scriptures

We should seek as far as possible to make the Bible its own dictionary. The resources for determining the grammatical sense are

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principally four: (1) the text itself; (2) the context; (3) parallel texts; (4) sources foreign to the text.

I. THE TEXT ITSELF

Those who have studied the original languages in which the Bible was written possess a great advantage in the interpretation of the Scriptures. Unless one has a thorough knowledge of those languages, however, to employ them is sometimes more dangerous than helpful. Doubtless the great majority of those who will study this book can read the Scriptures only in English. The use of a number of English translations are helpful in determining the grammatical sense. Of the many English translations, the American Revised Version is generally conceded to be the best. One should beware of prejudice in the use of the translations, for there is sometimes an inclination to search through the different translations and choose meanings that suit one's preconceived ideas. The construction that pleases us may not be the best. The principal resources derived from the text itself are: (1) study of words; (2) study of style and construction.

1. *Study of Words*

Words should be studied in two ways: from their etymology and from their grammatical construction in the sentence. A practical knowledge of grammar is of primary importance in the interpretation of the Bible. A word may change its meaning by inflection, by its position in the sentence, and by the use of other small words, such as prepositions, conjunctions, etc.

The study of etymology is of great importance in the interpretation of the Bible. For this purpose, the student has need of a good English dictionary and a good Bible dictionary. A Greek-English dictionary and a Hebrew-English dictionary are also

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valuable aids. Before attempting to interpret a text one should be sure that he thoroughly understands every word employed in the passage. In many instances the English words used in the Bible have changed their meaning since the time when it was translated. Many instances could be cited, but one will suffice. The word “prevent” in 1 Thess. 4:15, when the King James Version of the Bible was translated, meant to go before or to precede. Now it has quite a different meaning. It is necessary, therefore, in the study of etymology to be constantly on the lookout for words obsolete or obsolescent. Careful study of the etymology of important words is invaluable to the interpreter. One should be careful, however, to avoid far-fetched definitions. Ordinarily one should rely only upon the primitive sense of a word. A good interpreter of the Bible must give himself to reading and study. One should read a variety of books, choosing, of course, only good books. The habit of observing nice distinctions in the use of words and of looking up in the dictionary every word that you do not understand should be cultivated.

Suggestions.—First, avoid a too literal construction of words and strained definitions. Second, allow the spirit of the Old Testament, its language and its laws, to exert an influence upon the meaning and construction of words in the New Testament. The New Testament, though written in Greek, is the expression of ideas closely related to the Hebrew religion. Third, above all, interpret the Bible by the Bible and allow the spirit of the New Testament to mold the meaning and construction of words.

2. Style and Construction

Variations in the Usage of the Different Writers.—The social, the political, and the religious circumstances under which the writer lived could not but influence the meaning of words. In the

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study of Bible language, therefore, we should consider carefully the conditions under which the writer lived and wrote. Also, the circumstances which occasioned the writing may color the meaning of words. Hence it is necessary to study the apparent cause which necessitated the writing.

Style, or Form, of Writing.—We find in the Bible a variety of literature. The first five books, for instance, are called the law. Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, with some parts of other books, are poetry. Many of the books of the Old Testament and the Revelation in the New Testament are prophecy. The four Gospels are biography. Several books of the Old Testament and the Acts in the New Testament are historical. The Epistles of Paul and the seven General Epistles are written in a correspondence style, and were letters sent from certain individuals to certain persons, congregations, or to the church at large. Besides the variety of literature in the Bible, each author has a style peculiarly his own. It therefore becomes the duty of the Biblical interpreter not only to study the different forms of Biblical literature with respect to its influence upon the sense of the Scriptures, but also to study the characteristic style of each individual author.

Figures of speech are often used by the sacred writers to produce certain effects. We shall here notice only a few of the many found in the Bible. The paradox: Matt. 10:39; Luke 9:60. Irony: Luke 13:33; 1 Cor. 4:8. Interrogation: Jas. 2:21. Parables: Matthew 13. Allegory: Gal. 4:22-26. Hyperbole: John 21:25.

Emphasis.—Besides the figures of speech we have given, we call attention to emphasis. Emphasis is placed upon a word when the intention of the author gives to that word a sense more complete and more pronounced than is customary. Rotherham's translation of the New Testament is an attempt to bring out in English the emphasis

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of the original Greek. Hence it is called The Emphasized New Testament. In Acts 2:21 is an example of emphasis: “Whosoever shall *call* upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” “To call” here certainly signifies more than a mere appeal from the lips.

Caution.—When in doubt, give a text a literal meaning rather than a figurative one. Never regard the expression as figurative without positive proof. Other things being equal, the literal and most simple signification is always to be preferred. It should be borne in mind that usually when an author changes the accustomed sense of a word, he will in some manner reveal the intended change. Always seek for the simple meaning first. If a literal construction would result in a sense that would involve a physical or moral impossibility or a meaning contradicted by the context or by the general tenor of the Scriptures, we may infer that a figurative meaning is intended.

II. THE CONTEXT

There is no better way to interpret the meaning of a particular word or phrase than to interpret it by the other writings of the same author. By the use of the context one is less likely to fall into error than with the use of etymology. In fact, the importance of using the context in interpretation rightly deserves a place at the head of all the means to which the Biblical interpreter should have recourse. The context is of great importance in the interpretation of the Scriptures, since the antique and popular character of their writings brings with it many obscurities. The benefits derived from the use of the context may be grouped under three principal heads: (1) in determining the meaning of obscure words and variable meanings; (2) in determining when the general and when the local sense is intended; and (3) in determining the meanings of obscure phrases.

In Determining the Meaning of Obscure Words and Variable Meanings.—The word “life,” as used in the Bible, has

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several meanings. For instance, in Jas. 4:14 it means the life of the body and in John 10:28 it means the life of the soul, or union with God. "Death" in some texts means the separation of the soul and the body; in other passages it means separation of the soul from God and righteousness, or the state of the sinner. In still another usage the word refers to the eternal banishment of the wicked from God. "Faith," as used in the Bible, has at least three meanings: (1) mere historical belief; (2) belief in Christ as one's personal Savior; (3) the gospel, or the sum total of Christian belief. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews, which has been called the "faith chapter of the Bible," employs a peculiar meaning of the word "faith," which cannot be determined without the use of the context. The dogmatic conclusion of some is that these men possessed a complete faith in the Savior and a knowledge of redemption, without which they could not be saved. Careful study of the context, however, gives us the definition of "faith" as used in the chapter. In the first verse Paul defines faith in its most abstract sense as belief in the invisible, as an inward evidence of things hoped for and a conviction of things not seen. In this sense we should employ the word faith as used in the chapter. Many other examples might be given, but this will suffice to illustrate the importance of employing the context in determining the variable meanings of certain words.

In Determining When the General and When the Local Sense Is Intended.—Every book has a prompting motive for its existence. The motive, in a degree, colors and molds the sense in which its words and phrases are used. This prompting motive, therefore, should be carefully studied. The intention of any text can best be learned by a study of the context. The same words spoken with deep emotion or to accomplish an exalted purpose may convey a somewhat different meaning than when used under other circumstances. This peculiar shading of words gives them what is

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called a local sense. The meaning which the word has when used in the ordinary way we call its general sense. The interpreter is not in position to give the meaning of a word or of a passage until he has carefully and diligently sought out the immediate circumstances that occasioned its use or the motive that propounded it.

In Determining the Meaning of Obscure Phrases.—

Obscurity in the sense of a passage may arise from peculiarities of idiom, from irregularity of construction, and from modification in the form of words and phrases. In any case, the context is often the only means by which the meaning can be made clear. A few examples will be given:

1. Phrases which are obscure because of their brevity. In John 3:21 we read, “He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” “Doeth truth” is rather vague when considered apart from the context; but when contrasted with “doeth evil,” in verse 20, the meaning becomes clear. “Doeth truth” is the opposite of “doeth evil”; it means to do right, or to live a Christian life.

Another example is found in Matt. 23:9: “Call no man your father upon the earth.” Apart from the context, this would seem very peculiar, but upon examining the succeeding verses, we learn that fathers according to the flesh is not intended. It was a habit to give this honorary title to the doctors of the law; hence the passage refers to such customs as are prevalent among the Roman Catholics, who call their priests “Father.”

Obscurity sometimes results from what at first may seem a contradiction. In Phil 2:12, 13, for instance, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” When considered separately, these ideas seem contradictory. As it is, however, each

limits and explains the other. The two taken together teach us the important truth that both God and man have a part in salvation. Another example is found in Gal. 6:2, 5: "Bear ye one another's burdens. . . . For every man shall bear his own burden." Nothing could be more expressive of the spirit of Christ than these two sentences. When thinking of himself, "Every man shall bear his own burden" is applicable; when thinking of another, "Bear ye one another's burdens" is the spirit of the New Testament.

2. Phrases obscure because of those modifications of sense which but slightly change the construction of words. In many instances the context is the only means of determining whether the phrase is ironical or positive, interrogative or affirmative, imperative or indicative, figurative or literal, relative or absolute. A striking example of this is found in 1 Kings 22. In the fifteenth verse the good prophet Micah, in answer to the question, "Shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear?" said, "Go, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." A literal interpretation of these words would be in perfect agreement with what the false prophet had said and would make the king's rebuke in the sixteenth verse entirely without meaning. The prophet's interpretation in the seventeenth verse makes it clear that the fifteenth verse is ironical. The words in Titus 1:15, "To the pure all things are pure," would appear at first thought to contradict Christian morality. A literal interpretation would mean that to the pure no act, however sinful, would be impure. The fourteenth verse is sufficient to show, however, that the fifteenth verse refers only to human ordinances.

Faults of Interpreters with Reference to the Context.—In the employment of the context as a means of interpretation two errors are possible: the one through negligence and the other through

exaggeration. The former error is probably more often committed. The value of the context in interpretation has been underestimated, overlooked and neglected. One probable cause for this neglect is that the context often brings out the direct meaning of the text and does not, like etymology and some other means, afford scope for ingenuity and the development of unexpected constructions so cherished by some interpreters.

Sometimes, on the other hand, too much stress is laid on the context. The influence of the context in revealing the true sense is governed somewhat by the harmony of ideas throughout the passage as a whole. The effect of the context varies with different kinds of writing. In the Proverbs, for instance, each verse or two is often an independent thought having no connection with the context. A too strict application of the context may sometimes do violence to the meaning. This is especially true with prophetic writings, where sudden transitions are common.

The first duty of an interpreter, with respect to the context, is to decide, from the nature of the case, whether the context affects the word or phrase in question. This done, he should weigh carefully the effect of the context upon the passage and interpret accordingly.

III. PARALLEL TEXTS

Parallel texts are employed for two purposes: (1) to explain an obscure or unknown word; (2) to determine the correct interpretation of a vague or uncertain idea. In the first case, the different uses of the same word should be sought; in the second, the different expressions of the same idea. In the former, a parallel of words is sought for; in the second, a parallel of ideas. The parallel of ideas belongs to Scriptural hermeneutics and will be dealt with in a future chapter. The parallel of words pertains to grammatical hermeneutics.

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Besides the parallels of words proper, there are parallels of words that are in reality parallels of phrases. The latter consist of different passages that contain the same phrases, but which in some passages contain a synonym for the word of which we are seeking an explanation. In the employment of parallel texts great care should be exercised to see that the passages compared are closely connected by being written in the same epoch or by authors of analogous modes of thought, or by occurring in books of the same general nature. When all these conditions are equal, we may be reasonably certain that we have arrived at the local sense intended. When, on the contrary, the passages are not closely associated, the general sense only can be obtained, and that with some degree of uncertainty. To determine whether or not the passages compared are closely connected by time, or whether they were written by authors of the same modes of thought, we have but to observe the context. The collection of parallel texts, therefore, is really the collection not only of those texts, but also of their several contexts.

The method of comparing parallel texts, or, as it is sometimes called, the concordance method of Bible study, is one of the most valuable methods of interpretation. Unless the words or phrases compared, however, are strictly parallel, that is, unless they agree to the conditions before mentioned, one is liable to fall into serious error. One valuable use of parallel words is to determine the different ideas expressed by the same word. For instance, the word "heaven" in Matt. 16:17 refers to the final abode of the righteous; in 2 Pet. 3:10 it refers to the aerial heavens that surround the earth; in Matt. 11:23 it is used figuratively to denote an exalted position.

IV. SOURCES FOREIGN TO THE TEXT

There are many auxiliary helps in the interpretation of the Bible, such as books and special treatises, which are of considerable value

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to the interpreter. Every Biblical student should possess a carefully selected library. A few well-chosen and well-used books are better than an extensive library of unused and unusable books. The most useful books for the Biblical interpreter may be divided into two principal classes: 1. Reference books, including such as grammars, lexicons, and concordances. 2. Treatises, translations, and commentaries are among the second class. In consulting reference books, lexicons, and commentaries, one should consult those of opposite tendencies and of different schools; should compare the literal and the free, the aesthetic and the grammatical, and the rationalistic and the supernatural. Spending too much time in consulting such books, however, is worse than consulting none. The Bible should be the interpreter's book of books. Other books are good so long as they are kept secondary to the Bible, but the Bible should be made secondary to none. Consult other books, but consult the Bible first. After you have elucidated your subject as far as possible with the Bible alone, compare your thoughts with those of others; refer to other books and get all the help you can from every source. Proceed from the Bible to other books, not from other books to the Bible.

Chapter VI

Historical Hermeneutics

Introduction

In this chapter we shall study the historical circumstances which have exerted an influence upon the sacred writers and through them upon their writings. It must be granted that each writer of the different books of the Bible has preserved his own individual style of expression and mode of thought. It is also very evident that the specific objects for which the different books were written have influenced the writings themselves. The time, the place, and the circumstances surrounding those who are written to, as well as those surrounding the writer, have helped in molding the different books. Furthermore, it cannot be denied that the education of an author, his occupation, his times, and his nationality influence his language, his manner of expression, and his illustrations. A careful comparison of the writings of Moses, Solomon, Matthew, James, and John, reveals that each author occupied an intellectual sphere peculiar to himself. This intellectual sphere, or personality, combined with the environments and circumstances surrounding each author, could not but make the writings of the various men vastly different, even though their motives in the main were similar.

It is impossible to interpret wisely and correctly the writings of an author without a knowledge of his personal circumstances, his

social environments, his nationality, his linguistic habits, and the causes for the writing.

The historical circumstances relative to Biblical interpretation may be grouped as follows: (1) Circumstances personal to the author; (2) immediate circumstances surrounding the author; (3) linguistic habits of the author; (4) circumstances foreign to the author.

Personal Circumstances of the Author

Education and Profession.—There are three great sources of education: the home, the secular schools, and the church. The influences exerted upon one in childhood are the greatest of all influences. No other institution, therefore, serves to form character like the home. Whether these influences elevate or degrade a man, they leave an impress upon his ideas, his train of thought, and his mode of expression, that is seldom, if ever, entirely erased. The influences that have made the greatest men have often been overlooked. Many a pious mother of whom the world has never heard has left an impress upon her children which has elevated them to places of power and influence among men. In 2 Tim. 1:5 Paul calls to remembrance the unfeigned faith of the mother and grandmother of Timothy, which unfeigned faith was a mighty influence in raising Timothy to the elevated plane of noble manhood and Christian character. No one can fail to discover in Paul a man reared in the school of the Pharisees and brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. The Psalms of David teem with the tender admiration of nature with which the youthful shepherd was filled when he kept his father's flocks on the plains of Judea.

In the majority of cases a man's after-life is simply a continuation and a completion of home influences. We have but to

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name the mariner, the soldier, the merchant, the laborer, the peasant, the clergyman, the lawyer in order to bring to mind as many different types of men, each with his peculiar habits, expressions, images, and viewpoints. Since the Bible was written by men who were reared under different circumstances and who previously to their divine call followed various occupations, one should expect to find in the several books traces of the author's personality. Who worthy of the name of an interpreter can fail to mark the rustic images of the shepherd Amos or the sacerdotal coloring of some of the writings of Ezekiel? David, successively shepherd, captain, and king, has left in his writings images borrowed from nature and from war. Solomon betrays his wisdom and philosophical turn of mind in his Proverbs. Unlike his father David, he lived in a peaceful state of civilization. He therefore looked upon society in serene meditation, studied the subtlety of the human mind and soul and the ramifications of human nature. In Ezra and Nehemiah, we find respectively a professional scribe and a skilled administrator.

These few suggestions will be sufficient to start the student's mind in a train of thought that should lead to a careful study of the influence of education and profession upon the writings of each of the sacred authors.

Degree of Natural Intelligence and Extent of Education.—

Notwithstanding the influence of inspiration, the style of the Bible is marked with the training and the natural traits of its authors, just as a stream is affected by the channel through which it flows. Moses, an excellent type of learning, was just the man to form the constitution of the Israelites and to give laws to the people of God. We read of him that he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Learning is often a snare, but in those who choose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures

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of sin for a season” it proves a mighty influence in the establishment of the kingdom of God and in the enlightenment of men. Moses’ knowledge of Egyptian arts and laws is betrayed in many of his passages. Among the New Testament writers Luke and Paul were doubtless the best educated. Who can fail to discover in Luke’s prologue to his Gospel the touch of scholarly refinement? (Read Luke 1:1-4.) Paul’s discourse in the Areopagus at Athens stands among the world’s masterpieces of oratory. From Paul we may learn a valuable lesson about the use of learning and eloquence. (See Acts 17:16-31.) He adapted his language to his hearers. When he addressed the Corinthians, many of whom were doubtless unlearned men, he did not employ man’s wisdom; but when he stood in the Areopagus among the philosophers of Greece, he, by the inspiration of the Spirit, made use of his profound learning. When speaking to heathen philosophers he reasoned about their blind devotion to an unknown god, about the origin of the material universe and the nature of man. Thus, from things well known to them he led them to the living God, who was, as yet, to them unknown. Thus, like a true missionary, he found in their own religion, with which he was undoubtedly well acquainted, the germ of truth, and from this starting-point reasoned with them of the true God and of the inferiority of heathen idols. In his writings to the Hebrews, however, he makes little or no use of philosophy and seldom, if ever, refers to the origin of the universe. The Jews accepted the Old Testament record of the origin of the universe and Jehovah as the living God. Hence in his appeal to them he reasons from the Old Testament Scriptures.

Peter, James, and John each represent a distinctive style in their writings. Peter was fiery and passionate. The natural qualities of James’ mind were profundity and meditation. The characteristics of

the beloved John are too plainly marked in all his writings to need pointing out.

Moral Character.—A man's moral character, the motive of his heart and mind, is reflected in his writings. Therefore, if we would rightly understand and interpret a writer, we must become intimately acquainted with him, learn his natural tendencies, study his weakness as well as his strength. Unfortunately, history has left us with but little information concerning the sacred writers. The writers of the Bible were occupied too much with the more vital themes of which they were writing, to give any detailed account or personal description of either themselves or other writers. There are only two sources from which we may obtain the history of a man: (1) From himself and others; (2) from his own writings. Since the writers of the Bible give so little information concerning each other, we shall have to rely, for our information, principally upon what we can glean from their own writings. We must, therefore, appeal to the books of the several writers in order to discover their intellectual and moral characteristics, and then explain each part of the various books in the light of these characteristics.

A careful study of the writings of David and of Paul reveals very different moral tendencies. In David we find a tender, devotional, poetic nature; in the philosophical Saul we discover a cold, impetuous religious bigot. The former was reared amid the scenes of nature on the plains of Judea; the latter was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel and indoctrinated into the tenets of his intolerant religion. The grace of God, of course, elevates the moral nature of every man to a plane of righteousness and makes every man's motive to do the will of God; yet, in spite of all, a man's natural tendencies and disposition exert an influence upon his manner of application to his work and upon his everyday life.

Immediate Circumstances Surrounding the Author

Under this head we shall mention those social circumstances that have exerted an influence upon the writings and the habits of thought of the sacred writers. Social circumstances as opposed to personal circumstances are those participated in by one's contemporaries.

Geographical Circumstances.—The geography of the country in which the writer lives often exerts an indirect influence upon his manner of thought, language, and illustrations. A knowledge of the geography of Palestine is particularly necessary to the interpreter of the Bible. In the Old Testament, for instance, frequent allusion is made to Lebanon, Carmel, Gilead, Bashan, the Jordan, and many other places. Without a knowledge of the geography of the country, one cannot well understand the allusions to geographical places. Without some idea of the respective positions of Galilee, Samaria, Judea, and Perea, one would have difficulty in obtaining a clear idea of the life of Christ.

Natural and Ordinary Circumstances.—By natural and ordinary circumstances we mean such as vegetation, climate, domestic and wild animals. In order to appreciate the beauty of the Old Testament, the interpreter must employ this key to unlock its treasures. The frequent use of wild animals in illustrating is incomprehensible to one who has no knowledge of animal life as it existed in Palestine. The New Testament, though less poetic, abounds in illustrations drawn from natural and ordinary circumstances. The grain of mustard-seed, the lilies of the field, the wheat and the tares, the fowls of the air, and many other like illustrations are to those having no knowledge of them vague, if not meaningless.

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The interpreter is placed at a considerable disadvantage by being so far removed from the circumstances which were so familiar to those to whom the Bible was first written or spoken. Their means of navigation and travel, their cultivation of the vine and the olive, the herding of the sheep, and the trades and professions so common and familiar to those who first heard and read the sacred books are strange and too little understood by us today. It is therefore necessary that the Biblical interpreter should study carefully the manners and customs of the Oriental and Bible people.

Political Conditions.—The political condition of a people always exerts a great influence upon their national writings. The New Testament is no exception to this rule. The political condition of Palestine at the time when the New Testament was written is of great importance to the correct understanding of it. Three great peoples exerted an influence upon the minds of men at the time when Christ was born into the world. The Romans were the military power; Greek language and art greatly influenced thought and writing; and the Jewish religion exerted a great influence. From this state of affairs, the necessity of understanding Greek, Roman, and Jewish history will be evident. Without some knowledge of the history of these peoples, an interpreter is poorly equipped to interpret the New Testament.

Let us notice two political conditions that influenced the ministry of Jesus:

1. The Savior's aversion to being publicly recognized as the Messiah too soon and his frequent commands of silence in reference to his miracles are problems that cannot be solved without some knowledge of the seditious spirit of the Jews, and the consequent strict rule of the Romans. The Jews were impatient to throw off the Roman yoke. They believed that when the Messiah came he would

break the foreign rule, become their national leader, and establish again the temporal throne of David. Had Christ allowed himself to become too widely known as the Messiah, the Jews might have revolted; and, misunderstanding the nature of his kingdom, they would have rallied to him as their temporal king and deliverer. They would have thus compromised the character of the Messiah, whose kingdom was not of this world and who did not wish to have his vicarious death for the salvation of souls tainted with the least appearance of sedition and political usurpation.

2. The contempt and hatred into which the Jewish custom-house officers had fallen and the using of the name “tax-gatherers” as synonymous with whatever was odious and contemptible cannot be explained except by the system of tax-gathering adopted by the Romans. “The customs were farmed out to the highest bidder, as they were in France in the era of the Contractors. The inferior collectors ground down their fellow countrymen with more rigor than foreign collectors would have dared to exercise. The native tax-gatherers, by their cupidity, aided the Roman oppression and were hence doomed to national, religious, and political hatred.”

Religious Circumstances.—Nothing exerts more influence on the language of a people than its national religious belief. In the interpretation of the Bible it is necessary to take into account the general influence of the national religion upon the language and the personal sympathies of the author. Attention must also be given to the different forms of worship surrounding the writers. In many instances two or three religions exerted their several influences either directly or indirectly upon the sacred writings. Hence the Old Testament abounds with allusions to the idolatrous ceremonies of heathen worship. The New Testament likewise refers often to heathen religions, heresies, and heretics. It is quite impossible fully

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to understand some of the writings of the New Testament without a knowledge of the heresies prevalent at the time of the writings. One instance will suffice. At the time when the First Epistle of John was written Gnosticism was exerting a great influence. This accounts for the positive “we know,” so characteristic of this book.

These circumstances impose serious duties upon the interpreter. He should know all the religious facts that left their impress upon the language of the Scriptures. He should study not only the religion of the true God and his Son Jesus Christ, but also the opposing religions and elements which to a considerable degree influenced the writings of the Bible. However, one should spend more time in studying the positive side than in studying the negative. It is more important to understand the details of the religion of the true God than to understand heathen and non-Christian religions. Too much attention to, and the entire neglect of, the study of other religions are to be equally avoided.

To sum up the social circumstances that have exerted an influence upon the sacred authors, we call attention to three branches of study: (1) Biblical archeology, ancient history, and Oriental manners and customs; (2) the geography and history of the Bible; (3) careful, complete, and continued reading of the Bible itself. Add to these studies meditation and prayer.

Chapter VII

Historical Hermeneutics

(Concluded)

Linguistic Habits of the Sacred Writers

It might seem, at first thought, that the study of the linguistic habits of the Bible authors belongs to grammatical rather than to historical hermeneutics. When we consider, however, that modes of speech, figures of speech, symbols, illustrations, etc., have their origin in surrounding circumstances, we readily perceive that the study of linguistic habits belongs properly to Historical Hermeneutics. In order to appreciate the many figures of speech used in the Bible, we must examine the historical circumstances that formed their background or foundation. The general facts that press upon us the necessity of careful study of the language of the Bible may be summed up under two heads: 1. The language of the sacred writers is wanting in precision. 2. It abounds in figures.

Lack of Precision.—It is not doing violence to the Bible to accept the proposition that the language of the Bible is not always scientifically precise. It is not a scientific work; it deals more with the spiritual and the mystical than with the material and the physical. There are natural causes, too, for the lack of precision in the language of the Bible. The first of these natural causes is that the

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writers were Orientals. The language of the Oriental peoples, especially in ancient times, was highly colored rather than exact. It was more fervent than rigorous and formulated. It is the Western and modern mind that has given exactness and precision to language. The rigorous and formulated style of science, however, is often given to language at the expense of warmth and emotion.

The second cause for lack of precision in the sacred authors is that they were Jews, who were not people addicted to philosophical researches.

Another cause which in some instances has given the Bible practical rather than technical language is that many of its authors were uneducated men. Some of the sacred authors are exceptions to this rule, notably Moses, Luke and Paul. Since the majority of the sacred writers were men of the people, we naturally expect the Bible language to be more vivid, animated, and practical than exact and methodical.

Style of the Bible.—In the sacred Book, especially in the New Testament, we find no trace of a labored or florid style. This is particularly true of the doctrinal writings of Matthew, John, Paul, Peter, and James. Paul, the most remarkable of the New Testament writers, expresses himself in a style which does not conform to the rhetorical schools of his day. Though an educated man, his constant struggle was to express himself in the most simple, direct, and forceful way. He did not wish to attract by “enticing words of men’s wisdom,” but to convey divine ideas and the spiritual experience of his own heart to his readers in the most direct and simple way.

The Scriptures in general are designed to operate upon the imagination and upon the heart, rather than upon the intellect. Men are not to be convinced of a supernatural being by the mere use of logic and formal language; the heart and the feelings must be

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reached. Words to reach the heart must come from the heart. It is a universal law of language that thoughts of affection, emotion, and deep feeling are expressed in the most simple and direct style. Formality of expression would kill emotion and leave instead an impression of affectation.

While a considerable portion of the Bible is written in a simple and animated style, yet parts of it, especially in the Old Testament, are written in highly figurative language. Our distance from the habits, manners, and customs of Biblical writers makes some of their figures not easily understood. A general examination of the whole Biblical style, then, leads to the same conclusion—that the Bible is written in an animated and popular tone. Its poetic expressions, its figures of speech, and its simple expressions of emotion and affection—all these would cause a lack of precision. Lawgivers, prophets, historians, poets, and popular orators are all represented in the Bible.

Another fact that adds to our difficulty in the interpretation of the Bible, is our distance in time from and our unfamiliarity with many of the circumstances and conditions under which they wrote. The style of the Biblical writers was necessarily brief. In their writings, therefore, they merely referred to many things which—though perfectly clear to the readers of those times—are unavoidably obscure to us.

The mere human critic might affirm that the revelation should have been formulated and codified, so that it might be easily fixed in the memory. Had revelation been intended to reach only the intellect, its success would have depended more upon form; but a formal and code-like revelation would have remained forever foreign to the heart and unintelligible to the common people, who form a great majority of the human family. The grand object of

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divine truth is not to lodge systems in the mind, but to reach the deep spring and fountainhead of life—the heart. In the light of these considerations, we conclude that the Bible is better as it is than if it were written in a precise and formal style. God is wiser than man.

Rules Arising from Lack of Precision.—1. The interpreter should never press the sense of the words, especially when it is not evident that in the particular passage with which he is engaged the author has spoken in an exceptionally formulated style.

2. The interpreter should always rely upon the context in his endeavor to discover the meaning of a word or phrase, rather than upon the obscure meaning of the words or phrases.

3. In order fully to comprehend the language of Scripture, it is necessary that the heart be capable of receiving the impression intended to be produced. Hence we should study the Bible not only with logic, but also and especially with religious sensibility. The student of the Bible should associate himself, by the study of Bible manners and customs, as closely as possible with the masses to whom the message was originally addressed.

Figurative Language.—The language of the Bible, as before mentioned, is in many cases highly figurative. It should be remembered, however, that a figure may be just as thoroughly inspired as the more rigid syllogism. All the sacred writers employ figures of speech, in different degrees, according to the nature of their subjects and their own mental characteristics. Our Savior particularly was inclined to clothe his thoughts in figurative and popular language. No one can read the Gospels without observing the many figures, especially parables, he used in teaching the multitudes. The figures used by the sacred writers are for the most part drawn from objects familiar to their readers. Such objects, in

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general, are sacred history, pastoral life, physical geography, and natural phenomena.

The interpretation of the Bible is rendered somewhat difficult by its highly figurative language. There is danger of attributing too much to the imagination of the writer. It is the duty of the interpreter to reduce the figurative language of the Bible to positive, simple ideas. In the accomplishment of this task two successive steps are necessary: 1. It must be decided whether the language is or is not figurative. 2. If it is figurative, the true sense must be determined.

1. *Investigation of Figurative Language*—This investigation cannot be accomplished either by mere logic or without the use of sound judgment. Judgment and faith, critical tact and impartiality, and religious sympathies, go hand in hand in the investigation. A few general suggestions is all that we shall attempt to give by way of rules.

1. Reasoning from cause to effect. It is highly probable that the language is figurative in the poetical writings, as also in the oratorical and popular discourses. This probability becomes stronger when the passage under consideration is animated and highly wrought, and seems to make allusion to objects of another nature.

2. Reasoning from effect to cause. We may infer that a passage is figurative when it presents a natural or physical impossibility. For instance, when Jesus said of the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper, "This is my blood," it is highly probable that he was using figurative language. It is further necessary to examine carefully the passage in all its details, critically and exegetically. The figurative sense should be sustained by all these processes before decision is made to interpret it figuratively. Some interpreters habitually look for the figurative rather than for the literal sense. This is an error to be avoided. We should search for the simple and positive ideas, and

resort to the figurative sense only after the passage has been clearly proved to be figurative.

2. *Examination of the Figurative Sense.*—When once it is determined that a passage is figurative, the task of the interpreter consists of unveiling the idea, which is often obscured by the details of the figure. The very nature of figurative language renders this task difficult. There is a danger of neglecting the more essential ideas in order to scrutinize, analyze, and examine the secondary sense. For instance, in dealing with the parables of the Bible there is sometimes a temptation to become preoccupied with the objects and details of the parable, instead of dwelling upon the thought and lesson which was absorbing the mind of the sacred author. There is, however, a possibility of an opposite fault—of merely conjecturing what the central idea is without sufficient examination of the details and circumstances of the parable or figure. Without a consideration of the historical setting and background of the text and the nature of the objects used in the parable, it is often impossible to determine what idea the author means to convey.

Two extremes, then, are to be avoided: presuming what the central thought of a passage is without sufficient examination of the nature of the figure; and occupying oneself too much with the details of the figure to the neglect of the central idea. The right method consists in thoroughly acquainting oneself with the historical setting of the text in question and with the nature of the object used in the figure, and then proceeding immediately from the historical background to the central thought and idea meant to be conveyed.

In parables and other figures of speech there are frequently details which have nothing to do with the thought that the author seeks to convey. Two methods have been employed in the interpretation of parables: the one seeks to place some meaning upon

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every detail of the parable or figure; the other, in determining the thought meant to be conveyed, takes only that part of the parable which, from the general circumstances, seems to agree with the intention of the writer. The former of these methods is a source of abundant error. The speculative mind is liable to bring some fanciful and far-fetched meaning out of every minute detail of the figure and to distort and abuse the intended meaning. Often certain details of a parable are out of all harmony with the intended thought. Some details have for their object only the completion of the historical part of the parable and are not intended to exert any influence upon the meaning. When the Savior compared the coming of the Son of man to that of a thief, he did not mean that the details of the parable were to be applied, for they are out of harmony with the obvious meaning.

On the other hand, a figure of speech sometimes omits entirely the details which appear necessary to complete the figure. An example of this is the conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus, recorded in the third chapter of John. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again," but avoided entirely the details of the figure. Frequently sudden changes and different applications of the same figure to convey different thoughts make it wholly impossible to press the details of the figure. In John 10:16 Jesus speaks figuratively of his relation to believers, whom he designates as his sheep. The several parts of this figure are irreconcilable, and the details of one figure cannot be carried into another without causing great confusion. At one place Christ is represented as the door through which the sheep and the shepherd enter. Farther on in the chapter he is represented as being the shepherd himself. It will be seen at once that he could not be at the same time both the shepherd and the door. Separating the figures, however, we easily comprehend that Jesus as the door admits us into the kingdom of

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God (through him we have access to the Father) and that, as a shepherd, he cares for us.

As a further illustration of how the same figure may be used to convey different ideas, we call attention to Christ as the bridegroom and the church as the bride. In several passages of the New Testament Christ is represented as married to the church. In other passages it is made clear that the marriage supper of the Lamb will take place at the second advent of Christ. Great confusion has sometimes resulted from a wrong construction of this figure. One interpreter, striving to prove that Christ is now married to the church, argues that unless he is, the children of the church, or Christians, are illegitimate. Another, striving to prove that Christ is not now married to the church, makes much of the text which speaks of the marriage supper of the Lamb and the union of Christ and the church at the second advent. Such speculation is highly inconsistent and shows a lack of thorough investigation and a lack of comprehension of the figurative language of the Bible. The truth is this: Christ is now married to his church in his efforts to redeem the world. To express this union, the figure of marriage has been used. When Christ returns again to receive his church to her eternal abode, she will enjoy with him a closer relationship. The sacred writers, seeking to convey to the human mind this divine relationship and ecstatic union, could find no image so suitable as the joy of a bridegroom coming to receive his bride and the anticipation of a bride making herself ready for the bridegroom. Divine thought must be expressed to the human mind by things which the mind can comprehend. Both Christ's union with the church now and his final relationship with her when he shall come again are the facts which could not be better expressed than by the figure of marriage. Therefore, in some passages it is said that Christ now is married to his church and in others that the marriage will take place at his second advent.

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3. *Rules and Suggestions.*—1. No passage should be taken as figurative when a positive meaning is more in harmony with the context and with the tenor of the Scriptures.

2. In the investigation of the figurative sense the interpreter should seek to discover the principal idea without placing too much importance upon the details.

3. The interpreter should not conjecture what the principal idea is, without a sufficient examination of those details of the figure presented in the passage.

4. Diligence and thorough reading of the Bible and constant reference to the context are the surest methods of avoiding erroneous interpretation of figurative language.

Circumstances Foreign to the Author

The circumstances foreign to the author are two: 1. Circumstances peculiar to the writings. 2. Circumstances foreign to the writings.

I. CIRCUMSTANCES PECULIAR TO THE WRITINGS

Internal circumstances pertaining to the character or special nature of the writing. Under this head will be considered whether the writing to be interpreted is historical, poetical, oratorical, or prophetic.

The style of a writing necessarily exerts a great influence upon its interpretation. Writings which are strictly historical or chronological, for instance, must be interpreted differently from poetical or prophetic writings.

The Historical Writings.—In most cases the Bible historians recount the facts simply, clearly, and without pretension. Hence the

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attention of the interpreter should be centered upon the facts related. As in the interpretation of figurative language, so in the interpretation of Bible history, too much stress should not be placed upon the unimportant details that do not contribute to the thought intended by the writer; and, on the other hand, conclusions should not be reached without sufficient examination of the historical facts. In the Gospels the events as they occurred in the life and ministry of Jesus are recorded without any regard to whether they were ordinary occurrences or miracles. An example of this is found in Luke 4:30, where it is said that Jesus escaped from the hands of those who wished to cast him over the brow of the hill. We are not told whether he contrived some mere human way to escape or performed a miracle. In the Gospels more light can be frequently thrown upon the subject by comparing the parallel passages, or records of the same event by the other evangelists.

A safe rule for the interpreter is to go no further than the Bible goes. It is true that we may sometimes infer from different passages of Scripture what may have been the circumstances, even when they are not recorded. Such inferences, however, are extremely dangerous when taken in too absolute a sense. A careful interpreter will not be dogmatic about conclusions reached by mere inference.

Chronology.—The historical writers of the Bible present many differences in chronology. The condensed nature of the writings has in many cases necessitated the recording of events far removed from each other in time into the same book and often into the same chapter. Because certain events follow each other in successive order in the Bible is not a sufficient reason to conclude that they belong in the same chronological order. The Gospels as recorded by the evangelists are decidedly lacking in chronological order. The writers have given more importance to the events than to the order

in which they occurred. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the synoptic Gospels. In writing them the authors have associated the different events of the life of Christ which are of similar importance rather than given them in chronological order. John in his Gospel gives a little more attention to chronological order than the other evangelists give. Too much importance should not be placed upon the chronology in determining the meaning of a passage. The books of the Bible are not arranged in our English version in the chronological order in which they were written.

Didactic Writings.—Didactic writings are those whose object is to teach. In these writings we find the revealed truth of the Word of God. Of all the writings of the Holy Scriptures, they are most important and require the most care in their interpretation. There is neither the imagery of poetry nor the emotion of oratory to obscure the sense. They are to be interpreted literally, and the thought to be transmitted conscientiously. One point should be borne in mind in the interpretation of the didactic writings; a distinction should be made between the instruction and the arguments employed in supporting that instruction. The arguments, or reasons given for the truth taught, should not receive attention to the neglect of the truth intended. A thorough study of the Bible as a whole is necessary in the interpretation of didactic writings. In these writings throughout the Bible we discover a most profound harmony.

Oratorical Writings.—Oratory finds its way into almost every book of the Bible. Whether the instruction conveyed is figurative, didactic, or poetical, oratorical appeals are frequently made to the reader or hearer. Oratory is found in the writings of Moses, and in the chants of the prophets, in the Psalms, the Gospels, and the Epistles. The Book of Isaiah, especially the latter part, is an example in point. In Job, poetry and oratory are beautifully commingled.

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Many examples are found in the New Testament. (See Acts 17 and Rom. 8:33-39.)

Poetical Writings.—The Bible abounds in poetical writings. Besides those books that are written in the poetic form, poetic thought and expressions are frequently found in the writings of others. Isaiah and Joel may be called the poetic prophets.

II. EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE WRITINGS

The circumstances to be considered under this head are the persons to whom the writings were addressed, the epoch, the occasion, and, finally, the object of these writings. These circumstances are frequently so closely associated that it is difficult to distinguish the influence of each.

Persons to Whom the Writings Were Addressed.—The peculiar circumstances, dispositions, manner of thought, in fact, the entire environment of the persons written to, can but exert a great influence upon the writings. The geography, the natural, political, and religious circumstances of the persons addressed must be taken into account in approaching them. Even the financial and industrial position of a person must often be considered. The number of believers in a given locality, and even the religion from which they came—Judaism, for instance—are things which exerted a great influence upon the New Testament writers. Failure to take into consideration the condition and the circumstances of the persons written to, may often lead to a very wrong interpretation of the Scriptures. For example, in Acts 15:29, “the apostles and elders” instruct those to whom they are writing to abstain from blood, strangled animals, and things offered to idols. The opening address of this epistle is sufficient to show that this is not a permanent and universal precept, but applicable only “to the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia.” The interpreter

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should not extend the meaning of any passage beyond its obvious intent. It is true, however, that persons under like circumstances may require like instruction. However, one should be sure that the circumstances of those to whom the application of the passages are to be made are the same as those for whom the Scriptures were originally intended.

Circumstances of the Time.—The circumstances of the epoch, for instance, in which the Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews was written, are the key to the explanation. This book can be understood only when considered in the light of the political and religious agitation a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem. The Revelation is also greatly influenced by the sufferings and persecutions of the church in Asia.

Occasion of the Writing.—The circumstances of the time have often furnished the indirect occasion for the writing. But the interpreter ought to seek besides the indirect cause, the immediate occasion. The study of the occasion of the writing is one of the most important features in determining the meaning of many passages. Almost every book of the Bible, with the possible exception of Solomon's writings and the Book of Job, have been produced in view of certain circumstances and because of an urgent need. Without a knowledge of the needs which occasioned the writing of a book, one cannot appreciate its contents nor correctly interpret its meaning.

Object of the Writing.—By the object of the writing is meant the position that is taken by the writer with respect to the occasion of the writing. When we have discovered the circumstances which occasioned the writing, it is necessary to discover also what position the writer takes with respect to those particular circumstances. This can be ascertained only by thorough investigation of his writings as

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a whole. The entire Bible may be considered as a unit. The occasion which demanded its production was the fall and consequent sinfulness of man. Its object is the regeneration and salvation of humankind. In a particular sense each book of the Bible has been occasioned by particular circumstances and written for a special purpose. Therefore, the circumstances that occasioned the writing of any given book and the object for which that book was written may be expected to agree with the general circumstances that occasioned the writing of the entire Bible and to the object for which it was written. Some of the books of the Bible, however, have several objects, one of which may be considered as the principal object and the others as the subordinate, or secondary, objects. For instance, it is thought that the main object of the Gospel of John is to complete and supplement the synoptic Gospels, with a secondary design of refuting the prevailing heresies. A careful reader cannot fail to discover that the principal object of the first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians was to correct certain errors that had crept in among them. Note especially the first six chapters.

This principle may be abused, however, by putting too much stress upon the general object of the writing, presuming that the interpretation from the first to the last should revolve around a single idea. This absolute and rigorous unity is seldom found in Biblical writings; aside from the general object, there will often be found a particular object for the writing of certain parts of the book. Sometimes there may be found a twofold object in the writing of a book; namely, a principal object and a particular object. In some of the prophecies, for instance, this manifold element is found; that is, there is to be found a principal object in the Israelites and a feature referring to the kingdom of Christ. This does not constitute a divided sentiment; it is merely two phases of the same thing.

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The positive and the negative objects should be constantly held in mind. The negative object, for instance, of the writing of Paul in the first Epistle to the Corinthians was to correct certain abuses into which they had fallen; his positive object was to lead them to a higher state of spirituality.

1. Means of Determining the Object.—1. Too much dependence should not be placed upon the traditions of ecclesiastical history. These traditions should be received with reserve, but should not be entirely ignored.

2. Sometimes the author himself indicates his object, either at the beginning, as Luke in his prologue, or at the end, as John in the conclusion of his Gospel; or sometimes the object may be stated in the course of the writing, or possibly gained from its general tenor.

3. A study of the persons, the times, and the occasion will be found very useful in determining the object of the writer. The three most important elements in determining the object of a writer are the writer, those written to, and the circumstances of each.

4. A thorough study of the development of the plan of salvation revealed in the entire Bible will often greatly aid in determining the object for the writing of any given book. The example we have given of the comparison of John's Gospel with the synoptic Gospels is supposed to reveal the object of the former; namely, to supplement the other three Gospels by recording some things which they had omitted.

Chapter VIII

Scriptural Hermeneutics

Scriptural Hermeneutics is closely related to historical hermeneutics. The latter investigates by reasoning from cause to effect; that is, from discovering the circumstances that occasioned the writing, the object for which it was written, etc. The former reasons from effect to cause and seeks to discover by the examination of the entire Bible those principles by which the mind of the Spirit may be determined.

We make the following divisions of Scriptural hermeneutics:

1. The context, which has for its nature the logical and psychological nature of the instruction.
2. The analogy of faith, which deals with the general unity of Biblical instruction.
3. The parallels of ideas.
4. The special study of each sacred book, which has for its object the discovery of the individuality of each author.
5. The moral and intellectual character of the Bible, which has for its principle the sanctity and wisdom of the instruction.

Having dealt with the context in a previous chapter, we shall take up first the analogy of faith, after which we shall study the other divisions in the order given above.

Analogy of Faith

The analogy of faith, as applied to the method of interpretation, appeals to the general character of Scriptural truth for the explanation of a given passage. This law rests upon the principle of inspired unity of the Bible. This unity, is the result of inspiration; therefore, the analogy of faith is an inspired means of interpretation. The analogy of faith is a valuable means in discovering the meaning of obscure passages. In its use we explain obscure and uncertain passages by those which are at once clear and simple. Hence figurative, obscure, and uncertain passages should never be interpreted so as to contradict the plain and direct teachings of the Bible. Furthermore, a different and final conclusion should never be based on one or two passages. Every passage should be compared with every other passage that might limit or modify its meaning.

Degrees in the Analogy of Faith.—In the analogy of faith there are, according as it is deduced more or less immediately from the sacred books, many different degrees as to value and force. Four degrees of the analogy of faith have been recognized: Positive Analogy, General Analogy, Deductive Analogy, and Imposed Analogy. The first two have been called superior degrees, while the last two are classed as inferior degrees.

1. *Positive Analogy* is that analogy which is positively and immediately based upon Scriptural teaching. This superior degree is attainable only by the collection of a large number of positive and unanimous passages. When such a collection is possible, the interpreter may be certain, not only that such a truth is taught in the

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Bible, but that the Biblical writers have placed importance upon it and have placed it among a superior order of doctrines. Upon this superior degree of analogy rests the first principles of truth—existence of God, future life, retribution, sin, pardon, redemption, etc.

2. *General Analogy* belongs to the superior degree, but lacks the positive element and stress that is placed upon positive analogy. In general analogy the idea in question may occur frequently in the Bible, but the same degree of stress may not be placed upon it as in positive analogy, or it may not occur so frequently, and hence it may be taken as having less importance.

Deduced and imposed analogies form the inferior degrees of the analogy of faith. In reality they are unworthy of the name analogy of faith. Since, however, these inferior degrees are frequently used in the interpretation of the Scriptures, it will be necessary to take notice of them.

3. *Deduced Analogy*.—The method of deduced analogy, employing a train of reasoning founded upon the universal and positive teaching of Scripture, demands for these consequences the same degree of authority as for the Biblical instruction itself. The dangers of this method will at once be apparent, because it takes for granted the infallibility of the reasonings which connect the consequences with their sources. The conclusions reached by deductive analogy cannot be more certain than the fallibility of the human mind. The reasonings may be just or false, but they are always human, and, as such, doubtful or at least debatable. They are theological systems, but not necessarily divine truths. The longer and more complicated the chain of reasoning which separates the deduced consequences from the Scriptural teaching, the greater, of course, will be the danger of error. The chain of reasoning employed

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by Roman Catholics to substantiate the infallibility of their doctrine is a good example of deduced analogy:

God has given a revelation for the purpose of saving mankind. (Analogy of faith, first degree.)

Therefore, he watches over the preservation of this revelation and the church. (This consequence has some value, because it is not the result simply of reasoning, but rests, also, upon the second degree of analogy.)

Therefore, Christ preserves the church from error. (Here we are in the third degree, having a conclusion entirely human and partially erroneous.)

Therefore, Christ has instituted a visible and infallible authority in order to prevent error.

Therefore, the Pope and the bishops are the depositaries of this authority.

It is evident that the more this style of reasoning is prolonged, the less it presents of the guarantees of truth. At the point to which we have brought it, it includes nothing which deserves to be called analogy of faith.

4. *Imposed Analogy* is analogy of faith in name only. It is founded, not upon the truth of the Bible, but upon the faith of the church, so called. It is rather the analogy of the confessions of faith, and has simply the value that these confessions themselves may have. This method has simply the strength of a probability. It is, of course, probable that things which for a long time have been universally believed among men are correct. It is not, however, certain that they are the truth. Imposed analogy, then, has a certain

value, but does not deserve to be ranked with the superior degrees of the analogy of faith.

Gradation of the Evidences of the Analogy of Faith

The analogy of faith, even of the superior degrees, will not always have the same degree of evidence and the same authority. The strength of this evidence and this authority varies according to the number, unanimity, clearness, and distribution of the passages upon which they are founded.

Number.—Number is fundamental because true analogy of faith rests upon the habitual teaching of Scripture. There is no doubt that a divine certainty is attached to every positive and precise declaration of the Bible, but more than one declaration, however positive, is necessary to the analogy of faith. We sometimes hear the remark, “One text is as good as a thousand.” There may be a certain sense in which one positive text may be the truth, but in point of evidence the greater number of texts that can be produced supporting the idea, the stronger it appeals to the mind. One obscure passage might overbalance one clear passage, but could never gainsay the evidence derived from a dozen clear statements. For instance, because the existence of God is constantly and habitually recorded by the sacred writers, the analogy of faith is a stronger proof of this than of many other doctrines of the Bible.

Unanimity.—The more universal the texts or passages are which speak of any certain object, the stronger the evidence. Upon this point the united testimony of the entire Bible to the universality of sin, places that doctrine beyond dispute.

Clearness.—In order that its value may be recognized it is necessary only to mention clearness. It is very evident that the

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analogy of faith will have a value proportionate with the clearness of the passage upon which it is founded.

Distribution involves some questions which are more delicate. It is connected with the individuality of the sacred writers. The analogy of faith when deduced from the sacred books is stronger evidence than when based upon the analogy of faith of one book only, or from the New Testament or the Old Testament exclusive of the other. The evidence supporting any given subject, for instance, would be stronger if the analogy of faith included the entire New Testament than if based only on the writings of Paul; in the same way it would be stronger if based upon the entire Bible than if based only upon the New Testament. We would not, of course, expect to find the analogy of faith of any one writer contradict the analogy of faith of any other writer or of a writer upon any given subject. This does not alter the fact, however, that the strength of the evidence is governed in some degree by the distribution of the analogy of faith.

Utility of the Analogy of Faith

The superior degrees of the analogy of faith render service to the interpreter which cannot be obtained from any other sources.

1. It proves the true interpretation of any text, in a manner peculiarly satisfactory to the mind, by using the whole Bible as a commentary.

2. Analogy of faith enables the student to arrange the teachings of the Bible as to their relative importance. While all the truths of the Bible are equally inspired, there seems to be in some respects a difference as to their relative value to the wants of man. There are no non-essentials in the Bible, but some things, it seems, are more imperatively necessary. For instance, some doctrines are repeated again and again; certain truths are clearly, frequently, and forcibly

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affirmed, while others are simply referred to in a passing way. To illustrate, the atonement of Christ is mentioned over and over again, while the adornment of the body is mentioned but comparatively few times. The strength of the atonement in the Scriptures, however, does not weaken the doctrine in regard to modest apparel, but only fixes their relative importance in the salvation of the soul. A man who believes and appropriates the benefits of the atonement combines a spirit of humility, of dependence upon God, and of simplicity, that will incline to modesty of apparel. But modesty of apparel can in no way take the place of the atonement.

The analogy of faith often enables us to make clear the obscure passages of the Bible and to bring all into perfect harmony. It enables us to reconcile seeming contradictions. The Bible states that God repents, that he is angry, that he has eyes, ears, and hands, but the analogy of faith prevents us from attributing to God the physical organs and propensities of man by teaching us that God is a spiritual and infinite being. In other parts of the Bible we are enabled to see in the use of such words as angry, eyes, ears, and hands, a figurative meaning. Since the Bible teaches that God is a spiritual and infinite being, and that the organs and propensities of man are used in more than one sense, we therefore conclude that these passages do not teach that God is angry, that he repents in the same sense that man repents, or that he has physical organs in the same sense that man possesses them. Caution should be observed against the employment of the inferior degrees for the superior in the use of the analogy of faith. The Jews condemned Jesus to death in the name of a Pharisaical analogy of faith, based not upon Scripture, but upon their own deductions from the Bible. Often their example has been sadly imitated by professed Christian teachers.

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There may be instances in which the analogy of faith may seem to support many doctrines that appear contradictory. It is the duty of the interpreter in such cases not to accept one and contest the other, but to seek the solution in the general spirit of the Scriptures and in the study of the human heart. The solution may almost always be found, though sometimes we may have to wait and pray. A pious desire to make the Bible agree with itself does not justify our doing violence to one doctrine in order to establish another. It is far better to acknowledge that we do not know—that we have not yet reached a solution.

Parallels of Ideas

We have before dealt with the parallels of words, but have left for this place the mention of parallels of ideas. With respect to parallels of ideas we notice three things: Classification, Gradation, and Distribution. As with analogy of faith so with parallels of ideals—the more frequently they occur the stronger the evidence. An idea often repeated by different writers who are unanimous in the expression of their ideas may be considered of greater importance than a parallel of ideas lacking in number and unanimity.

The evidence deduced from parallels of ideas is not affected in the same way as is the evidence deduced from the analogy of faith. In the analogy of faith the evidence becomes stronger when the passages sustaining the truth in question are distributed in different books, but in the parallels of ideas the evidence becomes stronger when the parallels are founded on the writings of the same author; in other words, we are more certain that we have the mind of the writer when he repeats his idea than when we find the same idea expressed by some other writer.

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Gradation.—The lowest degree of parallels will be composed of the passages taken at random from the Bible, without reference to the kinds of writings, their epochs, or their authors. A somewhat superior degree will be composed of the parallel texts that have been taken at random from the Old Testament alone. A third degree will be composed of parallels gathered from contemporary authors who were not similarly placed, or who were similarly situated without being contemporary. The writings of the New Testament, for instance, when they are of different natures and of different authorships, pertain to this degree. It refers also to writers who were almost contemporary, although not receiving the same commission, as Ezra and Malachi. A still higher degree will include the writers who were contemporaneous or similarly situated, as Isaiah, Haggai, Zephaniah; Peter and Paul. The next degree will be parallels taken from the different writings of the same author, as from Paul's Epistle to the Romans and his pastoral epistles. To this category also may be referred the discourses of Jesus reported in the different Gospels. The next highest degree will be composed of the parallels collected from the same writings, or from the different analogous writings of the same author; as, for instance, the different Psalms of David treating on the same subject. To this degree may be referred the discourses of Christ reported in the same Gospel. The highest degree of parallels of ideas may be attached to the parallels taken from the same part of the same writing, and, in reference to the discourses of Christ, from the same portion of the same Gospel. It will be observed that this last and highest degree of parallels of ideas practically becomes the context.

Use of Parallels of Ideas.—The comparison of parallel passages is frequently attractive to the interpreter. There is much danger of its being erroneously employed by the student who is unacquainted with the science of correct interpretation and not given

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to critical habits. There is something very attractive and animating in this comparison of two distinct passages which are dissimilar in appearance, and yet, on being united, are found to be inspired by the same thought and to render testimony to the same truth.

The analogy of words requires the occurrence of the same word in the several passages. The parallels of ideas, on the contrary, is the expression of the same idea in different words. There is sometimes a danger in taking expressions that seem alike to express the same idea. Care should be taken, by constant reference to the context and other means, to identify the idea. To the parallels of ideas, therefore, the same degree of certainty cannot be attached as to the parallels of words. The same word is easily recognized, while ideas are more subtle and their identity may be mistaken.

The parallels of ideas are particularly useful in elucidating a difficult passage. For instance, in Col. 1:20 the apostle declares God has been pleased to reconcile all things unto himself by the blood of the cross, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven. This passage is striking and decidedly obscure. We find a parallel to this idea in Eph. 1:10, which more clearly defines the idea by adding the time in which this is to be accomplished. The idea is still not very clear as to what is to be reconciled unto himself in heaven. 1 Cor. 15:28 has been thought to present a probable parallel, adding to the clearness of the idea.

The historical facts of the Bible are frequently confirmed by the parallels of ideas. The incidents which have been thought worthy of recording in the inspired Book are found in different places. Hence there is opportunity for a parallel of historical ideas from which great benefits may be derived. For instance, there are three records of the conversion of Paul (Acts 9; 22; 26). These three narratives are not couched in the same terms; each narrative was presented for a

special purpose. Not one of them seems to give a complete record of this wonderful event, and there are some minor details which, at first sight, do not seem perfectly to agree; but between and underlying the three recitals there is a remarkable accord, giving the account remarkable certainty and exactness which no one can fail to recognize. Records of the same narratives, discourses, etc., in the life of Jesus by the different evangelists give us many parallels of historical ideas.

Rules and Suggestions for the Use of Parallels of Ideas

1. Parallels of ideas should be carefully distinguished from parallels of words. The same word cannot be taken to express the same idea throughout the Bible regardless of its context, its use in the sentence, and other circumstances. Parallels of ideas, on the contrary are not directly affected by the context. The Roman Catholic Church gives us an example of the error of substituting a parallel of words for a parallel of ideas: "A catechism of the Romish Church says that it is necessary to render worship to Joseph, the husband of the Virgin Mary, because in Gen. 41:55 Pharaoh said to the Egyptians: 'Go unto Joseph.' This confounding of a parallel of words for one of ideas is not alarming, since the error is so apparent to everyone who has studied the Bible." This is an extreme example, however, of the danger of not distinguishing clearly between a parallel of words and a parallel of ideas.

2. Avoid seeming, but false, parallels. There is a danger of taking seeming parallels for those passages which are really sure. An example of this is supposing that 1 Cor. 3:16, 17, and 1 Cor. 6:19, are parallels of ideas. It is probable in the former text that the word "body" refers to the body of Christ, the church; while it is clear

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in the second place that the “body” refers to the human body. These, then, are not parallels of ideas. Another good example is the expression in John 1:3, and Psa. 33:6. The words of the evangelist refer clearly to Christ, while the idea in Psalms is undoubtedly a parallel with the idea expressed in Genesis, where God said. “Let there be light, and there was light.”

3. As in the analogy of faith the more obscure texts are to be explained by the plainer ones, so in the parallels of ideas. Ideas which are more conclusive are more to be relied upon than those ideas in which the identity is not so clear.

The force of parallels of ideas must be in proportion to their clearness. Thus, the importance of a passage is variable, while its clearness is absolute. Clearness may be established by grammatical and logical rules. The importance of a passage, however, is sometimes determined by an individual at his own discretion. An interpreter frequently measures the importance of a passage from his own peculiar point of view. He ascribes superior value to the text which sustains his theological system and is favorable to his way of thinking. The employment of this principle involves arguing in a circle. If analyzed it presents the following series of propositions:

1. A given doctrine is certainly taught.
2. In fact, it is proved by passage X.
3. If passage X seems to be contradicted by passage Y, the latter ought to be subordinated to the former and explained accordingly.
4. For passage X is the more important.
5. This superior importance of passage X results from the fact that the doctrine which it teaches is important and certainly taught.

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By this method a show of logic and reasoning is presented, but the argument goes in a circle. It is equal to the proposition: "A given doctrine is certainly taught, because it is certainly taught." Absurd as this may seem, many interpreters employ this kind of logic to prove their doctrine. This absurdity will make clear the rule that conclusions should not be founded upon the more obscure passages, for our conclusions based upon a given text cannot be surer than our premise, or starting-point. If we start from a text, the meaning of which is uncertain, our final conclusion must of necessity be uncertain; and in proportion to the clearness and certainty of the text upon which we base our conclusion will our conclusion be clear and certain.

Special Study of Each of the Sacred Books

The principle upon which this study is based is the individuality of the author. It is easy to perceive that the sacred writers, though inspired, have retained their human characteristics to a certain degree. If inspiration destroys personality, then we might expect to find in the Bible a monotonous uniformity of style and method which would be conducive neither to interest nor profit. Moreover, the entire elimination of human personality would place the Holy Scriptures in an exalted plane which would not appeal to the human mind and heart. The sanctified and purified human personality in the Holy Scriptures is one of their most striking and convincing features. God preserves our human faculties and personality for the same reason that Jesus took upon himself the form of man, that he might demonstrate that humanity assisted by divinity can conquer sin and Satan. We value and respect the sacred writings more when we consider that the authors of the Bible were men with like passions as we.

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The individuality of each of the sacred writers necessarily exerted an influence upon their writings. First, upon their style; second, upon their grammar; and third, upon the particular phase of Bible doctrine with which their writings are engaged. Grammar has been sufficiently dealt with in previous chapters. We shall therefore turn our attention to methods and doctrine as influenced by the personality of the sacred writers. These two topics, method and doctrine, as influenced by the personality of the sacred writers, are closely allied to the analogy of faith and to the parallels of ideals. A special study of the methods and teachings of a writer cannot give us the general or Biblical analogy of faith, but it would give us the analogy of faith of that author. The importance of the analogy of faith of any given author is general in proportion to the extent of his writings in the Bible. The Biblical analogy of faith results from summing up the individual analogy of each of the sacred writers. It is related to the parallels of ideas because that the parallels of ideas of any given writer help us to understand his individual characteristics.

Method of Each Sacred Author.—Under this heading may be grouped all the forms which are natural to an author or habitually employed in his communication of thought and emotion. This will include his mode of reasoning, his style of writing, the outbreaks of his piety, and the transports of his imagination. In the study of the Old Testament prophets, for instance, it is important that the interpreter know how to analyze their diversities of system by comparison and contrast. Isaiah and Jeremiah are as much allied in their pious and devoted turn of mind as they are different in the rich imagination and the powerful eloquence of the former when contrasted with the sorrowful and plaintive strain of the latter. Another example is the contrast between the poetical and pathetic style of Joel and the animated and spirited style of Hosea. The same

is true of New Testament writers. The writings of James, for instance, with their profound thoughts, clear-cut phrases, and severe forms, are a striking contrast to the tender and loving style of John. The varied styles of the apostle Paul and his striking personality stand out prominently among the writers of the New Testament. How can one be surprised at the style of Paul, with his wonderful variety, striking contrasts, and logical force? There is a rich mine of thought and an inestimable benefit to be derived from the careful study of the personality of the sacred writers.

Influence of Personality upon Doctrine.—By the influence of the personality of the sacred writers upon the particular doctrine with which they were engaged we do not mean that their personality controlled or interfered with the inspiration of the Spirit. Their individuality and peculiar stamp of mind influenced the doctrine with which they were engaged; or, in other words, the Holy Spirit used them to develop such doctrines as their several personalities were particularly adapted to. The Holy Spirit could use any man to preach or to write regardless of the author's personality, if such were the will of God. In fact, God could have delegated angels to preach the gospel to man if this had been his plan. But it has pleased him in his wisdom to use man as he is, sin excepted. It cannot be doubted that under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the intellectual faculties are illuminated and elevated. It is still an undisputed fact, however, that it has pleased God to use man according to the talents he possesses. In the consideration of this fact we discover the wisdom of God in choosing different men to have a part in the writing of the Bible. Each of the sacred authors is, in a modified sense, a specialist. The theme of Paul and of James is faith; Peter dwells largely upon hope; and who can fail to recognize that the characteristic theme of the apostle John is love? This influence of individuality upon doctrine is more pronounced in the New Testament than in the Old.

Of course, no one of the sacred writers is occupied exclusively with one subject, neither does any one of them present a complete exposition of all the doctrines of the Bible. Whatever other benefits may be derived from the study of the influence of the personality upon the particular doctrine with which a writer is particularly occupied, it will serve to acquaint one with the thoughts and emotions of the writer.

Moral and Intellectual Character of the Bible

The discussion of the divine origin and character of the Bible belongs rather to apologetics than to hermeneutics. It is of primary importance, however, that the interpreter recognize the sanctity of the moral and intellectual character of the Bible. Someone has said that the first principle in understanding the Bible is true devotion to the God of the Bible. The right use of the analogy of faith will do much to prevent the interpreter from attaching to any part of the Bible a meaning not morally in harmony with the character of God. It is not within the province of man to dictate as to what the moral and intellectual character of the Bible should be. Since we attribute it to God, it is natural to expect that its teachings should present a moral and intellectual tone superior to that of man. There are certain innate principles of the human heart, certain involuntary and almost unconscious longings and expectations, the satisfying of which we naturally expect in the Bible. For example, the desire for happiness, the inward conviction of the existence of a supreme being, and the consciousness of progress toward a future destiny are common to all men. It is natural, therefore, to expect in the Bible, a satisfying of that desire for happiness, a revelation of that supreme being, and a reference to that future destiny.

Chapter IX

Doctrinal Hermeneutics

Having now studied psychological, grammatical, historical, and Scriptural hermeneutics, we have only to consider doctrinal hermeneutics to have within our grasp the main principles of Biblical interpretation. Doctrinal hermeneutics lies at the very foundation of all Biblical interpretation. We have studied in what state of mind the interpreter should approach the Bible; the human language by which divine thought is conveyed; the historical or human facts that surround the Bible, and the varied circumstances which have influenced the human instruments of divine inspiration; but now we must go to the root of our subject and consider the divine thoughts, or inspiration itself.

The study of inspiration should be distinguished from the study of the canon. By “canon” is meant the sum of those books which are generally admitted by the entire church to a place among the inspired writings. The study of the canon is not included in our present purpose.

Preliminary Remarks

Before beginning the study of inspiration we should carefully distinguish between revelation and inspiration. By “revelation” we

mean a direct communication from God to man either of such knowledge as man could not of himself obtain, or which was not known to the person who received the revelation.

By “inspiration” we mean the actuating energy of the Holy Spirit in whatever degree or manner it may have been exercised. Human agents chosen of God and guided by inspiration have officially proclaimed his will by word of mouth or committed it to writing.

The object of revelation is to commit knowledge; that of inspiration is to give infallibility in teaching. The effect of revelation is to make wiser; that of inspiration is to infallibly preserve one from error in teaching. As to what extent inspiration interferes with or controls the human faculties we shall see in what follows.

The Testimony of the Sacred Writers As to Their Own Inspiration

To begin with, let us admit that the authority of the Bible cannot be proved by the Bible alone. It is altogether logical and fair, nevertheless, that the Bible should be allowed to testify concerning its own inspiration, and that this testimony should be compared with other testimonies that may be adduced.

The First Fact.—The Old Testament generally represents its authors as men who received a mission from heaven and supernatural knowledge for the purpose of transmitting to men a revelation from God. Since none of us who have read the Bible can deny the fact that Moses and the prophets claim to be inspired, we omit as superfluous the citation and proof. That the entire Old Testament claims for its authors divine inspiration, we believe will be admitted by all.

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The Second Fact.—In John we read that Jesus Christ promised the Guide—the Holy Spirit—to his apostles. In Acts we read that the Holy Spirit was given in an extraordinary manner. The fact that this promise was made by Jesus Christ to the Apostles, is universally agreed upon by the gospel writers. Some have objected that the promise of the Holy Spirit was to none but to the apostles. The objection falls so far short of support in the sacred writings, however, that it is hardly worthy of extended notice. It will be a profitable exercise for the student to examine the several passages in the Gospels where Christ promised the Holy Spirit to his disciples and followers and then to search for its fulfilment in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. You should carefully distinguish between the gift of the Holy Spirit promised to all believers and the special inspiration of the sacred writers. The aid and illumination derived from the Holy Spirit by a Christian is different from the inspiration of the sacred writers only in degree. It is clear to any careful student of the New Testament that the authors of the several books of the New Testament occupy a position special and unique.

The Third Fact.—The majority of the writers of the New Testament declare plainly and boldly that they were inspired. See Gal. 1:11, 12; Acts 15:28, and many other passages. Paul was not one of the Twelve, but was chosen to a special mission and was equally inspired with them.

The Fourth Fact.—The claim of the sacred writers of the Old and New Testaments to a real inspiration and to an authority which flows from it was admitted by their contemporaries and successors. It is evident from sources other than the Bible itself that the Jewish people held the Old Testament to be inspired. The historian Flavius Josephus, as well as the New Testament in the first century of our era, attests this fact, and since that time both Jews and Christians

agree in holding the inspiration of the Old Testament. The writings of the Church Fathers and other available histories strongly testify to the fact that the contemporaries of the New Testament writers held them as inspired men. To deny that the Holy Scriptures are inspired is to discredit their testimony altogether and to discard their historical value, for the Scriptures themselves assert their own inspiration; and if they are untrue in that claim, we may have just reason to discredit them as a whole. No other book has ever held such prolonged and universal respect as the Bible. To reject its testimony to its own inspiration is to reject it altogether, and to reject it altogether means to reject in like manner many other documents and the testimony of the best and most intelligent men who have ever lived. The testimony of the Bible to its own inspiration, too, is in harmony with the judgment of the best and wisest men who have ever lived.

Historical Facts

What we shall call attention to first under historical facts is something that may be studied at length with great profit. It is the change produced upon the intelligence of the apostles on the day of Pentecost. Until this wonderful day these unlearned fishermen were incapable of fully understanding the Master's will and work; but on the day of Pentecost there was made a remarkable change. These men, whose slowness and stupidity had often grieved the Savior and astonishes us when we read the Gospels, became almost in an instant the authoritative teachers of the human race, not only of their own age but of all ages. Though some of the apostles were almost destitute of literary culture, their writings satisfy the universal desire of the human soul. Their teachings are in perfect harmony with the mysteries of the human heart, which philosophy has sought in vain to reveal.

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Special attention may be directed to Peter, who at one time was timid and lacked the moral courage and intellectual force to own that he was a follower of Christ. After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, he stood up before men of almost every nation under heaven and delivered one of the most notable discourses of all times.

Another remarkable proof of divine inspiration drawn from the history of the sacred writers is the union of enthusiasm with calm judgment and good sense. The complete absence of fanaticism in men who were so extremely devoted is an unparalleled exception which can hardly be found in the leaders of any other religion. In this connection it is interesting to study the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles and writers of the New Testament.

Another point proving divine inspiration is the great accomplishments of each of the sacred writers when compared with their capabilities and human attainments. Many of the writers and characters prominent in the Bible were, before their calling, comparatively unlearned and incapable, and yet their accomplishments in the elevation of humankind is unparalleled. This striking contrast between their human powers and their accomplishments cannot but suggest divine inspiration.

The general harmony that exists between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and, in fact, between all the several books of the Bible, cannot be accounted for in any other way except by inspiration. How could men living so far removed from each other in time, and surrounded by circumstances so vastly different, speak in such profound harmony as we find in the Bible, except they were guided by some power superior to the human mind?

The fulfilment of prophecy is a strong testimony to the divine inspiration of the prophets. This study is open to anyone who can

compare the prophecies with their recorded fulfilments. No one can pursue such a study with an unbiased and charitable spirit without being strongly impressed with the divine inspiration of the prophets.

Arguments from Feeling, or the Testimony of the Holy Spirit

We cannot depend absolutely upon mere human feelings as a logical argument, for this might let in a flood of deception. One man's feelings when reading the Bible might tell him that the Bible was not inspired simply because he approached it with a doubtful mind and an inferior motive; while another man might instinctively feel that it was inspired, without being able to prove his convictions to the other man.

General Remarks on the Proof Adduced

The proofs we have just considered are sufficient to establish the fact that the sacred writers were inspired. These proofs do not, however, determine either the nature of inspiration or the degree of inspiration. Many different theories of inspiration have been held and are still held. The theory of verbal inspiration advocates that the very words and letters of the Bible are inspired. The mystical theory regards the sacred writers as passive, wholly possessed of the Spirit, and uttering their words in a species of frenzy. Many other theories, such as the rationalistic theory, and the theory of a mere gracious influence, have all had their advocates.

The proofs we have just been considering may be applied equally in several of the theories that have been mentioned. The passages in the Bible that speak of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and of inspiration do not fully decide the question as to the nature and extent of inspiration. The capacities and endowments that the Holy

Spirit imparts to men are varied both in degree and in nature. Notice, for example, the mechanical skill of Bezaleel. (Exod. 35:31.) Contrast this with the divine wisdom of Christ and the inspiring effect of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

We regard what we have said as sufficient proof of the truth of inspiration, and we shall now proceed to examine the nature and extent of inspiration.

Nature and Extent of Inspiration

In the further consideration of this subject we will ask ourselves three questions: (1) Did the sacred writers preserve their individuality? (2) Did inspiration exclude occasionality from the sacred writings? (3) Did inspiration exclude accommodation?

I. DID THE SACRED WRITERS RETAIN THEIR INDIVIDUALITY?

1. Inspiration Was Sometimes Imparted Successively and by Degrees.—This is less apparent in the Old Testament than in the New. It is sufficient for our purpose to examine the New Testament. The Holy Spirit imparted gifts not only to different persons, but to the same person at different times and in different degrees. When sending out his apostles before the day of Pentecost, Christ delegated to them, through the Holy Spirit, power to cast out devils, to heal the sick, and to preach the kingdom of God. (See Matt. 10:5-8; Mark 6:7; Luke 9:1, 2; Luke 10:9-20.) On one occasion Jesus breathed on his disciples and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22). Whatever the meaning of this last act may have been, the apostles were not yet fully equipped for their work; the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was still necessary. Even after the day of Pentecost and the glorious infusion of the Holy Spirit experienced by the apostles, they still did not fully

understand the calling of the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-18, 44-48; 15:1-29).

It is clear from Paul's letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 14:1, 12) that believers ought to desire gifts superior to those which they have already attained, and that they may by prayer obtain them. From all these instances we conclude that inspiration of the Holy Spirit was imparted to the apostles and others in the early church successively and by degrees. This left room for the exercise of a degree of individuality.

2. The Religious Knowledge of Inspired Men Was Sometimes Acquired by Human and Ordinary Means.—This cannot be affirmed of all the sacred writers, nor even of the greater part of them. We know positively to the contrary with some of them. We know, however, that this is true at least with sacred historians. The genealogies of the Bible are undoubtedly extracts or copies of existing documents. Genesis in the Old Testament and Matthew and Luke in the New Testament contain extended lists of genealogies which were undoubtedly obtained by the writers in the ordinary way that historical events are collected today. The apostle John in his writing (1 John 1:3) appeals to his personal knowledge of the facts which he recorded. Jesus appointed his disciples to be witnesses unto him. They were men who had been eye-witnesses of his majesty and had obtained a great part of their knowledge from him by hearing him teach. Human knowledge and divine inspiration are often commingled in the work of God. (See Acts 15:28.) Here it is expressly stated that the apostles used their judgment in conjunction with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The apostles were not mere machines acted upon by the Holy Spirit, for Paul tells us that the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

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The diversities of style and methods so prominent among the inspired writers can be accounted for only by their individuality; while they never contradicted, they frequently differed in their methods of presentation.

Let us hear the testimony of the inspired writers to their individuality. Paul humbly confesses that he retained his personality, even though the knowledge of God was manifest through him. (See 2 Cor. 11:6.)

3. Relation of Inspiration to the Individuality of the Sacred Writers.—From the proofs that have been given of the inspiration and individuality of the sacred writers, it is evident that the Bible contains two elements—a divine and a human. The sacred writers expressly assert that the Holy Spirit spake by them (Matt. 10:20; Acts 2:4; 2 Pet. 1:21); that their writings had the character of infallible truth, and possessed absolute authority (John 10:35; Luke 16:29, 31; John 5: 39; Matt. 5:17, 18); that as prophets and apostles they spoke and acted for God, and that what he willed they said (Matt. 22:43; Ps. 95:7-11; Heb. 3:7-11).

The individuality of the sacred writers and the human element of the Bible are evident from the traces of human characteristics left upon the whole framework and style of the Scriptures. Each author has his own manner of expressing his thoughts. When we read Isaiah, we say, “This is not the style of Jeremiah or of Ezekiel”; and when we read John, we say, “This is not the style of Paul.” These facts prove the existence of two factors whose mysterious union and cooperation produced the Holy Scriptures in the form, style, and manner which Infinite Wisdom knew to be most suitable to the mind and heart of man. These two factors are the Holy Spirit and the human intelligences of the sacred writers. The question arises: What

is the relation of these two factors to each other? That question we shall not endeavor to elucidate.

4. Inspiration Did Not Destroy the Conscious Self-Control of the Inspired Writers.—“The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (1 Cor. 14:32). This scripture is conclusive evidence that the sacred writers did not lose their conscious self-control. The inspired writers of the Bible were not, like the priests of heathen gods, thrown into a state of unconscious ecstasy in which their understandings were inactive, while they gave utterance to words of which they knew not the import. They did not speak in spite of themselves, as was the case with the heathen oracles.

The Bible from beginning to end bears evidence of their calm, constant self-control. They spoke as they were moved upon by the Holy Spirit, but remained in full possession of their faculties and self-control; the human and divine mysteriously intermingled to give us a revelation worthy of God and suited to man. Probably the most striking example of this union is Jesus Christ. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, but born of the Virgin Mary. As a child he was subject to his parents, grew up to manhood and increased in wisdom (Luke 2:40) as other children, yet he recognized his divinity, for at the age of twelve he was about his Father's business. He suffered hunger, thirst, weariness of body, and sorrow of mind just as other men do, and yet by divine power he calmed the fury of a storm on the Sea of Galilee by his word, arose from the grave and ascended into heaven. Throughout his life, from his conception to his ascension, there is mysteriously commingled the human and the divine. The explanation of this union lies within the confines of mystery, yet what we know of it is a strong testimony to the wisdom of God. Just how human individuality was mingled

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with divine inspiration in the production of the Bible we may never exactly know; that it is true, however, we cannot doubt.

II. DID INSPIRATION EXCLUDE OCCASIONALITY FROM THE SACRED WRITINGS?

We have before proved that the circumstances in which the writer was placed influenced him—that the occasion was frequently the cause of the writing. By “occasionality” we mean the influence which the occasion, the times, and the persons addressed exercised upon the sacred writings; and this influence was perfectly compatible with their inspiration.

The Bible was written “at sundry times and in divers manners”; it is therefore to be expected that the occasions upon which it was written would influence in some way the particulars of the writing. Some of the writings of the apostles were of such an occasional character that they have not been preserved. (See 1 Cor. 5:9.) Others that have been preserved have not been included in the canon. (See Col. 4:16.) Many of the writings of the Bible, if not considered in the light of the occasion upon which they were written, would be stripped of their meaning. No careful reader of the Epistles of Paul can doubt their occasionality. The same is true of many other books of the Bible. The Old Testament, for instance, written primarily for the Jewish people, is more occasional than the New Testament. It is the principle of occasionality that did away with the Old Testament and established the New Testament as the law of liberty in this dispensation. The fourth commandment of the decalogue—“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy”—was given to the Jewish people, and it commemorated the occasion of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Many of the laws and precepts of the Old Testament were strictly occasional. For instance, Jesus said, “Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to

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put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so.” The sacrifices and offerings under the law were occasional, and continued only until the perfect sacrifice for sin, Jesus Christ, should die for all men. But the occasional character of the Bible does not interfere in the least with divine inspiration. While the several parts of the Bible were influenced in some degree by occasionality, they contain a universal principle applicable to all men in all ages.

What has been the need of men in other ages with respect to redemption and salvation from sin is, to a considerable degree, the need of men today and at all times. The Bible, then, while written at sundry times and in divers manners, has left us an inspired record of the universal laws and divine principles which are applicable to men of all ages. We conclude, therefore, that inspiration does not exclude occasionality and that occasionality does not hinder inspiration.

III. DOES INSPIRATION EXCLUDE ALL ACCOMMODATION?

There is a false accommodation and there is a true accommodation. The former relates to the matter; the latter, to the form. The former holds that Christ and his apostles accommodated themselves to the modes of thought around them in such a manner as to admit error into their instructions in respect to the interpretation of the Scripture or in respect to forms of opinion and articles of belief; the latter, that they fell in with prevalent modes of thought, so as to serve for the better apprehension of the truth, but not to lend countenance to error. The former is incompatible with inspired wisdom; the latter is perfectly reasonable and just.

Accommodation in form is an act of condescension on the part of God, by which, in his wisdom and goodness, he adapts revelation to human capacity in order that it may be understood and rendered effectual for our salvation. This definition contains the statement of

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a fact and its object which are indissolubly united. The fact is the form, more or less exact, more or less complete, given to revelation. The object is to enable man to understand it and accept it. Take away the one or the other and there is no such thing as accommodation.

The most natural and the most appropriate illustration of accommodation on the part of God, is furnished by a parent in the instruction of his child. Every pious and sensible father, when teaching his child the knowledge of God, uses language adapted to his capacity, and studiously avoids expressions philosophically exact. In the same way, God chooses the ideas and the language best adapted to convey revealed truth to the mind of man. This is all that is meant by accommodation, which we find in the expression, in the occasion, in gradual revelation, in limitation, in the time, or in the mode of teaching; for in these various respects the divine wisdom may require that God should accommodate himself to human weakness in order to attain the object of revelation.

IV. NECESSITY OF ACCOMMODATION

General Necessity.—For example, the employment of human language is an incontestable accommodation, for language made to express human ideas is necessarily incapable of rendering exactly the infinite nature and counsels of God. God could not express the infinite mysteries of his nature to finite minds. Therefore, he condescends to accommodate himself in revealing to men not the infinite truth and mysteries of his Godhead but saving truth accommodated to the needs of men and expressed in language that they can comprehend.

Special Necessity.—The necessity of accommodation of the divine revelation will appear stronger if we consider the people to whom revelation was, at first, more directly addressed. “The common people heard him gladly,” and the “poor had the gospel

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preached unto them.” Those to whom the gospel was first preached were poor and unlearned men, as are the great majority of those to whom it is still preached. God, not wishing to sacrifice the unlearned and ignorant masses, accommodated himself to express the divine revelation of his will in simple language. Had the Bible been expressed in philosophical language, only the philosopher could have been saved; but the simple truths of the Bible as they are expressed may be understood by both the unlearned and the learned, hence, all may be saved.

The soul-winner may learn two valuable lessons from the law of accommodation carried out in the Bible. First, to accommodate himself to his hearers with respect to form; to become all things to all men that he may win some. Second, not to accommodate himself in matter so as to take from or add to the divine revelation. The gospel of Christ was intended for all the world. Christianity is the universal religion, and the words and doctrines of this religion are so expressed that they may be accommodated in form to every creature in all the world and yet remain unchanged in matter. The man who will not accommodate himself in form to the manners and customs, modes of thought and circumstances in general of the people to whom he wishes to interpret the Bible, will fail of his purpose; and the man who seeks to accommodate in matter the gospel of Christ to the capriciousness and self-love of men will not only fail to save others, but will lose his own soul also. To become all things to all men in a way to save, means accommodation in form, but never in matter. Almost every, if not every, non-Christian religion has in it certain elements and doctrines that prevent its accommodation to the needs of men of every nation; hence, none of them can ever become a universal religion.

Accommodation of Matter.—The Old Testament, in some instances, was an accommodation in matter as well as in forms, but the law was not perfect. One instance of accommodation is mentioned in Matt. 19:8: “Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.” This is plainly an accommodation in matter. The law could not give life. God, therefore, accommodated the law of the Old Testament in such a way as to allow a man to divorce his wife for many trivial causes. The New Testament is the perfect law of liberty. It restores man to the plane of moral purity. In it, therefore, the accommodation of matter to the unregenerate nature of man is unnecessary and unknown; but accommodation in form is common, as we have before noticed.

Concluding Remarks

“We hold the doctrine of plenary [or absolute] inspiration, not verbal inspiration, and believe that all the facts of Scripture are consistent with it. Objections to this doctrine have been founded on the individuality of the sacred writers. The expression of their personal feelings, experience, and beliefs; the variety of conception and expression in their statements of the same truths, and in the narratives of the same events, have been appealed to as proofs that they were not plenary inspired. Their individuality has been admitted. It has been admitted that the Scriptures are of human authorship, and, at the same time, of divine authorship. Two factors—the Holy Spirit and the sacred writers—cooperated in their production; and the result was an infallible book. The union of these two factors is acknowledged to be a mystery, but not an impossibility, as the illustrative facts, adduced in those sections, clearly show. The human element was no less human because it wrought with the divine; and the divine element was no less divine

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because it wrought with the human. The Scriptures afford evidence of the perfection and harmonious working of both.

“If the individuality of the sacred writers is consistent with plenary inspiration, it is not difficult to see how occasionality, or the individuality of circumstances—as occasion, time, place, and persons addressed—can be so. These limitations would merely affect the range and object of inspiration, not its nature. They are as compatible with that as the wider limitations of earth and time.

“Some have taught, as has been stated, that our Lord and the sacred writers spoke and wrote occasionally, according to the prevailing opinions of the times, and not according to the truth of things. Such an accommodation we reject as inconsistent with right views of inspiration and with the facts of Scripture rightly understood. But an accommodation which has respect to the form merely of the doctrines, or lessons taught, we hold to be admissible and even necessary. It is required by our mental and moral constitution. Revelation and inspiration would be impossible without it.

“The natural deficiencies of the sacred writers are consistent with the doctrine of plenary inspiration. Some of them were deficient in education, in literary capacity, in intellectual endowments, and in refinement. These things had nothing to do with inspiration. They belonged to the sacred writers as men; and when they received the divine commission to write, it was not necessary to endow them with the taste and to adorn them with the classic elegance of Sophocles and Plato. Inspiration did not change a single faculty of the mind; neither did it supply information on any subject beyond its range; that was the province of revelation. It did not make grammarians, rhetoricians, nor logicians. In these things it left the man as it found him. Had this been kept in mind, the extremes of the

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Hebraists and Purists would have been avoided. The Scriptures would not have been represented, on the one hand, as abounding in Hebrew idioms and constructions, and in solecisms; or, on the other hand, as models of classic excellence, and standards of literary taste.

“Statements in the Bible which do not come from God, and which are not sanctioned by his authority, are consistent with plenary inspiration. The sacred writers merely recorded them; and the record, not the statements, is infallible. The inquiries with regard to such statements must always be: Who is the author of them? Does the sacred writer approve them? or does he merely record them as parts of a historical narrative? If the latter, they furnish no argument against his inspiration.

“Quotations made by the writers of the New Testament from the Old have occasioned difficulty in the minds of many, in regard to the subject of plenary inspiration. Some of these quotations are taken literally from the Septuagint version, where it differs from the Hebrew; and some differ from both the original text and the Septuagint version, even where, according to our exegesis, the Hebrew text and the Greek translation correspond to each other. These difficulties rise out of the strictly verbal theory of inspiration, but vanish on the dynamical theory which we adopt.

Chapter X

Passages from the Old Testament Quoted in the New Testament

The passages in the Old Testament quoted by the New Testament writers provide one of the best means within our reach of studying the laws of Biblical interpretation. It may not be possible to formulate any exact rules by which the New Testament writers interpreted the Old Testament but there are certain general principles developed by these quotations that should be studied by every Biblical interpreter.

Number of Quotations.—The number of direct quotations from the Old Testament found in the New Testament has been estimated at 263 passages; less direct quotations at about 376. Including both direct and indirect quotations we have in the New Testament about 639 quotations from the Old Testament.

Formulas.—The most common formulas by which the quotations from the Old Testament are introduced are: “that it might be fulfilled,” “it is written,” “it has been written,” or “the Scripture saith.” Not all quotations, of course, are formally introduced. The phrase, “that it might be fulfilled” has sometimes been misunderstood to mean that God brought about certain things simply because the prophet had spoken it. The opposite, however, is the true

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meaning. The prophet foretold it because it was foreseen that it would occur.

Classification.—The quotations taken from the Old Testament have been classified as prophetic, demonstrative, explanatory, and illustrative. A few examples of each class of quotations will be given. The student should take a concordance and look up others.

Prophetic: Matt. 4:15, 16; Matt. 8:17; Acts 1:20; Acts 2:17-20.

The prophetic quotations referring to Christ and the church have been estimated to amount to about 120.

Demonstrative: John 6:45.

Explanatory: Heb. 12:20.

Illustrative: Rom. 10:18-21.

Sources of Quotations.—Most of the quotations from the Old Testament found in the New Testament are taken from the Septuagint, a Greek version of the Old Testament. Since Greek was the prevailing literary language during the time of Christ and the apostles, it is only natural that they would quote from the Greek rather than from the Hebrew. On account of the quotations being taken mainly from the Septuagint version, the phraseology frequently disagrees with our translation of the Bible, which was taken from the Hebrew. But this difference in wording seldom, if ever, does violence to the meaning.

Untraced Quotations.—There are a few quotations in the New Testament credited to the prophets which are not found in so many words in the Old Testament.

An example is Matt. 2:23. The Old Testament nowhere records “he shall be called a Nazarene.” It will be noted, however, that “it was spoken by the prophets” (not by the prophet). Nazareth was

rather a mean city, a city of no great importance. The meaning intended in this text, therefore, may be that the prophets agree that Christ was to be of humble birth.

Bearing of Quotations upon Doctrine.—Many of the truths and doctrines taught by the Old Testament are eternal facts, and therefore are common to the old and new dispensations. A few of the doctrines common to both Testaments are: salvation by faith (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:6-9; Rom. 4:10, 11; 1 Pet 2:6, 7; John 8:56); faith an act of righteousness, whether exercised by Jew or Gentile (Rom. 4:3-8); men are condemned through unbelief (Heb. 4:6-11; Heb. 8:9, 10); salvation by grace (Rom. 11:4-6); holiness essential (2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Pet. 1:16); the necessity of humility (Jas. 4:6); present temporal blessings associated with obedience to God (Eph. 6:1-3; 1 Pet. 3:10, 11); the divinity of Christ (compare Isa. 8:13, 14, with Rom. 9:32, 33 and Rom. 10:11; Isa. 45:21-25 with Rom. 14:11; also Heb. 1:6, 8, 10 with Psa. 45:6, 7; 102:25-27); immortality, the resurrection, and future judgment. That the Jewish church had some glimpses of immortality, of the resurrection of the body, and of future judgment, may be gathered from the following texts: Matt. 22:32; Heb. 11:5, 13, 14; 1 Cor. 15:55; 1 Thess. 5:2; Rev. 6:17.

Symbolical Numbers, Names, and Colors

Too much stress has sometimes been laid upon the symbolism of numbers, names, and colors, yet every observant reader of the Bible has had his attention arrested by what seems a mystical or symbolical use of numbers. Certain proper names, such as Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon, are also used in a symbolical sense; and the colors, especially red, black, and white, are used in a figurative sense. The only valid method of ascertaining the symbolical meaning and usage of numbers, names, and colors, is to collect and

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study the passages where they occur. The hermeneutical process is, therefore, practically the same as that by which we have developed other principles of interpretation. Since the province of hermeneutics is not to furnish an elaborate discussion of the subject, but to develop principles, we will content ourselves with a brief discussion of the subject, and will leave the student to apply the principles laid down and further develop the subjects for himself.

1. SYMBOLICAL NUMBERS

The principal numbers used symbolically in the Bible are three, four, seven, ten, and twelve.

Three.—The number one does not appear to have been used in a figurative sense. It has a notable emphasis in such passages as: “Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah” (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29, 32; 1 Cor. 8:4). But neither here nor elsewhere does it appear to be used in any other than its literal sense.

The number three, however, is employed in such relations as to suggest that it is especially the number of divine fullness in unity. Study the triads, or groups of three, in the following instances:

The three men who appeared to Abraham (Gen. 18:2).

The three forefathers of the children of Israel—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod. 3:6).

The three sons of Noah by whom the postdiluvian world was peopled (Gen. 9:19).

The three constituent parts of the universe—heaven, earth, and sea (Exod. 20:11; Ps. 146:6).

The threefold cord (Eccl. 4:12).

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More important still are those passages that exhibit a sacredness in their use of the number three by associating its meaning with the divine name. Notice the following:

The thrice-repeated benediction (Num. 6:24-29).

The three-fold name in the formula of baptism (Matt 28:19).

The apostolic benediction (2 Cor. 13:4).

The trisagion (thrice holy) (Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8). Notice in the latter text that the trisagion is followed by the three divine titles, Lord, God, and Almighty, and the additional words, “Who was, and who is, and who is to come.”

Four.—From the use of the number three in the Bible with reference to divine things it has been called the number of God. The use of the number four, in like manner, has been called the number of the world, or of the visible creation. Notice its use in the following passages:

The four winds of heaven (Jer. 49:36; Ezek. 37:9; Dan. 7:2; Zech. 2:6; Matt. 24:31; Rev. 7:1-4). These four corners, or extremities, of the earth doubtless correspond to the four points of the compass—east, west, north, and south.

Seven.—The number seven, being the sum of four and three, has been supposed to symbolize some mystical union of God with the world, and, accordingly, has been called the sacred number of the covenant between God and his creation. Notice the use of the number seven in the following passages.

The hebdomad, or period of seven days (Gen. 2:2, 3; Exod. 20:8-11).

The period between birth and circumcision (Gen. 17:12 compared with Lev. 12:2, 3).

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The Passover feast of seven days (Exod. 12:15).

The feast of Pentecost, seven weeks after the day of the wave-offering (Lev. 23:15).

The feast of the trumpets, in the seventh month, and the jubilee every seven times seven years (Lev. 25:8).

Sprinkling of the blood of sin-offering seven times before the Lord (Leviticus 6).

Ceremonial cleansing of the lepers seven times with the blood, seven times with oil (Lev. 14:7, 16).

Sprinkling of the leper's house seven times (Lev. 14:51).

Other ceremonial cleansings (Num. 19:11; Lev. 15: 13, 24).

Seven priests with seven trumpets compassed the walls of Jericho once each day for seven days (Josh. 6:13-15).

The golden candlesticks, the seven lamps (Exod. 37:23).

See in Revelation the seven churches, seven stars, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven thunders, and seven plagues.

Since the number seven completes the list of primary numbers, it has been regarded as the number of rounded fullness or completeness. It is believed that the etymology of the Hebrew word sustains this idea.

Ten.—Study the following:

The ten commandments of the Decalogue (Exodus, Deuteronomy).

Ten elders in the ancient Jewish court (Ruth 4:2).

Ten princes represented the tribes of Israel (Josh. 22:14).

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Ten virgins went forth to meet the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1).

The ten horns of Dan. 7:7-24; Rev. 12:3; Rev. 13:1; Rev. 17:12.

In a general way ten times is equivalent to many times. (See Gen. 31:7, 41; Job 19:3.) Ten women means many women (Lev. 26:26). Ten sons means many sons (1 Sam. 1:8). Ten mighty ones means many mighty ones (Eccl. 7:19).

Twelve.—Symbolically, the use of the number twelve in the Scriptures seems to have its foundation in the twelve tribes of Israel. See the following:

Twelve pillars (Exod. 24:4).

Twelve stones in the breastplate of the high priest (Exod. 28:21).

Twelve cakes of showbread (Lev. 24:5).

Twelve bullocks, twelve rams, twelve lambs, twelve kids for offerings of dedication (Num. 7:87).

In the New Testament we have the twelve apostles, twelve gates, and twelve foundations to the city of the New Jerusalem. (See Rev. 21:12-14.) The number twelve has thus been called the mystical number of God's chosen people.

Besides the numbers referred to, the numbers forty and seventy seem to have a special significance in a number of texts. Number forty has been thought by some to designate penal judgment or the period of judgment. Notice, for instance:

The forty days of the flood (Gen. 7:4, 12, 17).

The forty years' wandering in the wilderness (Num. 14:34).

The forty stripes with which a convicted criminal was to be beaten (Deut. 25:3).

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The forty years of Egypt's desolation (Ezek. 29:11, 12).

The forty days and nights of fasting by Moses, Elijah, and Jesus (Exod. 24:18; 1 Kings 19:8; Matt. 4:2).

The number seventy seems in several instances to have a particular meaning. Notice the following:

Seventy sons of Jacob (Gen. 46:27; Exod. 1:5; Deut. 10:22).

Seventy elders of Israel (Exod. 24:1-9; Num. 11:24).

Seventy years of captivity (Jer. 25:11, 12; Dan. 9:2).

Seventy weeks of Daniel's prophecies (Dan. 9:24).

Seventy disciples of our Lord (Luke 10:1).

Care should be exercised in the use of symbolical numbers. Every time the numbers, three, four, seven, ten, and twelve, are used they do not, of course, have a symbolical meaning. Also in the use of all other symbols and figures of speech the first duty of the interpreter is to determine whether the literal or the symbolical sense is intended. A day has been taken in the interpretation of the prophecies as the universal symbol of a year. That in certain cases a day may be used to symbolize a period of time, a day or more than a day, seems probable. To adopt the theory, however, that in prophecy a day is universally used to represent a year, is erroneous.

2. SYMBOLICAL NAMES

Many proper names are used in the Bible in a symbolical or figurative sense. In most instances the signification of proper names used symbolically are too clear to need extended discussion. For instance, Egypt and Babylon are most naturally the symbols of oppression and bondage. Sodom and Gomorrah have become synonyms for adultery and wickedness. Jerusalem and Zion, on the

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contrary, are frequently used throughout the Bible as symbols of the people of God. Students should take a concordance and examine a number of texts where the following words occur: Egypt, Babylon, Sodom, Gomorrah, Jerusalem, Zion. Other proper names may sometimes be used symbolically, but those just given are most common.

3. SYMBOLISM OF COLORS

The use of colors as symbols, with the probable exception of white, black, and red, is not so common as the use of figures and proper names. The rainbow as a covenant between God and Noah, and the four colors—blue, purple, scarlet, and white—prominent in the construction of the tabernacle, have been thought by some to have particular meaning. To give any definite signification to these colors, however, seems rather strained and far-fetched.

Purple and scarlet, so often mentioned in connection with the dress of kings, have naturally been regarded as the symbol of royalty and majesty. (See Judg. 8:26; Esth. 8:15; Dan. 5:7.)

White is preeminently the symbol of purity and righteousness. The Hebrew word for fine linen is from a root which signifies whiteness or to be white. Study the following uses of the word white:

Vestments of the high priests (Exod. 28:5, 6, 8, 15, 39).

White garments of priests and Levites (2 Chron. 5:12).

Linen white as the light, in which the transfigured Christ appeared (Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:3).

The apparel of the angels (Matt. 28:3; John 20:12; Acts 1:10).

Fine linen as a symbol of righteousness of saints (Rev. 19:8).

White horses of the victorious conquerors (Rev. 6:2; 19:11).

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The throne of God (Rev. 20:11).

Black in its symbolical meaning is naturally the opposite of white. It is the symbol of evil, of mourning, of pestilence, and of famine. Read Jer. 14:2; Rev. 6:5, 6.

Red is naturally associated with war and bloodshed. Read Isa. 9:5; Nah. 2:3.

