E.P. BARROWS COMPANION TO THE BIBLE

by E.P. Barrows

A reference work designed to assist Bible study, with special attention to teachers of Bible classes and Sunday schools. Barrows provides the results of biblical investigation in an accessible format for ministers and students of God's word.

44 Chapters

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Chapter 1

Preface

GENERAL PREFACE. The design of the present work, as its title indicates, is to assist in the study of God's word. The author has had special reference to teachers of Bible classes and Sabbath-schools; ministers of the gospel who wish to have ready at hand the results of biblical investigation in a convenient and condensed form; and, in general, the large body of intelligent laymen and women in our land who desire to pursue the study of Scripture in a thorough and systematic way. The First Part contains a concise view of the Evidences of Revealed Religion. Here, since Christianity rests on a basis of historic facts, special prominence has been given to the historic side of these evidences; those, namely, which relate to the genuineness, integrity, authenticity, and inspiration of the several books of the Bible. A brief view is added of the evidences which are of an internal and experimental character. In the Introductions to the Old and New Testament which follow in the Second and Third Parts, the general facts are first given; then an account of the several divisions of each, with their office and mutual relations, and such a notice of each particular book as will prepare the reader to study it intelligently and profitably. The Fourth Part is devoted to the Principles of Biblical Interpretation. Here the plan is to consider the Scriptures, first, on the human side, as addressed to men in human language and according to human modes of thinking and speaking; then, on the divine side, as containing a true revelation from God, and differing in this respect from all other writings. To this twofold view the author attaches great importance. To the human side belong the ordinary principles of interpretation, {4} which apply alike to all writings; to the divine side, the question of the unity of revelation, and the interpretation of types and prophecies. In each of the abovenamed divisions the author has endeavored to keep prominently in view the unity of revelation and the inseparable connection of all its parts. It is only when we thus contemplate it as a glorious whole, having beginning, progress, and consummation, that we can truly understand it. Most of the popular objections to the Old Testament have their foundation in an isolated and fragmentary way of viewing its facts and doctrines; and they can be fairly met only by showing the relation which these hold to the entire plan of redemption. The plan of the present work required brevity and condensation. The constant endeavor has been to state the several facts and principles as concisely as could be done consistently with a true presentation of them in an intelligible form. It may be objected that some topics, those particularly which relate to the Pentateuch, are handled in too cursory a way. The author feels the difficulty; but to go into details on this subject would require a volume. He has endeavored to do the best that was consistent with the general plan of the work. The point of primary importance to be maintained is the divine authority and inspiration of the Pentateuch-the whole Pentateuch as it existed in our Saviour's day and exists now. There are difficult questions connected with both its form and the interpretation of certain parts of it in respect to which devout believers may honestly differ. For the discussion of these the reader must be referred to the works professedly devoted to the subject. The present volume is complete in itself; yet it does not exhaust the circle of topics immediately connected with the study of the Bible. It is the author's purpose to add another volume on Biblical Geography and Antiquities, with a brief survey of the historic relations of the covenant people to the Gentile world.

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Chapter 2

01. Introductory Remarks

EVIDENCES OF REVEALED RELIGION.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

I. The Christian religion is not a mere system of ideas, like the philosophy of Plato or Aristotle. It rests on a basis of historic facts. The great central fact of the gospel is thus expressed by Jesus himself: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John 3:16; and by the apostle Paul thus: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Timothy 1:15. With the appearance of God's Son in human nature were connected a series of mighty works, a body of divine teachings, the appointment of apostles and the establishment of the visible Christian church; all which are matters of historic record. Nor is this all. It is the constant doctrine of Christ and his apostles that he came in accordance with the scriptures of the Old Testament, and that his religion is the fulfilment of the types and prophecies therein contained: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Matthew 5:17. "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, {32} and in the psalms concerning me." Luke 24:44. The facts of the New Testament connect themselves, therefore, immediately with those of the Old, so that the whole series constitutes an indivisible whole. The Bible is, from beginning to end, the record of a supernatural revelation made by God to men. As such, it embraces not only supernatural teachings, but supernatural facts also; and the teachings rest on the facts in such a way that both must stand or fall together.

II. This basis of supernatural facts, then, must be firmly maintained against unbelievers whose grand aim is to destroy the historic foundation of the gospel, at least so far as it contains supernatural manifestations of God to men. Thus they would rob it of its divine authority, and reduce it to a mere system of human doctrines, like the teachings of Socrates or Confucius, which men are at liberty to receive or reject as they think best. Could they accomplish this, they would be very willing to eulogize the character of Jesus, and extol the purity and excellence of his precepts. Indeed, it is the fashion of modern unbelievers, after doing what lies in their power to make the gospel a mass of "cunningly-devised fables" of human origin, to expatiate on the majesty and beauty of the Saviour's character, the excellence of his moral precepts, and the benign influence of his religion. But the transcendent glory of our Lord's character is inseparable from his being what he claimed to be-the Son of God, coming from God to men with supreme authority; and all the power of his gospel lies in its being received as a message from God. To make the gospel human, is to annihilate it, and with it the hope of the world.

III. When the inquiry is concerning a long series of events intimately connected together so as to constitute one inseparable whole, two methods of investigation are open to us. We may look at the

train of events in the order of time from beginning to end; or we may select some one great event of especial prominence and importance as the central point of inquiry, and from that position look forward and backward. The latter of {33} these two methods has some peculiar advantages, and will be followed in the present brief treatise. We begin with the great central fact of revelation already referred to, that "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." 1 John 4:14. When this is shown to rest on a foundation that cannot be shaken, the remainder of the work is comparatively easy. From the supernatural appearance and works of the Son of God, as recorded in the four gospels, the supernatural endowment and works of his apostles, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and their authoritative teachings, as contained in their epistles, follow as a natural and even necessary sequel. Since, moreover, the universal rule of God's government and works is, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear," (Mark 4:28,) it is most reasonable to suppose that such a full and perfect revelation as that which God has made to us by his Son, which is certainly "the full corn in the ear," must have been preceded by exactly such preparatory revelations as we find recorded in the Old Testament. Now Jesus of Nazareth appeared among the Jews, the very people that had the scriptures of the Old Testament, and had been prepared for his advent by the events recorded in them as no other nation was prepared. He came, too, as he and his apostles ever taught, to carry out the plan of redemption begun in them. From the position, then, of Christ's advent, as the grand central fact of redemption, we look backward and forward with great advantage upon the whole line of revelation.

IV. We cannot too earnestly inculcate upon the youthful inquirer the necessity of thus looking at revelation as a whole. Strong as are the evidences for the truth of the gospel narratives considered separately, they gain new strength, on the one side, from the mighty revelations that preceded them and prepared the way for the advent of the Son of God; and on the other, from the mighty events that followed his advent in the apostolic age, and have been following ever since in the history of the Christian church. The divine origin of the Mosaic institutions can be shown on solid grounds, independently of the {34} New Testament; but on how much broader and deeper a foundation are they seen to rest, when we find (as will be shown hereafter, chap. 8) that they were preparatory to the incarnation of Jesus Christ. As in a burning mass, the heat and flame of each separate piece of fuel are increased by the surrounding fire, so in the plan of redemption, each separate revelation receives new light and glory from the revelations which precede and follow it. It is only when we view the revelations of the Bible as thus progressing "from glory to glory," that we can estimate aright the proofs of their divine origin. If it were even possible to impose upon men as miraculous a particular event, as, for example, the giving of the Mosaic law on Sinai, or the stones of the day of Pentecost, the idea that there could have been imposed on the world a series of such events, extending through many ages, and yet so connected together as to constitute a harmonious and consistent whole, is a simple absurdity. There is no explanation of the unity that pervades the supernatural facts of revelation, but that of their divine origin.

V. In strong contrast with this rational way of viewing the facts of revelation as a grand whole, is the fragmentary method of objectors. A doubt here, a cavil there, an insinuation yonder; a difficulty with this statement, an objection to that, a discrepancy here-this is their favorite way of assailing the gospel. If one chooses to treat the Bible in this narrow and uncandid way, he will soon plunge himself into the mire of unbelief. Difficulties and objections should be candidly considered, and allowed their due weight; but they must not be suffered to override irrefragable proof, else we shall

soon land in universal skepticism: for difficulties, and some of them too insoluble, can be urged against the great facts of nature and natural religion, as well as of revelation. To reject a series of events supported by an overwhelming weight of evidence, on the ground of unexplained difficulties connected with them, involves the absurdity of running into a hundred difficulties for the sake of avoiding five. If we are willing to examine the {35} claims of revelation as a whole, its divine origin will shine forth upon us like the sun in the firmament. Our difficulties we can then calmly reserve for further investigation here, or for solution in the world to come.

VI. When we institute an examination concerning the facts of revelation, the first question is that of the genuineness and uncorrupt preservation of the books in which they are recorded; the next, that of their authenticity and credibility. We may then conveniently consider the question of their inspiration. In accordance with the plan marked out above, (No. III.,) the gospel narratives will be considered first of all; then the remaining books of the New Testament. After this will be shown the inseparable connection between the facts of revelation recorded in the Old Testament and those of the New; and finally, the genuineness of the books which constitute the canon of the Old Testament, with their authenticity and inspiration. The whole treatise will be closed by a brief view of the internal and experimental evidences which commend the Bible to the human understanding and conscience as the word of God.

02. Genuineness of the Gospel Narratives

CHAPTER II.

GENUINENESS OF THE GOSPEL NARRATIVES.

I. Preliminary Remarks. 1. A book is genuine if written by the man whose name it bears, or to whom it is ascribed; or when, as in the case of several books of the Old Testament, the author is unknown, it is genuine if written in the age and country to which it is ascribed. A book is authentic which is a record of facts as opposed to what is false or fictitious; and we call it credible when the record of facts which it professes to give is worthy of belief. Authenticity and credibility are, therefore, only different views of the same quality. In the case of a book that deals mainly with principles, the question of authorship is of subordinate importance. Thus the book of Job, with the exception of the brief narratives with which it opens and closes, and which may belong to any one of several centuries, is occupied with the question of Divine providence. It is not necessary that we know what particular man was its author, or at what precise period he wrote. We only need reasonable evidence (as will be shown hereafter) that he was a prophetical man, writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But the case of the gospel narratives is wholly different. They contain a record of the supernatural appearance and works of the Son of God, on the truth of which rests our faith in the gospel. So the apostle Paul reasons: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." 1 Corinthians 15:14. It is, then, of vital importance that we know the relation which the authors of these narratives held to Christ. If they were not apostles or apostolic men, that is, associates of the apostles, laboring with them, enjoying their full confidence, and in circumstances to obtain their information directly from them-but, instead of this, wrote after the apostolic age-their testimony is not worthy of the unlimited faith which the church in all ages has reposed in it. The question, then, of the genuineness of the gospel narratives and that of their authenticity and credibility must stand or fall together.

2. In respect to the origin of the gospels, as also of the other books of the New Testament, the following things should be carefully remembered:

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First. There was a period, extending, perhaps, through some years from the day of Pentecost, when there were no written gospels, their place being supplied by the living presence and teachings of the apostles and other disciples of our Lord.

Secondly. When the need of written documents began to be felt, they were produced, one after another, as occasion suggested them. Thus the composition of the books of the New Testament extended through a considerable period of years.

Thirdly. Besides the gospels universally received by the churches, other narratives of our Lord’s life were attempted, as we learn from the evangelist Luke (1:1); but those never obtained general currency. The churches everywhere received the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,

because of the clear evidence which they had of their apostolic origin and trustworthiness; and because, also, these gospels, though not professing to give a complete account of our Lord's life and teachings, were nevertheless sufficiently full to answer the end for which they were composed, being not fragmentary sketches, but orderly narratives, each of them extending over the whole course of our Lord's ministry. The other narratives meanwhile gradually passed into oblivion. The general reception of these four gospels did not, however, come from any formal concert of action on the part of the churches, (as, for example, from the authoritative decision of a general council, since no such thing as a general council of the churches was known till long after this period;) but simply from the common perception everywhere of the unimpeachable evidence by which their apostolic authority was sustained. The narratives referred to by Luke were earlier than his gospel. They were not spurious, nor, so far as we know, unauthentic; but rather imperfect. They must not be confounded with the apocryphal gospels of a later age.

3. In respect to the quotations of Scripture by the early fathers of the church, it is important to notice their habit of {38} quoting anonymously, and often in a loose and general way. They frequently cite from memory, blending together the words of different authors, and sometimes intermingling with them their own words. In citing the prophecies of the Old Testament in an argumentative way, they are, as might have been expected, more exact, particularly when addressing Jews; yet even here they often content themselves with the scope of the passages referred to, without being particular as to the exact words. With the above preliminary remarks, we proceed to consider the evidences, external and internal, for the genuineness of the gospel narratives.

II. External Evidences. 4. Here we need not begin at a later date than the last quarter of the second century. This is the age of Irenæus in Gaul, of Tertullian in North Africa, of Clement of Alexandria in Egypt, and of some other writers. Their testimony to the apostolic origin and universal reception of our four canonical gospels is as full as can be desired. They give the names of the authors, two of them-Matthew and John-apostles, and the other two-Mark and Luke-companions of apostles and fellow-laborers with them, always associating Mark with Peter, and Luke with Paul; they affirm the universal and undisputed reception of these four gospels from the beginning by all the churches; and deny the apostolic authority of other pretended gospels. In all this, they give not their individual opinions, but the common belief of the churches. It is conceded on all hands that in their day these four gospels were universally received by the churches as genuine and authoritative records of our Lord's life and works, to the exclusion of all others.

Irenæus was a native of Asia Minor, of Greek descent; but the seat of his labors was Lyons and Vienne in Gaul, of the former of which places he became bishop after the martyrdom of Pothinus, about A.D. 177. He was born about A.D. 140, and suffered martyrdom under Septimius Severus A.D. 202. In his youth he was a disciple of Polycarp, who was in turn a disciple of the apostle John. In a letter to one Florinus, which Eusebius has preserved, (Hist. Ecclesiastes, 5. 20,) he gives, in glowing language, his {39} recollections of the person and teachings of Polycarp, and tells with what interest he listened as this man related his intercourse with the apostle John and the others who had seen the Lord, "how he recounted their words, and the things which he had heard from them concerning the Lord, and concerning his miracles and teaching." And he adds that these things which Polycarp had received from eye-witnesses he related "all in agreement with the

Scriptures;" that is, obviously, with the gospel narratives. Pothinus, the predecessor of Irenæus at Lyons, was ninety years old at the time of his martyrdom, and must have been acquainted with many who belonged to the latter part of the apostolic age. Under such circumstances, it is inconceivable that Irenæus, who knew the Christian traditions of both the East and the West, should not have known the truth respecting the reception of the gospels by the churches, and the grounds on which this reception rested, more especially in the case of the gospel of John. Tischendorf, after mentioning the relation of Irenæus to Polycarp the disciple of John, asks, with reason: "Are we, nevertheless, to cherish the supposition that Irenæus never heard a word from Polycarp respecting the gospel of John, and yet gave it his unconditional confidence-this man Irenæus, who in his controversies with heretics, the men of falsification and apocryphal works, employs against them, before all other things, the pure Scripture as a holy weapon?" (Essay, When were Our Gospels Written, p. 8.) The testimony of Irenæus is justly regarded as of the most weighty character. The fact that he gives several fanciful reasons why there should be only four gospels, (Against Heresies, 3. 11,) does not invalidate his statement of the fact that the churches had always received four, and no more. We always distinguish between men's testimony to facts of which they are competent witnesses, and their philosophical explanations of these facts.

Tertullian was born in Carthage about A.D. 160, and died between A.D. 220 and 240. About A.D. 202 he joined the sect of the Montanists; but this does not affect his testimony respecting the origin and universal reception of the four canonical gospels. His works are very numerous, and in them all he insists with great earnestness that the gospel narratives, as also the other apostolic writings, have been received without corruption, as a sacred inheritance, from the apostolic churches. His work against Marcion, whom he accuses of employing a mutilated gospel of Luke, is particularly instructive as showing how deep and settled was the conviction of the early Christians that nothing could be a gospel which did not proceed from apostles or apostolic men; and how watchful they were against all attempts to mutilate or corrupt the primitive apostolic records. In defending the true gospel of Luke against the mutilated form of it employed by Marcion, he says: "I affirm that not in the apostolic churches alone, but in all which are joined with them in the bond of fellowship, {40} that gospel of Luke which we most firmly maintain, has been valid from its first publication; but Marcion's gospel is unknown to most of them, and known to none, except to be condemned." This testimony of Tertullian is very important, as showing his full conviction that Marcion could not deny the universal reception, from the beginning, of the genuine gospel of Luke. And a little afterwards he adds: "The same authority of the apostolic churches will defend the other gospels also, which we have in like manner through them, and according to them," (Against Marcion, 4. 5.) Many more quotations of like purport might be added.

Clement of Alexandria was a pupil of Pantænus, and his successor as head of the catechetical school at Alexandria in Egypt. He was of heathen origin, born probably about the middle of the second century, and died about A.D. 220. He had a philosophical turn of mind, and after his conversion to Christianity made extensive researches under various teachers, as he himself tells us, in Greece, in Italy, in Palestine, and other parts of the East. At last he met with Pantænus in Egypt, whom he preferred to all his other guides, and in whose instructions he rested. The testimony of Clement to the universal and undisputed reception by the churches of the four canonical gospels as the writings of apostles or apostolic men, agrees with that of Tertullian. And it has the more weight, not only on account of his wide investigations, but because, also, it virtually

contains the testimony of his several teachers, some of whom must have known, if not the apostles themselves, those who had listened to their teachings. In connection with the testimony of the above-named writers, we may consider that of the churches of Lyons and Vienne in Gaul, in a letter addressed by them to "the churches of Asia and Phrygia," which Eusebius has preserved for us, (Hist. Ecclesiastes, 5. 1,) and which describes a severe persecution through which they passed in the reign of Antoninus Verus, about A.D. 177. In this they say: "So was fulfilled that which was spoken by our Lord, 'The time shall come in which whosoever killeth you shall think that he doeth God service.'" In speaking again of a certain youthful martyr, they first compare him to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, affirming, in the very words of Luke, that he "had walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," (Luke 1:6;) and then go on to describe him as "having the Comforter in himself, the Spirit, more abundantly than Zacharias," where they apply to the Holy Spirit a term peculiar to the apostle John. Here, then, we have indubitable testimony to the fact that the gospel of John, as well as of Luke, was known to the churches of Gaul in the west and Asia Minor in the east in the days of Pothinus, bishop of these churches, who suffered martyrdom in this persecution. But Pothinus was ninety years old, so that his knowledge of these gospels must have reached back to the first quarter of the second century, when many who had known the apostles were yet living.

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5. These testimonies, let it be carefully remembered, apply not to one part of Christendom alone, but to all its different and distant divisions; and that, too, long before there was any attempt to bring the judgment of the churches into harmony by means of general councils. The orthodox churches planted in the different provinces of the Roman empire, though in substantial harmony with each other, had nevertheless their minor differences, which were sometimes discussed with much warmth. In their relation to each other, they were jealous of their freedom and independence. The history of the so-called Antilegomena (Disputed Books of the New Testament, chap. 6) shows that the reception of a writing as apostolic in one division of Christendom, did not insure its reception elsewhere. Had it been possible that a spurious book should be imposed as genuine on the churches of one region, it would certainly have met with opposition in other regions; but our four canonical gospels were everywhere received without dispute as the writings of apostles or apostolic men. This fact admits of but one explanation: the churches had from their first appearance indubitable evidence of their genuineness.

6. Let it be further remembered that this testimony relates not to books of a private character, that might have lain for years hidden in some corner; but to the public writings of the churches, on which their faith was founded, of which they all had copies, and which it was the custom, from the apostolic age, to read in their assemblies along with the law and the prophets. (Justin Martyr Apol., 1. 67.) Earnestness and sincerity are traits which will not be denied to the primitive Christians, and they were certainly not wanting in common discernment. Let any man show, if he can, how a spurious gospel, suddenly appearing somewhere after the apostolic days, could have been imposed upon the churches as genuine, not only where it originated, but everywhere else in Christendom. The difficulty with which some of the genuine books of the New Testament gained universal currency sufficiently refutes such an absurd supposition.

7. We are now prepared to consider the testimonies of an {42} earlier period. Here Justin Martyr is a very weighty witness, since he lived so near the apostolic age, and had every facility for investigating the history of the gospel narratives. He was born near the beginning of the second century, and his extant works date from about the middle of the same century. Before his conversion to Christianity he was a heathen philosopher earnestly seeking for the truth among the different systems of the age. Of his undoubtedly genuine works, there remain to us two Apologies (defences of Christianity) and a Dialogue with Trypho a Jew, designed to defend the Christian religion against its Jewish opponents. In these he quotes the gospel of Matthew very abundantly; next in number are his quotations from Luke. His references to Mark and John are much fewer, but enough to show his acquaintance with them. He never quotes the evangelists by name, but designates their writings as "The Memoirs of the Apostles;" and more fully, "The memoirs which I affirm to have been composed by his"-our Lord's-"apostles and their followers," Dialog., ch. 103, "which," he elsewhere says, "are called gospels," Apol. 1. 66, and in a collective sense, "the gospel," Dialog., ch. 10. It should be carefully noticed that he speaks in the plural number both of the apostles who composed the gospels and their followers. This description applies exactly to our canonical gospels-two written by apostles, and two by their followers. The attempt has been made in modern times to set aside Justin's testimony, on the alleged ground that he quotes not from our canonical gospels, but from some other writings. The groundlessness of this supposition is manifest at first sight. Justin had visited the three principal churches of Rome, Alexandria, and Ephesus. It is certain that he knew what gospels were received by them in his day as authentic, and that these are the very gospels which he quotes, affirming that they were the writings of apostles and their followers. Now, that the gospels which Justin used should have been wholly supplanted by others in the days of Irenæus, who was of full age at the time of Justin's death, is incredible. But Irenæus, in common with Clement, Tertullian, and others, quotes our four canonical gospels as alone possessing apostolic authority, and as having been always received by the churches. It follows that the "Memoirs" of Justin must be the same gospels. We cannot conceive that in this brief period {43} an entire change of gospels should have been made throughout all the different and distant provinces of the Roman empire, at a time when concerted action through general councils was unknown; and that, too, in so silent a manner that no record of it remains in the history of the church. The supposition that the gospels known to Justin were different from those received by Irenæus ought not to be entertained without irrefragable proof. But no such proof exists. "An accurate examination in detail of his citations," says Semisch, Life of Justin Martyr, 4. 1, "has led to the result that this title"-the Memoirs of the Apostles-"designates the canonical gospels-a result in no way less certain because again called in question in modern days." The agreement of his quotations with our present gospels is of such a character and extent as can be explained only from his use of them. The variations are mainly due to his habit of quoting loosely from memory. "Many of these citations," says Kirchhofer, "agree, word for word, with the gospels; others with the substance, but with alterations and additions of words, with transpositions and omissions; others give the thought only in a general way; others still condense together the contents of several passages and different sayings, in which case the historic quotations are yet more free, and blend together, in part, the accounts of Matthew and Luke. But some quotations are not found at all in our canonical gospels," (see immediately below;) "some, on the contrary, occur twice or thrice." Quellensammlung, p. 89. note. Two or three more important variations are, perhaps, due to the readings in the manuscripts employed by Justin, since the later

church fathers, who, as we know, employed the canonical gospels, give the same variations. Finally, Justin gives a few incidents and sayings not recorded in our present gospels. As he lived so near the apostolic times he may well have received these from tradition; but if in any case he took them from written documents, there is no proof that he ascribed to such documents apostolic authority. In one passage, he accurately distinguishes between what he gives from tradition or other written sources, and what from the apostolic records. "When Jesus came," he says, "to the river Jordan, where John was baptizing, as he descended to the water, both was a fire kindled in the Jordan, and as he ascended from the water, the apostles of this very Christ of ours have written that the Holy Spirit as a dove lighted upon him." Dial., ch. 88.

It has been doubted whether certain references to the gospel of John can be found in Justin's writings; but it seems plain that the following is a free quotation from chapter 3:3-5: "For Christ said, Except ye be born again, ye shall by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven. But that it is impossible that they who have once been born should enter into the wombs of those who bare them is manifest to all." Apol. 1. 61. To affirm that a passage so peculiar as this was borrowed by both the evangelist {44} John and Justin from a common tradition, is to substitute a very improbable for a very natural explanation. Besides, Justin uses phraseology peculiar to John, repeatedly calling our Saviour "the Word of God," and "the Word made flesh;" affirming that he "was in a peculiar sense begotten the only Son of God," "an only begotten One to the Father of all things, being in a peculiar sense begotten of him as Word and Power, and afterwards made man through the Virgin;" and calling him "the good Rock that sends forth (literally, causes to bubble forth-compare John 4:14) living waters into the hearts of those who through him have loved the Father of all things, and that gives to all who will the water of life to drink." These and other references to John may be seen in Kirchhofer's Quellensammlung, pp. 146, 147.

8. Another early witness is Papias, who was bishop of Hierapolis, in Phrygia, in the first half of the second century. He wrote "An Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord," in five books. This work has perished; but fragments of it, with notices of its contents, are preserved to us by Eusebius and other writers. As Papias, according to his own express testimony, gathered his materials, if not from apostles themselves, yet from their immediate disciples, his statements are invested with great interest. Of Matthew he says, Eusebius Hist. Ecclesiastes, 5. 39, that he "wrote the oracles in the Hebrew dialect, and every one interpreted them as he could." He speaks of this interpretation by each one as he could as something past, implying that in his day our present Greek gospel of Matthew (of the apostolic authority of which there was never any doubt in the early churches) was in circulation, whether it was or was not originally composed in Hebrew, a question on which learned men are not agreed. Of Mark he affirms that, "having become Peter's interpreter, he wrote down accurately as many things as he remembered; not recording in order the things that were said or done by Christ, since he was not a hearer or follower of the Lord, but afterwards"-after our Lord's ascension-"of Peter, who imparted his teachings as occasion required, but not as making an orderly narrative of the Lord's discourses." Hist. Ecclesiastes, 3. 39. The fact that Eusebius gives no statement of Papias respecting the other {45} two gospels is of little account, since his notices of the authors to whom he refers, and of their works, are confessedly imperfect.

Eusebius notices, for example, Hist. Ecclesiastes 4:14, the fact that Polycarp, in his letter to the Philippians, "has used certain testimonies from the First Epistle of Peter;" but says nothing of his

many references, in the same letter, to the epistles of Paul, in some of which he quotes the apostle by name. We have, nevertheless, through Eusebius, an indirect but valid testimony from Papias to the authorship of the fourth gospel, resting upon the admitted identity of the author of this gospel with the author of the first of the epistles ascribed to John. Speaking of Papias, Eusebius says: "But the same man used testimonies from the First Epistle of John." Hist. Ecclesiastes, 3. 39, end. The ascription to John of this epistle, is virtually the ascription to him of the fourth gospel also. Eusebius speaks of Papias as a man "of very small mind." The correctness of this judgment is manifest from the specimens which he gives of his writings; but it cannot invalidate the evidence we have from the above passages of the existence, in Papias' day, of the gospels to which he refers. As to the question whether these were our present canonical gospels of Matthew and Mark, it is sufficient to say that neither Eusebius nor any of the church fathers understood them differently.

9. A very interesting relic of antiquity is the Epistle to Diognetus, of which the authorship is uncertain. Its date cannot be later than the age of Justin Martyr, to whom it is ascribed by some. It is, notwithstanding some erroneous views, a noble defence of Christianity, in which the author shows his acquaintance with the gospel of John by the use of terms and phrases peculiar to him. Thus he calls Christ "the Word," and "the only begotten Son," whom God sent to men. In the words, "not to take thought about raiment and food," section 9, there is an apparent reference to Matthew 6:25; Matthew 6:31. In addition to the above testimonies might be adduced some fragments of early Christian writers which have been preserved to us by those of a later day; but for brevity's sake they are omitted.

10. Following up the stream of testimony, we come now to that of the so-called apostolic fathers; that is, of men who were disciples of apostles, and wrote in the age next following them. {46} Holding, as they do, such a near relation to the apostles, and familiar with the oral traditions of the apostolic age, we cannot expect to find in them such frequent and formal references to the books of the New Testament as characterize the works of later writers. They quote, for the most part, anonymously, interweaving with their own words those of the sacred writers.

One of the earliest among the apostolic fathers is Clement of Rome, who died about A.D. 100. Of the numerous writings anciently ascribed to him, his First Epistle to the Corinthians is admitted, upon good evidence, to be genuine. In this we find words which imply a knowledge of the first three gospels. Citing evidently from memory, in a loose way, he says: "For thus he"-the Lord Jesus-"spake, 'Be merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; forgive, that ye may be forgiven; as ye do, so shall it be done to you; as ye give, so shall it be given to you; as ye judge, so shall ye receive judgment; as ye are kind, so shall ye receive kindness; with what measure ye measure, with that it shall be measured to you.'" And again: "For he said, 'Woe unto that man; it were better for him that he had not been born, than that he should offend one of my elect.'"

Ignatius was bishop of the church at Antioch, and suffered martyrdom A.D. 107, or according to some accounts, 116. In his epistles, which are received as genuine, are manifest quotations from the gospel of Matthew, and some apparent though not entirely certain allusions to the gospel of John.

Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, was a disciple of the apostle John. He suffered martyrdom about the year 166. Of his writings, only one short epistle, addressed to the Philippians, remains to us; but

this abounds in references to the books of the New Testament, especially the epistles of Paul. Of quotations from the gospel of Matthew, the following are examples: "Judge not, that ye be not judged; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven; be merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." "Blessed are the poor in spirit, and those that suffer persecution for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." For the gospel of John, Polycarp's testimony, though indirect, is decisive. In his letter to the Philippians, he quotes from the First Epistle of John, "For every one who does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is antichrist." 1 John 4:3. But that the gospel of John and this first epistle both proceeded from the same author, is a conceded fact. The recently discovered Sinai Codex, the oldest known codex in the world, contains the entire Epistle of Barnabas in the original Greek. In {47} this we find, among other references to the first three gospels, one to the written gospel of Matthew of the most decisive character: "Let us be mindful, therefore, lest perchance we be found as it is written, 'Many are called, but few are chosen.'" Matthew 20:16; Matthew 22:14. The form of quotation, "as it is written," is employed by the writers of the New Testament only of citations from Scripture. In these words the writer places the gospel of Matthew in the same rank as the Scriptures of the Old Testament. That he was the Barnabas mentioned in the New Testament as the companion of Paul cannot be maintained; but the composition of the epistle is assigned, with probability, to the beginning of the second century, though some place it as late as its close. The testimony of other apocryphal writings of early date might be adduced, but for the sake of brevity it is here omitted. It may be seen in the essay of Tischendorf, already referred to.

11. A different class of witnesses will next be considered-the ancient Syriac version, the old Latin version, and the Muratorian fragment on the canon of the New Testament-all of which bear testimony to our canonical gospels. The ancient Syriac version, commonly called the Peshito-simple, that is, expressing simply the meaning of the original, without allegorical additions and explanations, after the manner of the Jewish Targums-is admitted by all to be of very high antiquity. Learned men are agreed that this version cannot well be referred to a later date than the close of the second century, and some assign it to the middle of the second century, at which time the Syrian churches were in a very flourishing condition, and cannot well be supposed to have been without a version of the Holy Scriptures. The Peshito contains all the books of the New Testament, except the Second Epistle of Peter, the Second and Third Epistles of John, the Epistle of Jude, and the Apocalypse. It testifies to the existence of our four gospels, not only when it was made, but at an earlier date; since we must, in all probability, assume that some considerable time elapsed after the composition, one by one, of the books of the New Testament, before they were collected into a volume, as in this Syriac version.

Respecting the Old Latin version, (in distinction from Jerome's revision, commonly called the Vulgate, which belongs to the fourth century,) various opinions have been maintained. Some have assumed the existence of several independent Latin versions of the New Testament, or of some of its books; but the preferable opinion is that there were various recensions, all having for their foundation a single version, namely, the Old Latin; which, says Westcott, Canon of the New Testament, ch. 3, "can be traced back {48} as far as the earliest records of Latin Christianity. Every circumstance connected with it indicates the most remote antiquity." It was current in north Africa, at least soon after the middle of the second century. Though it has not come down to us in a

perfect form, it contains, along with most of the other books of the New Testament, our four canonical gospels; and its testimony is of the greatest weight. The Muratorian Fragment on the Canon is the name given to a Latin fragment discovered by the Italian scholar, Muratori, in the Ambrosian Library at Milan, in a manuscript bearing the marks of great antiquity. Its date is determined by its reference to the shepherd of Hermas, which, says the Fragment, Hermas "wrote very recently in our times, while the bishop Pius, his brother, occupied the chair of the church at Rome." The later of the two dates given for the death of Pius is A.D. 157. The composition of the Fragment must have followed soon afterwards. Though mutilated at the beginning, as well as the end, its testimony to the existence of the four canonical gospels is decisive. In its present form, it opens with the end of a sentence, the beginning of which is lost. It then goes on to say, "The third gospel according to Luke." After mentioning various particulars concerning Luke, as that he was a physician whom Paul had taken with him, that he did not himself see the Lord in the flesh, etc., it adds, "The fourth of the gospels, that of John, of the number of the disciples," to which it appends a traditional account of the circumstances of its composition. With the truth or falsehood of this account we have at present no concern; the important fact is that this very ancient canon recognizes the existence of our four canonical gospels.

12. The heretical sects of the second century furnish testimony to the genuineness of our canonical gospels which is of the most weighty and decisive character. Though some of them rejected certain books of the New Testament and mutilated others, it was on doctrinal, not on critical grounds. Had they attempted to disprove on historic grounds the genuineness of the rejected portions of Scripture, it is certain that the church fathers, who wrote against them at such length, would have noticed their arguments. The fact that they did not, is conclusive proof that no such attempt was made; but from the position which the leaders of these heretical sects occupied, it is certain that, could the genuineness of the canonical gospels, or any one of them, have been denied on historic grounds, the denial would have been made.

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Marcion, one of the most distinguished leaders of those who separated themselves from the orthodox church, came to Rome in the second quarter of the second century. He separated Christianity from all connection with Judaism, making the Jehovah of the Old Testament a different being from the God of the New Testament. His gospel, called by the ancients the gospel of Marcion, is admitted to have been a mutilated copy of Luke’s gospel. Of course it became necessary that he should reject the first two chapters of this gospel, (which alone he received,) since they contain our Lord’s genealogy in the line of Abraham and David, and should otherwise alter it to suit his views. On the same grounds, he altered the epistles of Paul also. That Marcion was not ignorant of the other three gospels, but rejected them, is plain from the words of Tertullian, who accuses him, Against Marcion, 4. 3, of attempting "to destroy the credit of those gospels which are properly such, and are published under the name of apostles, or also of apostolic men; that he may invest his own gospel with the confidence which he withdraws from them." His real ground for rejecting some books of the New Testament and mutilating others was that he could judge better of the truth than the writers themselves, whom he represented to have been misled by the influences of Jewish prejudices. Accordingly Irenæus well says of the liberties taken by Marcion, Against Heresies, 1. 27: "He persuaded his disciples that he was himself more trustworthy than the apostles who have delivered to us the gospel; while he gave to them not the

gospel, but a fragment of the gospel." A distinguished leader of the Gnostics was Valentinus, who came to Rome about A.D. 140, and continued there till the time of Anicetus. His testimony and that of his followers is, if possible, more weighty than even that of Marcion. His method, according to the testimony of Tertullian, was not to reject and mutilate the Scriptures, but to pervert their meaning by false interpretations. Tertullian says, Against Heretics, ch. 38: "For though Valentinus seems to use the entire instrument, he has done violence to the truth with a more artful mind than Marcion." "The entire instrument"-Latin, integro instrumento-includes our four canonical gospels. Clement of Alexandria and Hippolytus have preserved quotations from Valentinus in which he refers to the gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John. See Westcott, Canon of the New Testament, 4. 5. Respecting the gospel of John in particular, Irenæus says, Against Heresies, 3. 11, that "the Valentinians make the most abundant use of it." Heracleon, whom Origen represents as having been a familiar friend of Valentinus, wrote a commentary on John, from which Origen frequently quotes; but if Valentinus and his followers, in the second quarter of the second century, used "the entire instrument," they must have found its apostolic authority established upon a firm foundation before their day. This carries us back to the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles, when Polycarp and others {50} who had known them personally were yet living. The testimony of the Valentinians, then, is of the most decisive character.

Another prominent man among the heretical writers was Tatian, a contemporary and pupil of Justin Martyr, who, according to the testimony of Eusebius, Epiphanius, and Theodoret, composed a Diatessaron, that is, a four-fold gospel; which can be understood only as a harmony of the four gospels which, as has been shown, were used by Justin; or of such parts of these gospels as suited his purpose; for Tatian, like Marcion, omitted all that relates to our Lord’s human descent. With this Diatessaron, Theodoret was well acquainted; for he found among his churches more than two hundred copies, which he caused to be removed, and their places supplied by the four canonical gospels. As to other gospels of the second century, which are occasionally mentioned by later writers, as "The Gospel of Truth," "The Gospel of Basilides," etc., there is no evidence that they professed to be connected histories of our Lord’s life and teachings. They were rather, as Norton has shown, Genuineness of the Gospels, vol. 3, chap. 4, doctrinal works embodying the views of the sectaries that used them.

13. We have seen how full and satisfactory is the external evidence for our four canonical gospels. Considering how scanty are the remains of Christian writings that have come down to us from the first half of the same century, we have all the external evidence for that period also that could be reasonably demanded, and it is met by no rebutting testimony that rests on historic grounds. The authorship of no ancient classical work is sustained by a mass of evidence so great and varied, and the candid mind can rest in it with entire satisfaction.

III. Internal Evidences. 14. Here we may begin with considering the relation of the first three gospels to the last, in respect to both time of composition and character. And first, with respect to time. The first three gospels-frequently called the synoptical gospels, or the synoptics, because from the general similarity of their plan and materials their contents are capable of being summed up in a synopsis-record our Lord’s prophecy of the overthrow of Jerusalem. The three records of this prediction wear throughout the costume of a true prophecy, not of a prophecy written after the event. They are occupied, almost exclusively, with the various signs by {51} which the approach of that great catastrophe might be known, and with admonitions to the disciples to hold themselves in

readiness for it. Matthew, for example, devotes fifty verses to the account of the prophecy and the admonitions connected with it. Of these, only four, chap. 24:19-22, describe the calamities of the scene, and that in the most general terms. Now, upon the supposition that the evangelist wrote before the event, all this is natural. Our Lord's design in uttering the prophecy was not to gratify the idle curiosity of the disciples, but to warn them beforehand in such a way that they might escape the horrors of the impending catastrophe. He dwelt, therefore, mainly on the signs of its approach; and with these, as having a chief interest for the readers, the record of the prediction is mostly occupied. It is impossible, on the other hand, to conceive that one who wrote years after the destruction of the city and temple should not have dwelt in more detail on the bloody scenes connected with their overthrow, and have given in other ways also a historic coloring to his account. We may safely say that to write a prophecy after the event in such a form as that which we have in either of the first three gospels, transcends the power of any uninspired man; and as to inspired narratives, the objectors with whom we are now dealing deny them altogether. But there are, in the record of this prophecy, some special indications of the time when the evangelists wrote. According to Matthew, the disciples asked, ver. 3: "When shall these things"-the destruction of the buildings of the temple-"be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?" These questions our Lord proceeded to answer in such a way that the impression on the minds of the hearers (to be rectified only by the course of future events) must have been that the overthrow of the temple and city would be connected with his second coming and the end of the world. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days," says Matthew, "shall the sun be darkened," etc. The probable explanation of this peculiar form of the prophecy is that it does actually include {52} all three events; the fulfilment which it had in the destruction of the city and temple by the Romans being only an earnest of a higher fulfilment hereafter. But however this may be, it is important to notice that the evangelists, in their record of the prophecy, are evidently unconscious of any discrepancy, real or apparent, that needs explanation; which could not have been the case had they written years after the event predicted. "It may be safely held," says Professor Fisher, Supernatural Origin of Christianity, p. 172, "that had the evangelist been writing at a later time, some explanation would have been thrown in to remove the seeming discrepancy between prophecy and fulfilment."

It should be further noticed that the evangelists Matthew and Mark, in reference to "the abomination of desolation" standing in the holy place, throw in the admonitory words, "Let him that readeth understand." These are not the Saviour's words, but those of the narrators calling the attention of believers to a most important sign requiring their immediate flight to the mountains. Before the overthrow of the city these words had a weighty office; after its overthrow they would have been utterly superfluous. Their presence in such a connection is proof that the record was written before the event to which it refers.

Admitting the genuineness and authenticity of the book of Acts, (which will be considered hereafter,) we have a special proof of the early composition of the gospel according to Luke. The book of Acts ends abruptly with Paul's two years residence at Rome, which brings us down to A.D. 65, five years before the destruction of Jerusalem. The only natural explanation of this fact is that here the composition of the book of Acts was brought to a close. The date of the gospel which preceded, Acts 1:1, must therefore be placed still earlier.

If, now, we examine the gospel of John, we find its internal character agreeing with the ancient tradition that it was written at Ephesus late in the apostle's life. That it was composed {53} at a distance from Judea, in a Gentile region, is manifest from his careful explanation of Jewish terms and usages, which among his countrymen would have needed no explanation. No man writing in Judea, or among the Galileans who habitually attended the national feasts at Jerusalem, would have said, "And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh," 6:4; "Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand," 7:2, etc. The absence of all reference to the overthrow of the Jewish polity, civil and ecclesiastical, may be naturally explained upon the supposition that the apostle wrote some years after that event, when his mind had now become familiar with the great truth that the Mosaic institutions had forever passed away to make room for the universal dispensation of Christianity; and that he wrote, too, among Gentiles for whom the abolition of these institutions had no special interest. In general style and spirit, moreover, the gospel of John is closely allied to his first epistle, and cannot well be separated from it by a great interval of time; but the epistle undoubtedly belongs to a later period of the apostle's life. From the language of John, chap. 5:2, "Now there is at Jerusalem, by the sheep-gate, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue, Bethesda, having five porches,"-it has been argued that, when John wrote, the city must have been still standing. But Eusebius speaks of the pool as remaining in his day, and why may not the porches, as useful to the Roman conquerors, have been preserved, at least for a season?

We have seen the relation of John's gospel to the other three in respect to time. It must have been written several years later than the last of them; perhaps not less than fifteen years. If, now, we look to its relation in regard to character, we must say that it differs from them as widely as it well could while presenting to our view the same divine and loving Saviour. Its general plan is different. For reasons not known to us, the synoptical gospels are mainly occupied with our Lord's ministry in Galilee. They record only his last journey to Jerusalem, and the momentous incidents connected with it. John, on the contrary, notices his visits to Jerusalem year by year. {54} Hence his materials are, to a great extent, different from theirs; and even where he records the same events-as, for example, the miracle of the loaves and fishes, and the last supper-he connects with them long discourses, which the other evangelists have omitted. Particularly noticeable are our Lord's oft-repeated discussions with the unbelieving Jews respecting his Messiahship, and his confidential intercourse with his disciples, in both of which we have such treasures of divine truth and love. How strikingly this gospel differs from the others in its general style and manner every reader feels at once. It bears throughout the impress of John's individuality, and by this it is immediately connected with the epistles that bear his name. It should be added that in respect to the time when our Lord ate the passover with his disciples there is an apparent disagreement with the other three gospels, which the harmonists have explained in various ways. The essential point of the above comparison is this: Notwithstanding the striking difference between the later fourth gospel and the earlier three, it was at once received by all the churches as of apostolic authority. Now upon the supposition of its genuineness, both its peculiar character and its undisputed reception everywhere are easily explained. John, the bosom disciple of our Lord, wrote with the full consciousness of his apostolic authority and his competency as a witness of what he had himself seen and heard. He therefore gave his testimony in his own independent and original way. How far he may have been influenced in his selection of materials by a purpose to supply what was wanting in the earlier gospels, according to an old tradition, it is not necessary here to inquire; it is sufficient to say that, under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, he marked out that particular plan

which we have in his gospel, and carried it out in his own peculiar manner, thus opening to the churches new mines, so to speak, of the inexhaustible fulness of truth and love contained in him in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily." And when this original gospel, so different in its general plan and {55} style from those that preceded, made its appearance, the apostolic authority of its author secured its immediate and universal reception by the churches. All this is very plain and intelligible. But upon the supposition that the gospel of John is a spurious production of the age succeeding that of the apostles, let any one explain, if he can, how it could have obtained universal and unquestioned apostolic authority. Its very difference from the earlier gospels must have provoked inquiry and examination, and these must have led to its rejection, especially at a time when some who had known the apostle yet survived; and no one now pretends to assign to it a later period.

15. We will next consider the relation of the first three gospels to each other. Here we have remarkable agreements with remarkable differences. The general plan of all three is the same. It is manifest also, at first sight, that there lies at the foundation of each a basis of common matter-common not in substance alone, but to a great extent in form also. Equally manifest is it that the three evangelists write independently of each other. Matthew, for example, did not draw his materials from Luke; for there is his genealogy of our Lord, and his full account of the sermon on the mount, not to mention other particulars. Nor did Luke take his materials from Matthew; for there is his genealogy also, with large sections of matter peculiar to himself. Mark has but little matter that is absolutely new; but where he and the other two evangelists record the same events, if one compares his narratives with theirs, he finds numerous little incidents peculiar to this gospel woven into them in a very vivid and graphic manner. They come in also in the most natural and artless way, as might be expected from one who, if not himself an eye-witness, received his information immediately from eye-witnesses. The three writers, moreover, do not always agree as to the order in which they record events; yet, notwithstanding the diversities which they exhibit, they were all received from the first as of equal authority.

{56} The natural explanation of this is that all three wrote in the apostolic age, and consequently had access, each of them independently of the other two, to the most authentic sources of information. These sources (so far as the evangelists were not themselves eye-witnesses) lay partly, perhaps, in written documents like those referred to by Luke, 1:1, partly in the unwritten traditions current in the apostolic churches, and partly in personal inquiry from eye-witnesses, especially, in the case of Mark and Luke, from apostles themselves. From these materials each selected as suited his purposes, and the churches everywhere unhesitatingly received each of the three gospels, notwithstanding the above-named variations between them, because they had undoubted evidence of their apostolic authority. We cannot suppose that after the apostolic age three gospels, bearing to each other the relation which these do, could have been imposed upon the churches as all of them equally authentic. We know from the history of Marcion’s gospel how fully alive they were to the character of their sacred records. On apostolic authority they could receive-to mention a single example-both Matthew’s and Luke’s account of our Lord’s genealogy; but it is certain that they would not have received the two on the authority of men who lived after the apostolic age.

16. In the gospel narratives are numerous incidental allusions to passing events without the proper sphere of our Lord’s labors, to social customs, and to the present posture of public affairs, civil and

ecclesiastical. In all these the severest scrutiny has been able to detect no trace of a later age. This is a weighty testimony to the apostolic origin of the gospels. Had their authors lived in a later age, the fact must have manifested itself in some of these references. The most artless writer can allude in a natural and truthful way to present events, usages, and circumstances; but it transcends the power of the most skilful author to multiply incidental and minute references to a past age without betraying the fact that he does not belong to it.

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17. Every age has, also, its peculiar impress of thought and reasoning in religious, not less than in secular matters. Although the gospel itself remains always the same, and those who sincerely embrace it have also substantially the same character from age to age, there is, nevertheless, continual progress and change in men’s apprehension of the gospel and its institutions, and consequently in their manner of reasoning concerning them. No man, for example, could write a treatise on Christianity at the present day without making it manifest that he did not belong to the first quarter of the present century. The primitive age of Christianity is no exception to this universal law. Under the auspices of the apostles it began to move forward, and it continued to move after their decease. The pastoral epistles of Paul bear internal marks of having been written in the later period of his life, because they are adapted to the state of the Christian church and its institutions that belonged to that, and not to an earlier period. If, now, we examine the writings of the so-called apostolic fathers-disciples of the apostles, who wrote after their death-we find in them circles of thought and reasoning not belonging to the canonical writings of the New Testament, least of all to the canonical gospels, though they are evidently derived from hints contained in these writings, whether rightly or wrongly apprehended. In this respect, the works of the apostolic fathers are distinguished in a very marked way from those which bear the names of the apostles themselves or their associates.

18. Another decisive argument lies in the character of the Greek employed by the evangelists, in common with the other writers of the New Testament. It is the Greek language employed by Jews, (or, in the case of Luke, if his Jewish origin be doubted-see Colossians 4:11; Colossians 4:16 -by one who had received a Jewish training under the influence of the Greek version of the Old Testament,) and therefore pervaded and colored by Hebrew idioms. This peculiar form of the Greek language belongs to the apostolic age, when the teachers and writers of the church {58} were Jews. After the overthrow of Jerusalem, the dispersion of the Jewish nation, and the death of the apostles and their associates, it rapidly disappeared. Thenceforward the writers of the church were of Gentile origin and training, in accordance with the Saviour’s memorable words: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

These internal proofs, coinciding as they do with a mass of external evidences so great and varied, place the genuineness of the four canonical gospels on a foundation that cannot be shaken.

TAGS: [BibleAuthenticity]

03. Uncorrupt Preservation of the Gospel Narratives

CHAPTER III.

UNCORRUPT PRESERVATION OF THE GOSPEL NARRATIVES.

1. It is necessary, first of all, to define what is meant in the present connection by the uncorrupt preservation of the gospel narratives. When a man, whose business it is to examine and compare manuscripts or editions of a work, speaks of a given text as corrupt, he means one thing; in a question concerning the truth of the Christian system as given in the writings of the New Testament, a corrupt text means something very different. The collator of manuscripts understands by a corrupt text one that has been marred by the carelessness or bad judgment of transcribers, whence have arisen so many "various readings," though these do not change, or essentially obscure the facts and doctrines of Christianity, as has been most conclusively shown by the results of modern textual criticism; but in an inquiry whether we have in our canonical gospels the account of our Lord’s life and teachings as it was originally written by the evangelists in all essential particulars, we have to do with the question, not of various readings, such as are incident to all manuscripts, but of essential additions, alterations, or mutilations-like those, for example, which Marcion attempted-by which the facts and doctrines themselves are changed or obscured. It is against the charge of such essential corruptions that we maintain the integrity of the text in the gospels, as in the other books of the New Testament.

2. The most important materials for writing in ancient times were the paper made of the Egyptian papyrus plant-whence the word paper-and parchment, prepared from the skins of animals, the finer kinds of which are called vellum. {60} Both are of high antiquity. The use of the above-mentioned paper was very common in the apostolic age; and from an incidental notice in the New Testament, (2 John 1:12 compared with 3 John 1:13,) it appears to have been the material employed by the apostles themselves. But the use of parchment became more common in the following centuries, while that of papyrus-paper gradually ceased. To this circumstance we owe, in a great measure, the preservation of our oldest manuscripts; for the papyrus-paper was of a very perishable nature, and the manuscripts written upon it that have come down to us from high antiquity have been kept in specially favorable circumstances, as, for example, in the ancient Egyptian tombs. With the disuse of papyrus-paper ceased also the ancient form of the roll. All manuscripts written on parchment are in the form of books with leaves. From about the eleventh century, paper made from cotton or linen came into common use. The costliness of writing materials gave rise to a peculiar usage. From the leaves of an ancient work the original writing was erased, more or less perfectly. They were then employed as the material for another work, the latter being written over the former. Such manuscripts are called palimpsests-written again after erasure. The original writing, which is very often the sacred text, can in general be deciphered, especially by the aid of certain chemical applications. Some of our most precious manuscripts are of this character. The existing manuscripts of the New Testament are of two kinds. First, the uncial, that is, those written in capital letters. Here belong all the most ancient and valuable. The

writing is generally in columns, from two to four to a page; sometimes in a single column. There is no division of the text into words; the marks of interpunction are few and simple; and till the seventh century there were no accents, and breathings only in special cases. Secondly, the cursive, or those written in running-hand, with division of the text into words, capitals only for initial letters, accents, breathings, etc., and often with many contractions. This is the common form of manuscripts after {61} the tenth century, the uncial being retained for some ages afterwards only in books designed for use in the church service. In both the uncial and the cursive manuscripts, each century has its peculiar style of writing. From this, as well as from the quality of the materials, expert judges can determine the age of a given manuscript with a good degree of accuracy. The details pertaining to the form of ancient manuscripts, their number, character, etc., belong to the department of textual criticism. The above brief notices are given to prepare the way for a statement of the evidence that we have the gospel narratives, as also the other books of the New Testament, without corruption in the form in which they were originally written. See the PLATES at the beginning of this book.

3. Of the autograph manuscripts proceeding immediately from the inspired authors we find no trace after the apostolic age. Here, as elsewhere, the wisdom of God has carefully guarded the church against a superstitious veneration for the merely outward instruments of redemption. We do not need the wood of the true cross that we may have redemption through the blood of Christ; nor do we need the identical manuscripts that proceeded from the apostles and their companions, since we have the contents of these manuscripts handed down to us without corruption in any essential particular. This appears from various considerations.

First. Several hundred manuscripts of the gospels, or of portions of them, (to confine our attention at present to these,) have been examined, two of them belonging to the fourth century and two, with some fragments, to the fifth. All these, though written in different centuries and coming from widely different regions, contain essentially the same text. In them, not one of the great facts or doctrines of the gospel history is mutilated or obscured.

Secondly. The quotations of the church fathers from the last part of the second to the end of the fourth century are so copious, that from them almost the entire text of our present gospels could be reconstructed. These quotations agree substantially {62} with each other and with the text of our existing manuscripts; only that the earlier fathers, as already noticed, chap. 2. 3, often quote loosely from memory, blend together different narratives, and interweave with the words of Scripture their own explanatory remarks.

Thirdly. We have two versions of the New Testament-the Old Latin or Italic, and the Syriac called Peshito-which learned men are agreed in placing somewhere in the last half of the second century. The testimony of these witnesses to the uncorrupt preservation of the sacred text, from the time when they first appeared to the present, is decisive; for they also agree essentially with the Greek text of the gospel as we now possess it. Nor is this all. Davidson affirms of the Old Latin version, that "the more ancient the Greek manuscripts, the closer is their agreement with it." And Tischendorf says of the oldest known manuscript of the Bible-the Greek Sinai Codex, brought by him from the convent of St. Catharine, Mount Sinai, in 1859-that its agreement, in the New Testament portion, with the Old Latin version, is remarkable. Through the joint testimony, then, on the one hand, of the most ancient Greek manuscripts, especially the Sinai Codex, which is the

oldest of them all; and on the other, of the Old Latin version which belongs to the last half of the second century, we are carried back to a very ancient and pure form of the Greek text prevalent before the execution of this version, that is, about the middle of the second century. Tischendorf adds arguments to show that the Syriac Peshito version, the text of which has not come down to us in so pure a state, had for its basis substantially the same form of text as the Old Latin and the Sinai Codex. The substantial identity of the sacred text, as we now have it, with that which has existed since about the middle of the second century, is thus shown to be a matter not of probable conjecture, but of certain knowledge. Here, then, we have a sure criterion by which to measure and interpret the complaints which textual critics, ancient or modern, have made, sometimes in very strong language, concerning the corruptions that have found {63} their way into the text of the New Testament. These writers have reference to what are called "various readings," not to mutilations and alterations, such as those charged by the ancients upon Marcion, by which he sought to change the facts and doctrines of the gospel. That this must be their meaning we know; for there are the manuscripts by hundreds as witnesses, all of which, the most corrupt as textual critics would call them, as well as the purest, give in the gospel narratives the same facts and doctrines without essential variation.

Let not the inexperienced inquirer be misled into any wrong conclusion by the number of "various readings," amounting to many thousands, which textual criticism has brought to light. The greater the number of manuscripts collated, the greater will be the number of these readings; while, at the same time, we are continually making a nearer approach to the purity of the primitive text. As a general rule these variations relate to trifling particulars; as, for example, whether the conjunction and shall be inserted or omitted; whether but or for is the true reading; whether this or that order of words giving the same sense shall have the preference, etc. A few of the variations are of a more important character. Thus, in John 1:18, some manuscripts and fathers instead of only begotten Son, read only begotten God. But even here we may decide either way without changing or obscuring the great truths of the gospel narratives; for these are not dependent on particular words or phrases, but pervade and vivify the New Testament, as the vital blood does the body. The same may be said of certain passages which, on purely critical grounds-that is, the authority of ancient manuscripts-some have thought doubtful; as, for example, John 5:4, and the narrative recorded in the beginning of the eighth chapter of the same gospel. The insertion or omission of the passages concerning which any reasonable doubts can be entertained on critical grounds, will not affect in the least the great truths of the gospel narratives.

4. But it may be asked, Was the text from which the Old Latin version was made, and with which, as we have seen, the oldest manuscripts have a close agreement, substantially the same as that which proceeded from the inspired authors? Here we must discard all groundless suppositions, and adhere strictly to the known facts in the premises. The first fact to be noticed is the public reading of the gospels in the Christian churches, a custom which prevailed from the earliest times. Justin Martyr, writing before the middle of the second century, says of the memoirs written by the apostles or their followers and called gospels (which have been {64} shown to be our canonical gospels, chap. 2:7) that either these or the writings of the Jewish prophets were read in the Christian churches on the first day of every week. This is a fact of the highest importance; for it shows that the witnesses and guardians of the sacred text were not a few individuals, but the great body of believers, and that no systematic corruption of their contents could have taken place

without their knowledge and consent, which would never have been given.

Intimately connected with the above is a second fact, that of the great multiplication of copies of the books of the New Testament, especially of the gospel narratives, since these contain the great facts that lie at the foundation of the Christian system. Every church would, as a matter of course, be anxious to possess a copy, and Christians who possessed the requisite means would furnish themselves with additional copies for their own private use. If, now, we suppose one or more of these copies to have been essentially changed, the corruption would not, as in the case of a printed work, extend to many hundreds of copies. It would be confined to the manuscript or manuscripts into which it had been introduced and the copies made therefrom, while the numerous uncorrupt copies would remain as witnesses of the fraud; for the supposition of a very early corruption during the apostolic age, before copies of the gospels had been to any considerable extent multiplied, is utterly absurd. A third fact is the high value attached by the primitive churches to the gospel narratives, and their consequent zeal for their uncorrupt preservation. No one will deny to them the qualities of earnestness and sincerity. To them the gospels were the record of their redemption through the blood of Christ. For the truths contained in them they steadfastly endured persecution in every form, and death itself. Could we even suppose, contrary to evidence, that private transcribers altered at pleasure their copies of the gospels, it is certain that the churches would never have allowed their public copies to be tampered with. The resistance which Marcion met with in {65} his attempt to alter the sacred text, shows how watchful was their jealousy for its uncorrupt preservation. A still further fact is the want of time for essential corruptions, like those now under consideration. That such corruptions could have taken place during the apostolic age, no one will maintain. Equally certain is it that they could not have happened during the age next succeeding, while many presbyters and private Christians yet survived who had listened to the apostles, and knew the history of the gospels written by them or their companions. But this brings us down into the first part of the second century.

Leaving out of view the apostle John, who probably died near the close of the first century, and assuming the martyrdom of Peter and Paul to have taken place somewhere between A.D. 64 and 67, we may place the beginning of the age now under consideration at A.D. 65. Of the numerous Christians who were then thirty years or less of age many must have survived till A.D. 110, and even later. Polycarp, a disciple of John, suffered martyrdom A.D. 167, and doubtless many others of his hearers survived till the middle of the second century. The time, then, during which such a corruption as that now under consideration can be supposed to have taken place is so narrowed down that it amounts to well-nigh nothing; and it is, moreover, the very time during which Justin Martyr wrote his Apologies, and Marcion made his unsuccessful attempt to mutilate the gospel history.

Finally, no evidence exists that the text of the gospel narratives has been essentially corrupted. Of Marcion’s abortive attempt we have abundant notices in the writings of the early fathers. Their silence in respect to other like attempts is conclusive proof that they were never made. Had we the autographs of the evangelists, we should, with reason, attach to them a high value; but there is no ground for supposing that their text would differ in any essential particular from that which we now possess. They would present to our view the same Saviour and the same gospel.

5. What has been said respecting the uncorrupt preservation of the gospel narratives applies essentially to the other books of the New Testament; so that in the consideration of them the above arguments will not need to be repeated.

TAGS: [BiblePreservation]

04. Authenticity and Credibility of the Gospel Narratives

CHAPTER IV.

AUTHENTICITY AND CREDIBILITY OF THE GOSPEL NARRATIVES.

1. The genuineness and uncorrupt preservation of our four canonical gospels having been established, the presumption in favor of their authenticity and credibility is exceedingly strong. In truth, few can be found who, admitting their apostolic origin in essentially their present form, will venture to deny that they contain an authentic and reliable record of facts. We may dismiss at once the modern theory which converts the gospels into myths-pure ideas embodied in allegorical narratives which have no historic foundation. Myths do not turn the world upside down, as did the preaching of Christ and his apostles. Myths do not inspire the souls of men and women by thousands and tens of thousands with heroic zeal and courage, enabling them steadfastly to endure persecution and death for the truth’s sake. It was love towards a crucified and risen Saviour in deed and in truth, not towards the mythical idea of such a Saviour, that made the primitive Christians victorious alike over inward sinful affection and outward persecution. To every one who reads the gospel narratives in the exercise of his sober judgment, it is manifest that they are intended to be plain unvarnished statements of facts. The question is, Are these statements reliable? Here new arguments can hardly be expected; the old are abundantly sufficient. Reserving for another place those general arguments which apply to the gospel system as a whole, let us here briefly consider the character of the authors and their records; of the events which they record with the surrounding circumstances; and especially of Jesus, their great theme.

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2. It is natural to ask, in the first place, Were these men sincere and truthful? Here we need not long delay. Their sincerity, with that of their contemporaries who received their narratives as true, shines forth like the sun in the firmament. With reference to them, the Saviour’s argument applies in all its force: "How can Satan cast out Satan?" "If Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end." The life-long work of the evangelists and their associates was to cast out of the world all fraud and falsehood. If now they attempted to do this by the perpetration of a most astounding fraud, we have the case of Satan casting out Satan. But we need not argue the matter at length. By what they did and suffered in behalf of their doctrines, as well as by the artless simplicity of their narratives, they give full proof of their sincerity and truthfulness.

3. We next inquire: Were they competent as men? that is, were they men of sober judgment, able correctly to see and record the facts that came under their observation, and not visionary enthusiasts who mistook dreams for realities? This question admits of a short and satisfactory answer. No proof whatever exists that they were visionary men, but abundant proof to the contrary. Their narratives are calm, unimpassioned, and straightforward, without expatiation on the greatness of Christ’s character and works and the wickedness of his enemies, as is the way of all excited enthusiasts. What Paul said to Festus applies in its full force to them and their writings: "I

am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." If any one will condemn them as visionary, it must be on the sole ground that all belief in the supernatural is visionary-a position that will be noticed hereafter.

4. A further inquiry is, Were these men competent as witnesses? that is, had they the requisite means of knowing the facts which they record? With regard to the apostles Matthew and John, this matter need not be argued. With regard to the other two, Luke states very fairly the position which they occupied: {68} "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things," ("having accurately traced out all things," as the original signifies,) "from the very beginning, to write to thee, in order," etc. Luke had in abundance the means of accurately tracing out all things relating to our Lord's life and works, for he was the companion of apostles and others who "from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word;" and from them, according to his own statement, he drew his information. The same is true of Mark also.

5. We come now to consider the character of the works which they record, and the circumstances in which they were performed. Here it may be remarked in the outset that it is not necessary to examine in detail all the miracles recorded in the gospel history. Though they all proceeded alike from the direct agency of God, they are not all alike open to human inspection. If upon examination we find the supernatural origin of many of them raised above all possibility of doubt, it is a legitimate inference that the rest of them had the same divine origin. Not to insist then upon the miracles ascribed to our Lord within the sphere of inanimate nature, such as the conversion of water into wine, the feeding of many thousands with a few loaves and fishes, and walking upon the sea, all of which were done in such circumstances that there is no room for questioning their reality, let us examine some that were performed upon the persons of men. Palsy, dropsy, withered limbs, blindness, the want of hearing and speech, leprosy, confirmed lunacy-all these were as well known in their outward symptoms eighteen hundred years ago as they are to-day. Persons could not be afflicted with such maladies in a corner. The neighbors must have known then, as they do now, the particulars of such cases, and have been unexceptionable witnesses to their reality. Persons may feign blindness and other infirmities among strangers, but no man can pass himself off as palsied, deaf and dumb, blind, (especially blind from birth,) halt, withered, in his own community. The reality of the maladies then is beyond all question; and so is also the reality of their {69} instantaneous removal by the immediate power of the Saviour. Here we must not fail to take into account the immense number of our Lord's miracles, their diversified character, and the fact that they were performed everywhere, as well without as with previous notice, and in the most open and public manner. Modern pretenders to miraculous power have a select circle of marvellous feats, the exhibition of which is restricted to particular places. No one of them would venture to undertake the cure of a man born blind, or that had a withered limb, or that had been a paralytic for thirty-eight years. But Jesus of Nazareth went about the cities and villages of Judea for the space of three years, healing all manner of disease. With him there was no distinction of easy and difficult, since to Divine power nothing is hard. With the same word he rebuked a raging fever, cleansed from leprosy, gave strength to the paralytic, healed the withered limb, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and speech to the dumb, and raised the dead to life. The same voice that said to the man at Bethesda, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk," said also to Lazarus, who had lain four days in the grave, "Come forth."

6. It is with reason that we lay special stress upon the fact that Christ performed many of his greatest miracles in the presence of his enemies, who had both the means and the will to institute a searching investigation concerning them, and who would have denied their reality had it been in their power to do so. Sad indeed is the record of the perverse opposition and calumny which our Lord encountered on the part of the Jewish rulers. But even this has a bright side. It shows us that the Saviour's miracles could endure the severest scrutiny-that after every means which power and wealth and patronage and official influence could command had been used for their disparagement, their divine origin still shone forth like the unclouded sun at noon-day. If any one doubts this, let him read attentively the ninth chapter of John's gospel, which records the investigation instituted by the Jewish rulers respecting the miracle of healing a man blind from his birth. In no {70} modern court of justice was a question of fact ever subjected to a severer scrutiny. And the result was that they could not deny the miracle, but said in their blind hatred of the Redeemer, "Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner." So when they could not deny that Jesus cast out devils, they alleged that he did it by the help of Satan; when it was manifest that he had by a word healed a man that had lain thirty-and-eight years a helpless paralytic, they blamed him for working on the Sabbath-day; when Lazarus had been called out of his grave in the presence of all the people, they said, "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles." And then they consulted not to disprove these miracles, but to put both him and Lazarus to death. Thus, in the good providence of God, we have for the reality of our Lord's miracles the testimony of his enemies and persecutors.

7. The resurrection of Jesus is the miracle of miracles, of which we may say with truth that it comprehends in itself all the other mighty works recorded in the gospel history. We cannot but notice the condescending care with which our Lord himself certified to his disciples its reality. When he had suddenly appeared in the midst of them, "they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." To convince them of the reality of his bodily presence, he said, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet," that they might see in them the prints of the nails. Finding them still incredulous, "believing not for joy and wondering," he added another conclusive proof that he was not a spirit, but a true man: he asked for meat; "and they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb; and he took it, and did eat before them." Luke 24:36-43. To the unbelieving Thomas he offered the further proof which he had demanded: "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." The certainty of this great event {71} the evangelist Luke sets forth in his introduction to the Acts of the Apostles: "To whom also," (to the apostles,) "he showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." The apostle Peter, in his address to Cornelius and his friends, says: "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead." Acts 10:40-41 hew-41 ew, 41. The apostle Paul, in his enumeration of our Lord's appearances to his disciples after his resurrection, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 1 Corinthians 6:1-20; 1 Corinthians 7:1-401 Corinthians 8:1-13, mentions that on one occasion "he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom," he says, "the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep."

It was not the greatness of the miracle, considered simply by itself, but its relation to the gospel, that made our Lord's resurrection from the dead the central fact of the apostles' testimony. It was, so to speak, the hinge on which the whole work of redemption turned. Our Lord's expiatory death for the sins of the world and his resurrection from the dead were both alike parts of one indivisible whole. It was not his claim to be the promised Messiah alone that was involved in the fact of his resurrection. His completion, as the Messiah, of the work of man's redemption was also dependent on that great event. "If Christ be not risen," says the apostle, "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain;" and again, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." 1 Corinthians 15:14; 1 Corinthians 15:17. We need not wonder then that the apostles, in their testimony to the people, insisted so earnestly on this one great fact in our Lord's history; for by it God sealed him as the Prince of life.

8. The character of Jesus of Nazareth, as drawn by the four evangelists, is the highest possible proof of the authenticity and credibility of the gospel narratives. Of this it has been justly said, "The character is possible to be conceived, because it was actualized in a living example." (Nature and the Supernatural, {72} p. 324.) The inapproachable excellence of Christ's character places it high above all human praise. The reverent mind shrinks instinctively from the idea of attempting to eulogize it, as from something profane and presumptuous. We do not eulogize the sun shining in his strength, but we put a screen over our eyes when we would look at him, lest we should be blinded by the brightness of his beams. So must every man look at Jesus of Nazareth with reverence and awe, who has any true sense of what is great and excellent. What is now to be said of this character is not eulogy. It is part of an argument for the reality of the events recorded in the gospel history. Here it is important to notice not only the character itself, but the manner of the portraiture, and its power over the human heart. The character of Jesus is perfectly original. Nothing like it was ever conceived of by the loftiest minds of antiquity. Nothing like it has appeared since his day, in actual life, or even in the conceptions of the most gifted writers. As there is one sun in the firmament, so there is one Jesus Christ in the history of the world. His character has a human and a divine element; and these two interpenetrate each other, so as to constitute together one indivisible and glorious whole. Jesus could not be, even in idea, what he is as man, unless he were God also. And what he is as God, he is as God made flesh, and dwelling as man among men. It is the God-man which the gospel narratives present to us. If we consider the qualities which belong to our Saviour as man, we notice the union in full measure and just proportion of all those qualities which belong to perfect humanity. In the case of mere men, the abundant possession of one quality implies almost of necessity deficiency elsewhere, and consequently one-sidedness of character. Not so in the case of Jesus. He has all the attributes of a perfect man in perfect fulness and in perfect harmony with each other. Let us reverently look at some particulars. His character unites the deepest tranquillity with the deepest {73} fervor of spirit. Our Lord's tranquillity shines forth through the whole course of his ministry, and manifests itself alike in great things and small. It is evident to all who read the narratives of the evangelists that he performed his mighty works as one conscious that divine power belonged to him of right, and that the exercise of it, even in its highest forms, was nothing new nor strange. In connection with his greatest miracles he calmly gave directions, as if they had been ordinary occurrences. When he had fed many thousands with a few loaves and fishes, he said, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." When he had raised from the dead the daughter of Jairus, "he commanded that something should be given her to eat." When he had called out of the grave one

who had lain there four days, he directed, "Loose him and let him go." Even in Gethsemane, when oppressed with agony too great for human endurance, his self-possession remained as perfect as his submission to his Father's will. That his serenity never left him for a moment during the process of his arrest, trial, sentence, and lingering death on the cross, is a truth which shines forth from the sacred narrative as his own raiment did on the mount of transfiguration, "white and glistering." Any attempt to describe it would be but mockery. And yet this deep composure of spirit is not that of indifference or of a cold temperament. It is the composure of one in whose bosom burns a steady and intense flame of zeal for the glory of God and good will towards men, by which he is borne forward with untiring energy in the work committed to him from above. It is the composure of a spirit whose depth of emotion none can measure.

We notice again the union in our Lord of perfect wisdom with perfect freedom from guile and double dealing. That his wisdom was never at fault all must admit. He was surrounded by crafty adversaries, who contrived all manner of plans to entangle him in his talk. Yet in the twinkling of an eye he turned their wiles against themselves, and they found themselves taken in their own net. Meanwhile he always pursued {74} the straightforward course of sincerity and truth. Not the slightest trace of deceit or cunning artifice appeared in his ministry from first to last.

Closely allied to the above-named qualities are prudence and boldness, both of which met in full measure in our Lord's character. That he feared no man and shrank from no peril when it was his duty to encounter it, is too obvious to be insisted on. Yet he never needlessly encountered opposition and danger. He was never bold for the purpose of making a show of boldness. When the Jews sought to kill him, he "walked in Galilee" to avoid their enmity. When his brethren went up to the feast in Jerusalem, he would not go up with them, but afterwards went up, "not openly, but as it were in secret." When, at a later day, after the resurrection of Lazarus, the Jews sought his life, he "walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence into a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples." Not until the time had come that he should die for the sins of the world did he expose himself to the rage of his enemies; and then he went boldly into Jerusalem at the head of his disciples. His own precept, "Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves," he perfectly exemplified throughout his ministry.

We cannot but notice once more the union in our Lord's character of the greatest tenderness with unbending severity whenever the cause of truth demanded severity. He opened his ministry at Nazareth by reading from the prophet Isaiah a portraiture of his own character: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Isaiah 61:1-2. The execution of this mission required a tender and forbearing spirit, that would not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax; and such was the spirit of his whole ministry. For the penitent, though publicans and sinners, he had only words of kindness. {75} Towards the infirmities and mistakes of his sincere disciples he was wonderfully forbearing. When a strife had arisen among the apostles which of them should be the greatest, instead of denouncing in severe terms their foolish ambition, he called to himself a little child and set him in the midst, and from him gave them a lesson on the duty of humility. Yet this tender and compassionate Jesus of Nazareth, who took little children in his arms and blessed them, who stood and cried, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest," and who wept at the grave of Lazarus-this

same Jesus could say to Peter when he would deter Him from the path of duty, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" and could denounce in the presence of all the people the scribes and Pharisees who sat in Moses' seat. In truth, the most severe denunciations of hypocrisy and wickedness contained in the New Testament and the most awful descriptions of the future punishment of the impenitent fell from our Saviour's lips. In his tenderness there was no element of weakness. Our Lord's perfect meekness and humility need no human comment. They shine forth with serene brightness through all his words and actions. He described himself as "meek and lowly in heart," and his life was a perpetual illustration of these qualities. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." But the point to be particularly noticed is the wonderful harmony of this meek and lowly mind with claims more lofty than were ever conceived of by any man before him-claims everywhere boldly asserted, and which, as we shall see hereafter, implied the possession of a divine nature. It is not that he claimed and exercised power over nature or outward power over men, even power to raise the dead, that fills us with awe and amazement; but that he went within the spirit, and offered inward life, light, strength, peace-in a word, life eternal-to all who would come to him; and that he asserted, in a way as decisive as it was calm, his absolute control over the everlasting destinies of all men. When we read the {76} account of these superhuman claims, we have no feeling that they were incongruous or extravagant. On the contrary, they seem to us altogether legitimate and proper. And yet, as has been often remarked, were any other person to advance a tithe of these pretensions, he would be justly regarded as a madman. The only possible explanation is, that this meek and lowly Jesus made good his claim to be the Son of God by what he was and by what he did.

Another quality very conspicuous in our Lord's character is his perfect elevation above this world. "Ye are from beneath," said he to the Jews; "I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world." It was not in his origin alone, but in his spirit also that he was from above. As he was from heaven, so was he heavenly in all his affections. His own precept to his disciples, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven," was the law of his own life. He had no treasures here below but the souls of men; and these are not earthly, but heavenly treasures. Satan plied him in vain with the offer of "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." In him "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" could find no place for a single moment. He kept the world always and perfectly under his feet. Yet this perfect elevation above the world had in it no tinge of stoicism or asceticism. He made no war upon the genuine passions and affections of human nature, but simply subjected them all to his higher spiritual nature; in other words to the law of God. Except temporarily for meditation and prayer, he never withdrew himself, nor encouraged his disciples to withdraw themselves from the cares and temptations of an active life, under the false idea of thus rising to a state of superhuman communion with God. He did not fast himself systematically, nor enjoin upon his disciples systematic fastings, but left fastings for special emergencies. In a word, he ate and drank like other men. His heavenly mind lay not in the renunciation of God's gifts, but in maintaining his affections constantly raised above the gifts themselves to {77} the divine Giver. It took on a human, and therefore an imitable form. And what shall we say of our Lord's spotless purity of heart and life? We cannot eulogize it, for it is above all human praise. But we can refresh the eyes of our understanding by gazing upon it, as upon a glorious sun, until we feel its vivifying and transforming power in our own souls. In contemplating the above qualities, it is of the highest importance to

notice that, though they exist in such fulness and perfection, they are yet human, and therefore imitable. They are not the virtues of an angel in heaven, or of a king on the throne, or of a philosopher in his school, or of a monk in his cell; but of a man moving among men in the sphere of common life, and filling out common life with all the duties appropriate to it. His example then is available for the imitation of the lowest not less than the highest. It offers itself to all classes of men as a model of all that is good in human nature. We may boldly affirm that such a character as this could never have been conceived of, if it had not actually existed.

If now we look at our Lord's character as a teacher, we find it equally original and wonderful. Writers on the gospel history have with reason laid great stress on the fact that he stood high above the errors and prejudices, not only of his own age and nation, but of all ages and nations. He saw intuitively and perfectly what God is, what man is, and what are man's relations to God and to his fellow-men; and was therefore able to establish a religion for men, as men, that needs no change for any age, or nation, or condition of life. He has sometimes been called a "Galilean peasant." The phrase sounds unpleasantly in the ears of those who adore him as their divine Lord and Master. Nevertheless it is in an important sense true. He was educated among the common people of Galilee, and had no special human training. It was an age of narrowness and formalism. The scribes and Pharisees, who sat in Moses' seat, had covered up the true meaning and spirit {78} of the Old Testament beneath a mass of human traditions that substituted "mint, and anise, and cummin" for "the weightier matters of the law." Yet in such an age Jesus came forth a perfect teacher of divine truth. He swept away at once the glosses of the Jewish doctors, unfolded to the people the true meaning of the law and the prophets as preparatory to his coming, and gave to the world a religion that meets the wants of all classes and conditions of men in all ages and nations. Considered as the good leaven which Christ cast into the lump of humanity, the gospel has continual progress. But considered as the plan of salvation which he revealed, it cannot have progress, for it is perfect. It needs no amendment or change, that it may be adapted to our age or any other age. As air and water and light meet the wants of all men in all ages, so the gospel, when freed from human additions and received in its original purity, is all that fallen humanity needs. Here is a great fact to be explained. The only reasonable explanation is that given by the Saviour himself. When the Jews marvelled at his teaching, saying, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" he answered, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." Such a religion as that described in the gospels could not have been conceived of unless it had actually existed; and it could not have existed without God for its author. Gifted men may be in advance of their own age; that is, they may see before others what is the next thing indicated by the present progress of society. But mere men do not rise at once above all the errors and prejudices by which they are surrounded into the region of pure light and truth. All the work that men do is imperfect, and needs emendation by those who come after them. A religion that remains from age to age as perfectly adapted to the wants of all men as it was at the beginning, must be from God, not from man. Our Saviour's manner of teaching was also as original as the teaching itself. He saw through the world of nature and mind at a glance, and it stood always ready at hand to furnish him with arguments and illustrations-arguments and illustrations {79} as simple and natural as they were profound, and by means of which he unfolded the deepest truths in the plainest and most intelligible forms. Take, for example, the parables of the mustard-seed and the leaven. They contain within themselves the whole history of Christ's kingdom in its inward principle. They unfold views of its steady progress from age to age, as a growth from an inward vital force, on which the

most philosophical minds especially love to dwell; and yet they are perfectly intelligible to the most unlettered man. To teach by parables, without any false analogies, and in a way that interested and instructed alike the learned and the ignorant, this was a wonderful characteristic of our Lord's ministry. In this respect no one of his apostles, not even the bosom disciple, attempted to imitate him. Yet in the great fact that his teaching was not for a select few, but for the masses of mankind, so that "the common people heard him gladly," all his servants can and ought to imitate him.

Thus far we have considered mainly the human side of our Lord's character, though through it all his divinity shines forth. Let us now look more particularly at his divine mission and character. On the fact that his mission was from God we need not dwell. Nicodemus expressed the judgment of every candid mind when he said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." If there is one truth which our Lord asserted more frequently than any other, it is that he came from God: "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." "If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me." But Jesus had not only a divine mission, but a divine person also; and the manner in which he manifested his divinity is, if possible, more original than any thing else in his history, and bears in itself the impress of reality. A company of men who should attempt to give a portraiture of a divine being {80} simply from their own conceptions would doubtless put into his lips many direct assertions of his deity, and make his life abound in stupendous miracles. But it is not in any such crude way that our Saviour's divinity manifests itself in the gospel narratives. It is true indeed that in the manner of his miracles he everywhere makes the impression that he performs them by virtue of a power residing in himself; that while the commission to do them comes from the Father, the power to do them belongs to his own person. In this respect the contrast is very sharp between his manner and that of the prophets before him and the apostles after him. In their case the power, as well as the commission, was wholly from God, as they were careful to teach the people: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." "Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" "His name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know." "Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." But not to dwell on this, let us look at some very remarkable ways in which our Saviour manifested his divine nature.

He called God his Father in a peculiar and incommunicable sense. He never said, "Our Father," by which he would have classed himself with other men, but always, "My Father," showing that thus he stood alone in his relation to God. As the son has the same nature with the father, and when acting under his authority, the same prerogatives also; so Jesus, as the Son of God, claimed the power and right to do whatever his Father did, and to receive the same honor as his Father: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." This the Jews rightly understood to be an assertion of equality with the Father; for they "sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his own Father, (so the original reads,) making himself equal with God." To this the Saviour answered: "The Son can do nothing of himself"-acting in his own name, and without the concurrence of the Father's will-"but what he seeth the Father {81} do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son

quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him." John 5:17-23. Here the Son, though acting under the Father's commission, claims equality with the Father; for without this he could neither share all the Father's counsels, nor do all the Father's works, nor receive from the Father authority to judge all men-an office which plainly implies omniscience-nor be entitled to the same honor as the Father. The point to be especially noticed in the present connection is the originality of the way in which our Lord here asserts his divine nature. We cannot for a moment suppose that such a way would have occurred to one who was writing from his own invention. The only possible explanation of the existence of such a passage in the gospel of John, (and the same is true of many other passages,) is that it is a true record of what actually took place in our Lord's history.

Again: our Lord represents himself as the source of light and life to all mankind. To the Jews he said: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John 8:12. In comparison with what he here claims for himself, the outward work of opening men's bodily eyes dwindles into nothing. That was only the seal of his divine mission. But in these and other like words, he does, as it were, draw aside the veil of his humanity, and give us a glimpse of the glory of the Godhead that dwells within. So too he says, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." John 6:51. {82} The resurrection of Lazarus, stupendous as that miracle was, does not fill us with such awe and amazement as the mighty words which he uttered to Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die," John 11:25-26; for in these words he represents himself as being to the whole human family the author of all life, natural, spiritual, and eternal. He connects the particular act of giving life which he is about to perform with the final resurrection, "when all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28-29. These utterances, so calm, so lofty, so original, do not sound like the inventions of man. They wear a heavenly costume. When we read them, we feel that the only explanation of their existence in the gospel narrative is the fact that they were actually uttered by our Lord. And the same is true of another kindred class of passages, in which the Saviour asserts his inward dominion over the human spirit. Hear him, as he stands and proclaims: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." John 14:27. The world gives peace at best outwardly, and often only in empty words; but Jesus has direct access to the inmost fountains of feeling. He gives peace inwardly and efficaciously. When he turned into songs of joy the tears of the widow of Nain by raising her son to life, that was a wonderful instance of his giving peace; but far greater and more glorious is the work when, by his inward presence in the soul, he makes it victorious over all "the sufferings of this present time." This is what he meant when he said to his disciples: "These things have I spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulations; but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." John 16:33. In his name, apostles {83} raised the dead to life; but no apostle-no mere man-would have ventured to say, "In me ye shall have peace."

These last words naturally lead to the consideration of another very peculiar form of speech first introduced by our Lord, and passing from him to the church; that of the mutual indwelling of himself and his disciples: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." John 15:1-7. It is a vital union of the believer's soul with Jesus, through which he receives from Jesus life and fruitfulness, as the branch from its union with the vine. Here is an assertion of deity. The Jews regarded Moses with the highest reverence; but no one of them ever spoke of abiding in Moses, or having Moses abiding in himself. Had any Christian disciple represented himself as dwelling in Peter or Paul, the apostle would have rent his clothes at the blasphemy of the words.

Other peculiar ways in which our Lord manifested his deity could be specified, but the above will suffice as examples. Let any candid man consider all these examples in their connection, each of them so original and so majestic, so simple and natural, and yet so far removed from anything that could have occurred to one sitting down to draw from his own imagination the picture of a divine person; and he will be convinced that such a record as that contained in our four canonical gospels was possible only because it is a simple and truthful history of what Jesus of Nazareth was and did. Plain men can give a straightforward account of what they have seen or learned from eye-witnesses; but it transcends the genius of any man to invent such narratives of such a character. The gospel narratives are marked throughout by artless simplicity. Each of the writers goes straightforward with his story, never thinking for a moment of what his own genius is to accomplish, but intent only on exhibiting his Lord and Master as the Saviour of the world. The apostle John, in giving the design of his own gospel, gives that also of the other evangelists: "And many other signs {84} truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." John 20:30-31. And because this glorious and divine person is a living reality, he possesses from age to age an undying power over the human heart. Love towards him is the mightiest principle on earth, both for doing and for suffering. It makes the soul of which it has taken full possession invincible. When Jesus of Nazareth is enthroned in the castle of the human heart, not all the powers of earth and hell can overcome it. See farther, chap. 12:8.

9. Since, as we have seen, the gospel narratives are an authentic record of facts, it follows that in the person and life of Jesus of Nazareth we have a supernatural revelation from God in the fullest sense of the words. That his origin was both superhuman and supernatural, the gospels teach us in the most explicit terms. He says of himself: "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father." John 16:28. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." John 17:5. That the appearance on earth of One who dwelt with the Father in glory before the world was, and after the fulfilment of his mission returned to the Father again, was supernatural, is self-evident. His person was, as has been shown, divine. He was God manifest in the flesh; and wherever he went, his supernatural power displayed itself. The miraculous element is so interwoven into the very substance of the gospel history, that there is no possibility of setting it aside, except by rejecting the history itself. It is the fashion with a certain class of writers, after denying our Lord's divine nature and explaining away his supernatural works, to be profuse in their eulogies of his character. If they can first rid themselves of the obligation to believe on him and obey him as their

divine Lord, they are willing to bestow upon him, as a man like themselves, the highest commendations. {85} But the attempt is hopeless. What will they do with the fact of his resurrection from the dead-the most certain as well as the greatest miracle in his history, and which includes in itself all the rest? Had Jesus not risen from the dead, as he so often affirmed that he should, then he would have been what the Jewish rulers called him-a deceiver, and no Saviour; but since the miracle of his resurrection must be admitted by all who do not reject the whole gospel history as a fable, why deny the lesser miracles connected with his history? The assumption that miracles are impossible can only go with the denial of God's personality; and this, by whatever name it is called, is atheism. If there is a personal God, who is before nature, above nature, and the author of nature in its inmost essence, he can manifest himself within the sphere of nature in a supernatural way, whenever he chooses to do so. If God who made us cares for us, and is indeed our Father in heaven, it is reasonable to suppose that he may reveal himself to us in supernatural forms, when the end is our deliverance from the bondage of sin, and our preparation for an eternity of holiness and happiness. To deny this, would be to make nature the highest end of God-to put the world of God's intelligent creatures under nature, instead of making nature their servant and minister.

10. The objections that have been urged against the gospel history are of two kinds. The first class relates to its doctrines, as, for example, that of demoniacal possessions, that of eternal punishment, etc. To enlarge on this subject would be out of place here. It is sufficient to say that the only reasonable rule is to argue from the certainty of the record to the truth of the doctrines in question. He who first assumes that a certain doctrine cannot be true, and then, on the ground of this assumption, sets aside a history sustained by overwhelming evidence, exalts his own finite understanding to be the supreme rule of faith; and to him an authoritative revelation becomes an impossibility. The second class of objections relates to alleged contradictions and inconsistencies between the different {86} writers. The explanation and reconciliation of these is the work of the harmonist. We need not wait, however, for the result of his labors, that we may rest confidently on the truth of the record. These apparent disagreements do not affect a single doctrine or duty of Christianity. They all relate to incidental matters, such as the time and order of the events recorded, the accompanying circumstances, etc. Had we all the missing links of the evangelical history, we might reconcile all these differences; but without them, it is not in all cases possible. Nor is it necessary; since, where different writers record the same transactions, substantial agreement, with diversity in respect to the details, is everywhere the characteristic of authentic history.

TAGS: [BibleAuthenticity]

05. Acts of Apostles and the Acknowledged Epistles

CHAPTER V. THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES AND THE ACKNOWLEDGED EPISTLES.

1. The genuineness, uncorrupt preservation, and credibility of the gospel narratives having been shown to rest on a firm foundation, the principal part of our work is accomplished, so far as the New Testament is concerned. We are prepared beforehand to expect some record of the labors of the apostles, like that contained in the Acts of the Apostles; and also discussions and instructions relating to the doctrines and duties of Christianity, such as we find in the apostolic epistles. Our Saviour established his church only in its fundamental principles and ordinances. The work of publishing his gospel and organizing churches among Jews and Gentiles he committed to his apostles. Before his crucifixion he taught them that the Holy Ghost could not come (that is, in his special and full influences as the administrator of the new covenant) till after his departure to the Father: "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you." John 16:7. "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." John 15:26-27. Now we have, in the Acts of the Apostles, first an account of the fulfilment by the Saviour of his promise that he would send the Holy Ghost; then a record how the apostles, thus qualified, obeyed the Saviour’s command to preach the gospel to Jews and Gentiles-a record not, indeed, complete, but sufficient to show the manner and spirit in which the work {88} was performed. Some truths, moreover, of the highest importance the Saviour gave only in outline, because the time for their full revelation had not yet come. John 16:12-13. Such were especially the doctrine of his atoning sacrifice on Calvary with the connected doctrine of justification by faith; and the divine purpose to abolish the Mosaic economy, and with it the distinction between Jews and Gentiles. We have, partly in the Acts and partly in the epistles, an account of the unfolding of these great truths by the apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and of the commotions and contentions that naturally accompanied this work. The practical application of the gospel to the manifold relations of life, domestic, social, and civil, with the solution of various difficult questions arising therefrom, was another work necessarily devolved on the apostles, and performed by them with divine wisdom for the instruction of all coming ages. The book of Acts and the epistles ascribed to the apostles being such a natural sequel to the Redeemer’s work, as recorded by the four evangelists, a briefer statement of the evidence for their genuineness and authenticity will be sufficient.

I. The Acts of the Apostles. 2. According to Chrysostom, First Homily on Acts, this book was not so abundantly read by the early Christians as the gospels. The explanation of this comparative neglect is found in the fact that it is occupied with the doings of the apostles, not of the Lord himself. Passing by some uncertain allusions to the work in the writings of the apostolic fathers, the first explicit quotation from it is contained in the letter heretofore noticed, chap. 2:4, from the churches of Vienne and Lyons in Gaul, written about A.D. 177, in which they say: "Moreover they prayed, after the example of Stephen the perfect martyr, for those who inflicted upon them cruel

torments, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.'" Irenæus, in the last part of the second century, Tertullian in the last part of the same century and the beginning of the third, Clement of Alexandria about the end of the second century and onwards-all these bear explicit testimony to the book of {89} Acts, ascribing it to Luke as its author; and from their day onward the notices of the work are abundant. We may add the concurrent testimony of the Muratorian canon and the Syriac version, called the Peshito, which belong to the last quarter of the second century, and the still earlier testimony of the Old Latin version. In a word, the book is placed by Eusebius among those that were universally acknowledged by the churches. The rejection of the book by certain heretical sects, as the Ebionites, Marcionites, Manichæans, etc., is of no weight, as their objections rested not on historical, but on doctrinal grounds. As to the statement of Photius that "some call Clement of Rome the author, some Barnabas, and some Luke the evangelist," it is to be remarked that he is giving not his own judgment, for he expressly ascribes it to Luke, but the arbitrary opinions of certain persons; and these are contradicted by the obvious fact that the third gospel, which proceeded from the same hand as the Acts of the Apostles, was never ascribed to any other person than Luke 3:1-38. The internal testimony to Luke's authorship is decisive. The writer himself, in dedicating it to the same Theophilus, expressly identifies himself with the author of the third gospel: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach." Acts 1:1. Then there is a remarkable agreement in style and diction between the gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, as any one may learn who peruses them both together in the original Greek. Davidson, Introduction to the New Testament, vol. 2, p. 8, has collected forty-seven examples of "terms that occur in both, but nowhere else in the New Testament." Luke, moreover, as the travelling companion of Paul, had all needed facilities for composing such a work. With regard to the latter portion of the book, this is denied by none. His use of the first person plural, "we endeavored," "the Lord had called us," "we came," etc.-which first appears, chap. 16:10, and continues, with certain interruptions, through the remainder of the book-admits of but one natural and reasonable explanation, namely, that when he thus joins himself with the apostle he was actually {90} in his company. As it respects the first part of the book, we notice that he visited Cæsarea with Paul's company, and "tarried there many days," chap. 21:8-10; afterwards he went up with him to Jerusalem, chap. 21:15. We find him again with Paul at Cæsarea when he sets out for Rome. Chap. 27:1. Now at such centres as Jerusalem and Cæsarea he must have had abundant opportunities to learn all the facts recorded in the present book which could not be gathered from Paul's own lips.

4. For the credibility of this book we have, in general, the same arguments which apply to the gospel narratives, especially to the gospel of Luke. Its author is evidently a sincere and earnest man, who goes straight forward with his narrative; and where he does not write as an eye-witness, he had, as we have seen, abundant means of ascertaining the truth concerning the facts which he records. His narrative is, moreover, corroborated in a very special way, as will be shown hereafter-No. 8, below-by its many undesigned coincidences with the events alluded to in the epistle of Paul. To admit the credibility of the gospel of Luke and to deny that of this work would be altogether inconsistent. In truth, there is no ground for doubting the credibility of the Acts of the Apostles other than that which lies in the assumption that no record of miraculous events can be credible, and this is no ground at all. To some modern writers the narrative of the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost has seemed to present an insuperable difficulty. Undoubtedly it is above our comprehension how a man should suddenly become possessed of the ability to speak in a

language before unknown to him; but why should we doubt God's power to bestow such a gift? Can any one suppose for a moment that when our Saviour met with a person deaf and dumb from birth, he had, for the first time, a case beyond his healing power? The gospel narrative plainly indicates the contrary. Mark 7:32-37, upon which passage see Meyer and Alford. The account of the sudden death of Ananias and Sapphira, chap. 5:1-11, is not contrary to the spirit of the gospel. They died by the immediate act of God. His wisdom judged such an example of severity to be necessary in the beginning of the gospel, as a solemn warning against hypocrisy and {91} falsehood in his service. Though the gospel is a system of mercy, it takes, as all admit, a severe attitude towards those who reject it; why not, then, towards those who make a hypocritical profession of it? As Nadab and Abihu were consumed by fire from heaven at the beginning of the Mosaic economy, so the death of Ananias and his wife came early in the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, as a testimony to all future ages of Christ's abhorrence of hypocrisy, and consequently of the doom which hypocrites will receive from him at the last day. Matthew 7:21-23. The fact that Luke has omitted some events in the history of Paul, as, for example, his journey into Arabia, which occurred during the three years that intervened between his conversion and his first visit to Jerusalem, Acts 9:22-26 compared with Galatians 1:15-18, is no argument against the credibility of his narrative. Difficulties that arise simply from a writer's brevity must not be allowed to set aside satisfactory evidence of his competency and truthfulness. The historical difficulties connected with Stephen's address do not concern Luke's credibility as a historian, and the discussion of them belongs to the commentator.

5. The book of Acts closes with a notice that "Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus, with all confidence, no man forbidding him." As it adds no notice of the issue of his imprisonment, or of what afterwards befell him, we naturally infer that the book was written at Rome about this time, that is, about A.D. 63.

II. The Acknowledged Epistles, 6. It is well known that doubts existed, to a greater or less extent, in the primitive churches before the fourth century, respecting the apostolic origin and authority of certain books which now constitute a part of the New Testament canon. Hence the distinction made by Eusebius between the acknowledged books, (homologoumena) that is, those that were universally received from the first, and the disputed books, (antilegomena,) books respecting which some entertained doubts. The acknowledged books are, the four gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the thirteen epistles of Paul which bear his name at the beginning, the first epistle of Peter, and the first epistle of John; twenty in all. The disputed books {92} are, the epistle to the Hebrews, the epistle of James, the second epistle of Peter, the second and third epistles of John, the epistle of Jude, and the book of Revelation; seven in all. The gospels and the Acts have been already considered, and the disputed books are reserved for the following chapter. Some remarks will here be made on the fifteen acknowledged epistles.

7. The epistles of Paul may be conveniently distributed into two groups, of which the second or smaller contains the three pastoral epistles, and the former or larger, the remaining ten. Of the apostolic origin of the larger group little needs to be said. They bear throughout the impress of genuineness and authenticity. No doubts were ever entertained concerning them in the ancient churches. There is, indeed, some ground for suspecting that a few ancient copies of the epistle to the Ephesians omitted the words at Ephesus-more literally in Ephesus-chap. 1:1. But the

genuineness of these words is sustained by an overwhelming weight of evidence, and that Paul was the author of the epistle was never once doubted by the ancient churches. The arguments of some modern writers against its apostolic origin have no real weight, as will be shown hereafter in the introduction to the epistle.

Respecting the apostolic authorship of the three pastoral epistles, two to Timothy and one to Titus, there was never any doubt in the ancient churches. They are supported by the testimony of the Peshito-Syriac version, of the Muratorian canon, also, (as appears from Jerome's letter to Marcella and the quotations of the church fathers before him,) of the Old Latin version; of Irenæus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and a multitude of later writers. There are also some allusions to these epistles in the apostolic fathers, which seem to be decisive.

Such are the following: "Let us therefore approach to him in holiness of soul, lifting up to him holy and unpolluted hands." Clement of Rome, First Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. 29. "But the beginning of all mischief is the love of money. Knowing, therefore, that we brought nothing into the world neither have power to carry any thing out, let us arm ourselves {93} with the armor of righteousness." Polycarp, Epistle to the Philippians, chap. 4. The student may see other supposed allusions in Kirchhofer, Quellensammlung; Lardner, 2:39; Davidson's Introduction, 3, p. 101 seq.; Alford's New Testament, Introduction to the Pastoral Epistles, etc.

Respecting the date of the pastoral epistles very different opinions are held. The whole discussion turns on the question whether they were written before or after Paul's imprisonment at Rome, which is recorded in the last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles; and this again is connected with the further question whether he underwent a second imprisonment at Rome, concerning which learned men are not agreed. The full discussion of this matter belongs to the introduction to the pastoral epistles. It may be simply remarked, however, that the internal arguments in favor of a late date are very strong, and that its assumption accounts for the development of such a state of things at Ephesus as appears in the two pastoral epistles to Timothy-a state very different from that which existed when the epistle to the Ephesians was written, between A.D. 60 and 64, and which makes it necessary to separate the first epistle to Timothy from that to the Ephesians by a considerable interval of time. The theme of the pastoral epistles is peculiar. It is the affectionate counsel of an aged apostle to two young preachers and rulers in the church respecting the duties of their office. From the peculiarity of the subject-matter naturally arises, to some extent, a peculiarity in the diction of these epistles; yet the style and costume is throughout that of the apostle Paul.

8. The testimony of the ancient church to the first epistle of Peter and the first of John is very ample. Besides that of the Peshito-Syriac version, and of the church fathers Irenæus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria, they have in addition that of Papias and the apostolic father Polycarp. The first epistle of John is also included in the Muratorian canon. It scarcely needs, however, any external testimony. The identity of its author with that of the fourth gospel is so manifest from its whole tone and style, that it has been always conceded that {94} if one of these writings came from the pen of the apostle John, the other did also. The testimony of Papias to these two epistles, though indirect, is conclusive. Eusebius says, Hist. Ecclesiastes 3. 39, "The same Papias has employed testimonies from the first epistle of John, and in like manner of Peter." Polycarp says, Epistle to the Philippians, ch. 7, "For every one who confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in

the flesh, is anti-Christ," with evident reference to 1 John 4:3. Eusebius says also, Hist. Ecclesiastes 4:14, that in the same epistle to the Philippians Polycarp "has employed certain testimonies from the first epistle of Peter;" and when we examine the epistle we find several certain references to it, among which are the following: "In whom, though ye see him not, ye believe; and believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Chap. 1 compared with 1 Peter 1:8. "Believing in him who raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and gave him glory, and a seat at his right hand." Chap. 2 compared with 1 Peter 1:21.

9. The relation of the gospel history to the writings now under consideration-the book of Acts and the apostolic epistles-is of the most intimate and weighty character. The truth of the earlier narratives contained in the gospels implies the truth of these later works; for, as already remarked, they are the natural sequel of the events there recorded. On the other hand, the truth of these later writings implies the truth of the gospel history; for in that history they find their full explanation, and without it they are, and must ever remain, inexplicable. All the parts of the New Testament constitute one inseparable whole, and they all shed light upon each other. Like a chain of fortresses in war, they mutually command each other. Unless the whole can be overthrown, no one part can be successfully assailed. But to overthrow the whole is beyond the power of man; for God has guarded it on every side by impregnable bulwarks of evidence.

10. A special argument for the truth of the Scripture history of the apostle Paul may be drawn from the numerous undesigned coincidences between the events recorded in the book of Acts and those referred to in the epistles. This work has been accomplished with great ability and skill by Paley in his {95} Horæ Paulinæ, to which the reader is referred. The argument is very conclusive; for when we consider the "particularity of St. Paul’s epistles, the perpetual recurrence of names of persons and places, the frequent allusions to the incidents of his private life, and the circumstances of his condition and history, and the connection and parallelism of these with the same circumstances in the Acts of the Apostles, so as to enable us, for the most part, to confront them one with another," we must be satisfied that the truth of the history can alone explain such a multitude of coincidences, many of them of a minute character, and all of them manifestly undesigned.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible]

06. The Disputed Books

CHAPTER VI. THE DISPUTED BOOKS. The grounds on which each of the disputed books-Antilegomena, chap. 5, No. 6-is received into the canon of the New Testament, will be considered in the introduction to these books. In the present chapter some general suggestions will be made which apply to them as a whole.

1. This is not a question concerning the truth of Christianity, but concerning the extent of the canon; a distinction which is of the highest importance. Some persons, when they learn that doubts existed in the early churches, to a greater or less extent, respecting certain books of the New Testament, are troubled in mind, as if a shade of uncertainty were thereby cast over the whole collection of books. But this is a very erroneous view of the matter. The books of the New Testament, like those of the Old, were written one after another, as occasion required; and the churches received each of them separately on the evidence they had of its apostolic origin and authority. At length collections of these books, that is, canons, began to be formed. Such collections translators would of necessity make, unless they found them ready at hand. The earliest canons of which we have any knowledge are contained in the old Latin version, the Syriac version called Peshito, and the Muratorian canon; each of which represented the prevailing judgment of the churches in the region where it was formed. As this judgment differed in the different provinces of Christendom in respect to the books in question, so also do these canons. The Peshito contains the epistle to the Hebrews and that of James, but omits the other five books. The Muratorian canon omits the epistle to the Hebrews, the epistle of {97} James, and the second epistle of Peter; but contains the epistle of Jude, the book of Revelation, and apparently also the second and third of John, though in respect to them its language is obscure and of doubtful interpretation. The old Latin version, so far as we can judge from the quotations of the church fathers, agreed in general with the Muratorian canon. It contained, however, the epistle of James, (Codex Corbeiensis, ff,) and that to the Hebrews; and if, as has been supposed, this latter was a later addition, it was yet earlier than the time of Tertullian. See Westcott on the Canon, pp. 282, 283. Now this diversity of judgment with regard to particular books does not affect in the least the remaining books of the New Testament, which are sustained by the authority of all the above-named witnesses, as well as by the undivided testimony of the ancient churches. Did the New Testament claim to be the work of a single author, the case would be different. We should then have but one witness; and if certain parts of his testimony could be successfully assailed, this would throw a measure of suspicion on the whole. But now we have in the separate books of the New Testament a large number of witnesses, most of whom are entirely independent of each other. Doubts respecting the testimony of one do not affect that of another. We receive the seven books in question as a part of God’s revelation on grounds which we judge adequate, as will be shown in the introductions to the several books. But if any one feels under the necessity of suspending his judgment with respect to one or more of these books, let him follow the teachings of the other books, which are above all doubt. He will find in them all the truth essential to the salvation of his soul; and he will then be in a position calmly to investigate the evidence for the

canonical authority of the so-called disputed books.

2. The diversity of judgment which prevailed in the early churches in respect to certain books of the New Testament, is in harmony with all that we know of their character and spirit. It was an age of free inquiry. General councils were not then known, nor was there any central power to impose its decisions {98} on all the churches. In the essential doctrines of the gospel there was everywhere an agreement, especially in receiving the writings acknowledged to be apostolic, as the supreme rule of faith and practice. But this did not exclude differences on minor points in the different provinces of Christendom; and with respect to these the churches of each particular region were tenacious then, as they have been in all ages since, of their peculiar opinions and practices. It is well known, for example, that the churches of Asia Minor differed from those of Rome in the last half of the second century respecting the day on which the Christian festival of the Passover, with the communion service connected with it, should be celebrated; the former placing it on the fourteenth of the month Nisan, the latter on the anniversary of the resurrection Sunday. Nor could the conference between Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor, and Anicetus, bishop of Rome, about A.D. 162, avail to change the usage of either party, though it did not at that time break the bond of brotherhood between them. We need not be surprised therefore to find a like diversity in different regions respecting certain books of the New Testament. The unanimous belief of the Eastern and Alexandrine churches ascribed to Paul the authorship of the epistle to the Hebrews; but in the Western churches its Pauline authorship was not generally admitted till the fourth century. The Apocalypse, on the contrary, found most favor with the Western or Latin churches. It has in its favor the testimony of the Muratorian canon, which is of Latin origin, and also-as appears from the citations contained in the commentaries of Primasius-that of the old Latin version. Other examples see above, No. 1.

3. Although we cannot account for the universal and undisputed reception of the acknowledged books by all the churches, except on the assumption of their genuineness, the non-reception of a given book by some of the early churches is no conclusive argument against its apostolic origin. From the influence of circumstances unknown to us, it may have remained for a considerable period of time in comparative obscurity. {99} We have good ground for believing that some apostolic writings are utterly lost. To deny the possibility of this would be to prejudge the wisdom of God. As the apostles delivered many inspired discourses which it did not please the Holy Ghost to have recorded, so they may have written letters which he did not judge needful to make the sacred volume complete. The question is one of fact, not of theory. The most obvious interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5:9 and Colossians 4:16 is that Paul refers in each case to an epistle which has not come down to us. And if an inspired epistle might be lost, much more might the knowledge and use of it be restricted for a time to a narrow circle of churches. When such an epistle-for example, the second of Peter-began to be more extensively known, the general reception and use of it would be a slow process, not only from the difficulty of communication in ancient as compared with modern times, but also from the slowness with which the churches of one region received any thing new from those of other regions.

Then again, if a book were known, there might be in some regions hesitancy in respect to receiving it, from doubts in regard to its author, as in the case of the epistle to the Hebrews and the Apocalypse; or from the peculiarity of its contents also, as in the case of the latter book. In the influence of causes like the above named, we find a reasonable explanation of the fact that some

books, which the mature judgment of the churches received into the canon of the New Testament, did not find at first a universal reception.

4. In the caution and hesitation of the early churches with respect to the books in question, we have satisfactory evidence that, in settling the canon of the New Testament, they acted with great deliberation and conscientiousness, their rule being that no book should be received whose apostolic origin could not be established on solid grounds. Did the early history of the Christian church present no such phenomenon as that of the distinction between acknowledged and disputed books, we might naturally infer that all books that professed to have emanated {100} from the apostles, or to have had their sanction, were received without discrimination. But now the mature and final judgment of the churches is entitled to great consideration. This judgment, let it be remembered, was not affirmative only, but also negative. While it admitted to the canon the seven books now under consideration, it excluded others which were highly valued and publicly read in many of the churches. On this ground it is entitled to still higher regard. It is not, however, of binding authority, for it is not the decision of inspired men. We have a right to go behind it, and to examine the facts on which it is based, so far as they can be ascertained from existing documents. But this work belongs to the introduction to the several books.

Three books alone "obtained a partial ecclesiastical currency, through which they were not clearly separated at first from the disputed writings of the New Testament." Westcott on the Canon, Appendix B, p. 550. This was on the ground that they were written, or supposed to be written, by the immediate successors of the apostles. The oldest known codex of the Bible is the Sinaitic, discovered at mount Sinai by Tischendorf in 1859, and which belongs to the fourth century. This contains the whole of the epistle of Barnabas, and the first part of the work called the Shepherd of Hermas. The Alexandrine codex, belonging to the fifth century, has appended to it the first epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, the genuineness of which is admitted, and also a portion of the second or apocryphal epistle, the remainder of it being lost. The explanation is, that these three books were read in some at least of the churches when these codices were formed. But they never obtained any permanent authority as canonical writings, and were excluded from the New Testament "by every council of the churches, catholic or schismatic." Tertullian, as quoted by Westcott, p. 551.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible]

07. Inspiration and the Canon

CHAPTER VII.

INSPIRATION AND THE CANON By the word inspiration, when used in a theological sense, we understand such an illumination and guidance of the Holy Spirit as raises a speaker or writer above error, and thus gives to his teachings a divine authority. If we attempt to investigate the interior nature of this superhuman influence, its different degrees and modes of operation, and the relation which the human mind holds to the divine in the case of those who receive it, we find ourselves involved in many difficulties, some of which at least are to our finite minds insuperable. But if we look at it from a practical point of view, restricting our inquiries to the end proposed by God in inspiration, which is to furnish his church with an infallible and sufficient rule of faith and practice, we find no difficulty in understanding the subject so far as our duty and welfare are concerned. From such a practical position the question of inspiration will now be discussed; and the inquiry will be, at present, restricted to the writings of the New Testament. In connection with this discussion will also be considered the subject of the canon, not in its particular extent, but in the principle upon which it is formed.

1. It is necessary, first of all, to find a sure rule by which we can try the claims of a given book to be inspired, and consequently to be admitted into the canon of the New Testament. It cannot be simply the writer’s own declaration. It will be shown hereafter that, in connection with other evidence, his testimony concerning himself is of the highest importance. But the point now is, that no man’s inspiration is to be acknowledged simply on his own word. Nor can we decide simply {102} from the contents of the book. Very important indeed is the question concerning the contents of any book which claims to be a revelation from God. Yet we cannot take the naked ground that a given book is inspired because its contents are of a given character. This would be virtually to set up our own reason as the supreme arbiter of divine truth, which is the very position of rationalism. Nor can we receive a book as inspired on the so-called authority of the church, whether this mean the authority of a man who claims to be its infallible head, or the authority of a general council of the churches. Admitting for a moment the Romish doctrine of the infallibility of the church, we could know this infallibility not from the declaration of any man or body of men in the church, but from Scripture alone. But this is assuming at the outset the infallibility of Scripture, and therefore its inspiration, which is the very point at issue. Looking at the question on all sides, we shall find for a given book of the New Testament no valid test of the writer’s inspiration except his relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. This presupposes our Lord’s divine mission and character, and his supreme authority in the church. It is necessary therefore to begin with the great central fact of the gospel, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, and that through him God has made to men a revelation of his own character and will for their salvation. This fact is to be first established according to the ordinary rules of human evidence, as has been attempted in the preceding chapters. After that we come naturally to the inspiration of the record, and can establish it also on a sure foundation.

2. The great fundamental truth that Jesus is the Son of God, who dwelt from eternity with the Father, knew all his counsels, and was sent by him to this fallen world on a mission of love and mercy, being established on an immovable foundation, we have a sure point of departure from which to proceed in our inquiries respecting inspiration. It becomes at once a self-evident proposition-the great axiom of Christianity, we may call it-that the teaching of Jesus Christ, when he was on {103} earth, was truth unmixed with error. This he himself asserted in the most explicit terms: "The Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth." John 5:20. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John 8:12. "He that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him." John 8:26. "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." John 12:49-50. Proceeding then from the position of our Lord's infallibility, let us inquire whether any of his disciples, and if so, who among them, were divinely qualified to teach, and consequently to record, without error, the facts and doctrines of his gospel. There are but two grades of relationship to Christ with which we can connect such a high endowment: that of apostles, and that of their companions and fellow-laborers. Let us consider each of these in order.

3. Early in our Lord's ministry he chose twelve apostles, "that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils." Mark 3:14-15. In this brief notice we have all the distinguishing marks of an apostle. He was chosen that he might be with Christ from the beginning, and thus be to the people an eye-witness of his whole public life. When an apostle was to be chosen in the place of Judas, Peter laid particular stress on this qualification: "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection." Acts 1:21-22. In the case of Paul alone was this condition of apostleship wanting; and this want was made up to him by the special revelation of Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:11-12. An apostle, again, was one who received his commission to preach {104} immediately from the Saviour, a qualification which Paul strenuously asserted in his own behalf: "Paul an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." Galatians 1:1. An apostle, once more, was one who received directly from Christ the power of working miracles. This was the seal of his apostleship before the world. In the three particulars that have been named the apostles held to Christ the nearest possible relation, and were by this relation distinguished from all other men. Have we evidence that they were divinely qualified, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to preach and record the facts and doctrines of the gospel without error? That they must have been thus qualified, we have, in the first place, a strong presumption from the necessity of the case. Though our Lord finished the work which the Father gave him to do on earth, he did not finish the revelation of his gospel. On the contrary, he said to his disciples just before his crucifixion, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." John 16:12-13. Let us look at some of these things which were reserved for future revelation. The purely spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom was not understood by the apostles till after the day of Pentecost, for we find them asking, just before his ascension, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" a question which he did not answer, but referred them to the promised gift

of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:6-8. Another of the things which they could not bear was the abolition, through Christ's propitiatory sacrifice, of the Mosaic law, and with it, of the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles. This great truth was reserved to be revealed practically in the progress of the gospel, as recorded in the book of Acts, and doctrinally in the epistles of Paul. Then what a rich unfolding we have in the apostolic epistles of the meaning of our Lord's death on Calvary, and in connection with this, of the doctrine of justification by faith-faith not simply in Christ, but in Christ crucified. {105} Faith in Christ's person the disciples had before his death; but faith in him as crucified for the sins of the world they could not have till after his resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God. The abovenamed truths-not to specify others, as, for example, what Paul says of the resurrection, 1 Cor., ch. 15; 1. Thess. 4:13-18-enter into the very substance of the gospel. They are, in fact, integral parts of it. Can we suppose that our Lord began the revelation of his gospel by his own infallible wisdom, and then left it to be completed by the fallible wisdom of men? If Augustine and Jerome in the latter period of the Roman empire, if Anselm and Bernard in the middle ages, if Luther and Calvin at the era of the Reformation, if Wesley and Edwards in later days, commit errors, the mischief is comparatively small; for, upon the supposition that the apostles were qualified by the Holy Ghost to teach and write without error, we have in their writings an infallible standard by which to try the doctrines of later uninspired men. But if the apostles whom Christ himself appointed to finish the revelation which he had begun, and whom he endowed with miraculous powers, as the seal of their commission, had been left without a sure guarantee against error, then there would be no standard of truth to which the church in later ages could appeal. No man who believes that Jesus is the Son of God, and that he came into the world to make to men a perfect revelation of the way of life, can admit such an absurd supposition. In the second place, we have Christ's express promises to his apostles that they should be divinely qualified for their work through the gift of the Holy Ghost: "But when they deliver you up, take no thought"-be not solicitous, as the original signifies-"how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." Matthew 10:19-20. "But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you {106} in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost." Mark 13:11. "And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." Luke 12:11-12. "Settle it therefore in your hearts not to meditate before what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." Luke 21:14-15. The above promises are perfectly explicit; and although they refer primarily to a particular emergency, in which the apostles would especially feel their need of divine guidance, they cover, in their spirit, all other emergencies. We cannot read them without the conviction that they contain the promise to the apostles of all needed help and guidance in the work committed to them. If they were divinely qualified to defend the gospel before their adversaries without error-"I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist"-so were they also to record the facts of the gospel, and to unfold in their epistles its doctrines. The promises recorded in the gospel of John are more general and comprehensive in their character. It will be sufficient to adduce two of them: "These things have I spoken unto you being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all

things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." John 14:25-26. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." John 16:12-15. In the former of these passages the special promise is that the Holy {107} Spirit shall bring to the remembrance of the apostles and unfold to their understanding all Christ's personal teachings; so that they shall thus have a fuller apprehension of their meaning than they could while he was yet with them. The second promise is introduced with the declaration that the Saviour has yet many things to say to his apostles which they cannot now bear. Of course these things are reserved for the ministration of the Spirit, as he immediately proceeds to show: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." The Spirit shall glorify Christ; for he shall take of the things which are Christ's, and reveal them to the apostles. And what are the things which are Christ's? "All that the Father hath;" for the Father has given all things into the hands of the Son. John 13:3. Among these "all things" are included all the Father's counsels pertaining to the way of salvation through the Son. These are given to the Son; and the Holy Ghost shall take of them and reveal to the church, through the apostles, as much as it is needful for the church to know. In these remarkable words we have at once a proof of our Lord's deity, and a sure guarantee to the apostles of supernatural illumination and guidance in the work committed to them-all the illumination and guidance which they needed, that they might be qualified to finish without error the revelation of the gospel which Christ had begun. The question is often asked: Were these promises given to the apostles alone, or through them to the church at large? The answer is at hand. They were given primarily and in a special sense to the apostles; for they had reference to a special work committed to them, which required for its performance special divine illumination and guidance. They were also given, in an important sense, to the church at large; since all believers enjoy, through the teaching of the apostles, the benefit of these revelations of the Holy Spirit. They are not, however, made to all believers personally; but were given, once for all, through the apostles to the church. The gift of the Holy Spirit is indeed made to all believers personally: through his enlightening and sanctifying power they have all needed help and guidance. But they are not called, as were the apostles, to lay the foundations of the Christian faith, and have therefore no promise of new {108} revelations from the Spirit or of elevation above all error, any more than they have of miraculous gifts.

We are now prepared to consider, in the third place, the claims which the apostles themselves made to speak and write with divine authority. Although their simple word as men could avail nothing, yet this same word, taken in connection with their known relation to Christ, with the work committed to them, and with the promises made to them, is of the most weighty import. It was not indeed their custom to assert gratuitously their superhuman guidance and authority. Yet when occasions arose, from the nature of the subject under discussion, or from the opposition of false teachers, they did so in unambiguous terms. Thus the apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says, "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual," 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 : and writing to the Thessalonians concerning the

resurrection, "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep," etc. 1 Thessalonians 4:15. And again, in writing to the Galatians, among whom his apostolic standing had been called in question by certain Judaizing teachers, he says, "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man: for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Galatians 1:11-12. This language is explicit enough. It could have been used only by one who was conscious of having been divinely qualified to teach the gospel without error. Accordingly, in the same epistle, he opposes his apostolic authority to these false teachers: "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing." Galatians 5:2. In the memorable letter of the apostles and elders to the Gentile churches, Acts 15:23-29, they say, "It seemed good to the {109} Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things." "To the Holy Ghost and to us" can mean only, to us under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Besides such explicit assertions as the above, there is a tone of authority running through the apostolic writings which can be explained only from their claim to speak with divine authority. They assert the weightiest truths and make the weightiest revelations concerning the future, as men who know that they have a right to be implicitly believed and obeyed. What majesty of authority, for example, shines through Paul’s discussion of the doctrine of the resurrection, 1 Cor., ch. 15, where he announces truths that lie wholly beyond the ken of human reason. "Behold," says he, "I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," as one who has perfect assurance that he speaks from God. The same tone of certainty runs through all the remarks which the apostle John interweaves into his gospel, as well as through his epistles, and through the other apostolic writings. To sum up in a single sentence what has been said respecting the apostles: When we consider the strong presumption, arising from the necessity of the case, that they must have been divinely qualified to teach and write without error, the explicit promises of Christ that they should be thus qualified, and their explicit claims under these promises, we have full evidence that they wrote, as well as spoke, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and consequently that their writings are of divine authority.

4. In the second grade of relationship to Christ stand men who, like Mark and Luke, were not themselves apostles, but were the companions of apostles, and their associates in the work of preaching the gospel. We are not authorized to place them in the same rank with the apostles. Yet they had the gift of the Holy Spirit, which was always given in connection with ordination at the hands of the apostles. If, in addition to this, their connection with some of the apostles was of such an intimate nature that we cannot suppose them to have written {110} without their knowledge and approbation, we have for their writings all the apostolic authority that is needed. The intimate relation of Luke to the apostle Paul has been already sufficiently shown. We have good ground for believing that he was with him when he wrote both the gospel and the book of Acts. The intimate connection of Mark with the apostle Peter is shown by the unanimous testimony of the primitive churches, and is confirmed, moreover, by an examination of the peculiarities of his gospel. In entire harmony with the position of these two evangelists is the character of their writings. They never assume the office of independent teachers, but restrict themselves to a careful record of the works and words of Christ and his apostles.

5. A final argument for the inspiration of the books of the New Testament, whether written by apostles or their companions, may be drawn from their general character, as contrasted with that

of the writings which remain to us from the age next succeeding that of the apostles. The more one studies the two classes of writings in connection, the deeper will be his conviction of the distance by which they are separated from each other. The descent from the majesty and power of the apostolic writings to the best of those which belong to the following age is sudden and very great. Only by a slow process did Christian literature afterwards rise to a higher position through the leavening influence of the gospel upon Christian society, and especially upon Christian education. The contrast now under consideration is particularly important in our judgment of those books which, like the second epistle of Peter, are sustained by a less amount of external evidence. Though we cannot decide on the inspiration of a book simply from the character of its contents, we may be helped in our judgment by comparing these, on the one hand, with writings acknowledged to be apostolic, and on the other, with writings which we know to be of the following age.

6. The inspiration of the sacred writers was plenary in the sense that they received from the Holy Spirit all the illumination {111} and guidance which they needed to preserve them from error in the work committed to them. With regard to the degree and mode of this influence in the case of different books, it is not necessary to raise any abstract questions. That Paul might make to the Galatians a statement of his visits to Jerusalem and the discussions connected with them, Galatians, chaps. 1, 2, or might give an account of his conversion before king Agrippa, Acts, ch. 26, it was not necessary that he should receive the same kind and measure of divine help as when he unfolded to the Corinthians the doctrine of the resurrection, 1 Cor., ch. 15. And so in regard to the other inspired penmen. Whatever assistance each of them needed, he received. If his judgment needed divine illumination for the selection of his materials, it was given him. If he needed to be raised above narrowness and prejudice, or to have the Saviour’s instructions unfolded to his understanding, or to receive new revelations concerning the way of salvation or the future history of Christ’s kingdom-whatever divine aid was necessary in all these cases, was granted. Thus the books of the New Testament, being written under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, become to the Christian church an infallible rule of faith and practice.

If there be any limitation connected with the inspiration of the sacred writers, it is one of which the Holy Spirit is himself the author, and which cannot therefore injuriously affect their testimony. It did not please God, for example, that the exact order of time should always be kept in the gospel narratives; nor that the identical forms of expression employed by the Saviour on given occasions should always be preserved; nor that the accompanying circumstances should in all cases be fully stated; for in all these respects the evangelists frequently differ among themselves. Had the wisdom of God judged it best, minute accuracy in these particulars might have been secured. But the result would probably have been injurious, by leading men to exalt the letter above the spirit of the gospel. We should be glad to know with certainty which, if any, of the different ways that have been proposed for reconciling John’s narrative with those of the other evangelists in respect to the day of the month on which our Lord ate his last passover with his disciples, is the true one. It would give us pleasure were we able to arrange all the incidents connected with our Lord’s resurrection, as recorded by the four evangelists, in the exact order of their {112} occurrence. Had we a full record of all the circumstances pertaining to these two transactions, this might be accomplished. But it would not make any essential addition to our knowledge of the gospel. We should have, in every jot and tittle, the same way of salvation that we have now, and the same duties in respect to it. To all who, on grounds like these, find difficulty with the doctrine of plenary inspiration, we may

say, in the words of the apostle, "Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit, in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men."

7. The extent of the canon is determined by the extent of inspiration. The question to be settled respecting each book of the New Testament is, Was it written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit? or, which amounts to the same thing, Has it apostolic authority? If it has, it is to be received; if not, it is to be rejected. There is no middle ground-no division of the canon into books of primary and of secondary authority.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Inspiration]

Chapter 9

08. Inseparable Connection between the Old and New Testament.

CHAPTER VIII.

INSEPARABLE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Although the great central truth of redemption, that "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world," and that we have in the New Testament a true record of this mission, rests, as has been shown, upon an immovable foundation, we have as yet seen the argument in only half its strength. Not until we consider the advent of Christ in connection with the bright train of revelations that preceded and prepared the way for his coming, do we see it in its full glory, or comprehend the amount of divine testimony by which it is certified to us. We have already seen, chap. 5. 1, how the events recorded in the Acts of the Apostles follow, as a natural sequel, from the truth of the gospel history; how, if we admit the former, we ought, for very consistency, to admit the latter also, since the two cling together as inseparable parts of one great plan. It is now proposed to look backward from the Saviour's advent to the preceding series of revelations, and show how naturally in the plan of God they preceded that great event, and how inseparably they were connected with it as parts of one great whole.

1. The supernatural mission of Christ furnishes, in and of itself, a very strong presumption in favor of previous supernatural revelations. That such a mighty event as this should have burst upon the world abruptly, without any previous preparation, is contrary to the whole order of providence as well as of nature, which is, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." And since the advent of Christ was miraculous in the fullest sense of the term, why should not the way for it have been prepared by miraculous revelations as {114} well as by providential movements? The natural sun does not emerge suddenly from the darkness of night: his approach is preceded by the day-star and the dawn. So were the revelations which God made to men from Adam to Malachi, with the mighty movements of his providence that accompanied them, the day-star and the dawn that ushered in upon the world the glorious sun of righteousness.

2. We have the great fact that the Jewish people, among whom our Lord appeared, and from among whom he chose the primitive preachers of the gospel, possessed a firm and deeply-rooted belief in the unity of God and his infinite perfections. That such a belief was a necessary foundation for the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, all of which are underlaid by that of trinity in unity, is self-evident. Now, this belief was peculiar to the Jews, as contrasted with other nations; and it was held, moreover, not simply by a few philosophers and learned men among them, but by the mass of the people. No other example of a whole nation receiving and holding firmly this fundamental doctrine of religion existed then, or had ever existed; and no adequate explanation of this great fact has ever been given, except that contained in the revelation of God to this people recorded in the Old Testament. It was not by chance, but in accordance with the eternal plan of redemption, that the Messiah appeared where as well as when he did; not in Egypt in the days of Pharaoh, nor in Nineveh, or Babylon, or Greece, or Rome; but among the Jewish people, when now "the fulness of time was come."

3. The impossibility of any attempt to dissever the revelations of the Old Testament from those of the New appears most clearly when we consider the explicit declarations of our Saviour, and after him the apostles, on this point. If we know any thing whatever concerning the doctrines of our Lord Jesus, we know that he constantly taught his disciples that he had come in accordance with the prophecies of the Old Testament. If there were found in his discourses only one or two remote allusions to these prophecies, there would be more show of reason in the {115} favorite hypothesis of rationalists, that the disciples misapprehended their Lord's meaning. But his teachings are so numerous and explicit on this point that, even aside from the inspiration of the writers, such an explanation is not to be thought of for a moment. It was with two of them a matter of personal knowledge that "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself," Luke 24:27; and with all of them that he said, after his resurrection, in reference to his past teachings: "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." Luke 24:44. That in Christ were fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament, appears in every variety of form in the gospel narratives. It constituted, so to speak, the warp into which the Saviour wove his web of daily instruction. Now if a single thread, unlike all the rest in substance and color, had found its way into this warp, we might, perhaps, regard it as foreign and accidental; but to dissever from our Lord's words all his references to the prophecies concerning himself in the Old Testament, would be to take out of the web all the threads of the warp, and then the web itself would be gone. No unbiased reader ever did, or ever could gain from the words of Christ and his apostles any other idea than that Jesus of Nazareth came in accordance with a bright train of supernatural revelations going before and preparing the way for his advent. This idea is so incorporated into the very substance of the New Testament that it must stand or fall with it.

4. Having contemplated the indivisible nature of revelation from the position of the New Testament, we are now prepared to go back and look at it from the platform of the Old Testament. We shall find this thickly sown with those great principles which underlie the plan of redemption, and bind it together as one glorious whole.

First of all, we have in the narrative of Adam's fall and the consequences thence proceeding to the race, the substratum, so {116} to speak, on which the plan of redemption is built. From this we learn that alienation from God and wickedness is not the original condition of the race. Man was made upright and placed in communion with God. From that condition he fell, in the manner recorded in the Old Testament; and to restore him, through Christ, to his primitive state is the work which the gospel proposes to accomplish. The great historic event of redemption is that "the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil;" and these are the very works described in the narrative now under consideration, namely, the seduction of man from his allegiance to God, with the misery and death that followed. The primitive history of man's apostacy contains, then, the very key to the plan of redemption. So it is plainly regarded by the apostle Paul. He builds upon it arguments relating not to the outworks of redemption, but to its inward nature. He makes the universality of man's fallen condition through the sin of Adam the platform on which is built the universality of the provisions of salvation through Christ. "As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners,

so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Romans 5:18-19. "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Corinthians 15:21-22. How could the original transaction of the fall, through the wiles of the devil, and the manifestation of God’s Son to destroy the works of the devil, be more indissolubly bound together as parts of one great whole than in these words of an inspired apostle?

Secondly, the Abrahamic covenant connects itself immediately with the mission and work of Christ. It was made with Abraham, not for himself and his posterity alone, but for all mankind: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Genesis 22:18. And if the Abrahamic covenant had respect to the whole human family, the same must be true of {117} the Mosaic economy in its ultimate design; since this did not abrogate the covenant made with Abraham, as the apostle Paul expressly shows, Galatians 3:17, but rather came in as subordinate to it, and with a view of preparing the way for the accomplishment of its rich provisions of mercy for "all families of the earth." The Mosaic economy was then a partial subservient to a universal dispensation. The Abrahamic covenant was also purely spiritual in its character, the condition of its blessings being nothing else than faith. The apostle Paul urges the fact that this covenant was made with Abraham before his circumcision, lest any should say that it was conditioned wholly or in part upon a carnal ordinance: "He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised." Romans 4:11. The seal of circumcision, then, did not make the covenant valid, for the covenant existed many years before the rite of circumcision was instituted. Faith was the only condition of Abraham’s justification. "He believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness." Genesis 15:6. And if we look at the promise contained in the Abrahamic covenant, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed," we find it to be the very substance of the gospel, as the apostle Paul says: "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." Galatians 3:8. The incarnation and work of Christ are, according to the uniform representation of the New Testament, nothing else but the carrying out of the covenant made with Abraham, for this covenant was made for all mankind, was purely spiritual, being conditioned on faith alone, and its substance is Christ, in whom all nations are blessed. And while God has thus indissolubly linked to the incarnation of his Son this high transaction with Abraham, we see how he has at the same time connected it with the first promise made in Eden, and thus with the fall of man through the {118} subtilty of Satan. The promise in Eden is that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head. The promise to Abraham is that in his seed, which is also the seed of the woman, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Now it is by the bruising of the serpent’s head, or, in New Testament language, by destroying the works of the devil, that Abraham’s seed blesses all the families of the earth. The two promises, then, are in their inmost nature one and the same, and their fulfilment constitutes the work of Christ.

Thirdly, the end of the Mosaic economy is Christ. Its general scope is thus briefly summed up by Paul: "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Galatians 3:25. But not to insist on this, let us contemplate its three great institutions-the prophetic, the kingly, and the priestly order. The mode of communication which God employed on Sinai the people could not endure, and they besought him, through Moses, that it might be discontinued: "Speak them with us," they said, "and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

Exodus 20:19. Of this request God approved, and promised: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee." Deuteronomy 18:18. The point of special emphasis is, that the great Prophet here promised, who is Christ, should be one of their brethren, as Moses was. His personal advent was for many ages delayed; but in the meantime his office was foreshadowed by the prophetical order in Israel, consisting of men sent by God to address their brethren. Thus the old dispensation and the new are linked together by the great fundamental principle-that God should address man through man-which runs through both. The whole series of Old Testament prophecies, moreover, point to Christ as their end and fulfilment; "for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Revelation 19:10. The kingly office of the Old Testament connects itself with that of Christ in a special way. Not only did the headship given to David and his successors over the covenant people of {119} God adumbrate the higher headship of Christ, but David had from God the promise: "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." 2 Samuel 7:16. This promise is fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, "the seed of David according to the flesh," according to the express declaration of the New Testament: "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Luke 1:32-33. The priestly office, with the blood of the sacrifices connected with it, prefigured Christ, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." By the stream of sacrificial blood that flowed for so many ages was set forth that great fundamental truth of redemption, that "without shedding of blood is no remission." Hebrews 9:22. The sacrifices of the Mosaic law were continually repeated, because "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Hebrews 10:4. But when Christ had offered his own blood on Calvary for the sins of the world, the typical sacrifices of the law ceased for ever, having been fulfilled in the great Antitype, "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." Ephes. 1:7.

5. Since the Old Testament and the New are thus inseparably connected as parts of one grand system of revelation, of which the end is Christ, it follows that the later revelations of the New Testament are the true interpreters of the earlier, which are contained in the Old. This is only saying that the Holy Ghost is the true and proper expositor of his own communications to man. From the interpretations of Christ and his apostles, fairly ascertained, there is no appeal. And they are fairly ascertained when we have learned in what sense they must have been understood by their hearers. All expositions of the Old Testament that set aside, either openly or in a covert way, the supreme authority of Christ and his apostles, are false, and only lead men away from the truth as it is in Jesus.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible]

09. Authorship of the Pentateuch

CHAPTER IX.

AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH. The term Pentateuch is composed of the two Greek words, pente, five, and teuchos, which in later Alexandrine usage signified book. It denotes, therefore, the collection of five books; or, the five books of the law considered as a whole.

1. In our inquiries respecting the authorship of the Pentateuch, we begin with the undisputed fact that it existed in its present form in the days of Christ and his apostles, and had so existed from the time of Ezra. When the translators of the Greek version, called the Septuagint, began their work, about 280 B.C., they found the Pentateuch as we now have it, and no one pretends that it had undergone any change between their day and that of Ezra, about 460 B.C. It was universally ascribed to Moses as its author, and was called in common usage the law, or the law of Moses.

2. That the authorship of the law in its written form is ascribed to Moses in the New Testament every one knows. "The law was given by Moses;" "Did not Moses give you the law?" "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me;" "For the hardness of your heart he," Moses, "wrote you this precept;" "Master, Moses wrote unto us;" "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" etc. Since now the whole collection of books was familiarly known to the people as the law, or the law of Moses, it is reasonable to infer that our Saviour and his apostles use these terms in the same comprehensive sense, unless there is a limitation given in the context. Such a limitation the apostle Paul makes when he opposes to the Mosaic law the previous promise to Abraham: "The covenant that was confirmed before of God in {121} Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." Galatians 3:17, and compare the following verses. But in the following chapter Paul manifestly employs the words the law of the whole Pentateuch, to every part of which he, in common with the Jewish people, ascribed equal and divine authority: "Tell me, ye that desire to be under law"-under a system of law, the article being wanting in the original-"do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons; the one by a bond-maid, the other by a free woman," etc., Galatians 4:21, seq., where the reference is to the narrative recorded in Genesis, as a part of the law. So also in the following passage: "Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath-day," Acts 15:21; the term Moses necessarily means the law of Moses, as comprehending the whole Pentateuch, for it was that which was read in the synagogues. Compare the words of Luke: "After the reading of the law and the prophets," Acts 13:15. And in general, when Christ and his apostles speak of Moses or the law, without any limitation arising from the context, thus, "The law was given by Moses;" "They have Moses and the prophets," etc., we are to understand them as referring to the Pentateuch as a whole, for such was the common usage of the Jewish people, and such must have been their apprehension of the meaning of the terms.

3. But it may be said, Christ and his apostles did not speak as critics, but only in a popular way. That they did not speak of the Pentateuch as critics, is certain. They had no occasion for doing so,

since no Jew doubted either its divine authority or its Mosaic authorship. But when we consider, on the one side, with what unsparing severity our Lord set aside the traditions of the Pharisees as "the commandments of men," and on the other, how he and his apostles ascribed equal divine authority to every part of the Pentateuch, as will be shown in the next chapter, and how unequivocally they sanctioned the universal belief that Moses was its author, we must acknowledge that we {122} have the entire authority of the New Testament for its Mosaic authorship in every essential respect. This is entirely consistent with the belief that inspired men, like Ezra, and perhaps also prophetical men of an earlier age, in setting forth revised copies of the Pentateuch, that is, copies which aimed to give the true text with as much accuracy as possible, may have added here and there explanatory clauses for the benefit of the readers of their day. Such incidental clauses, added by men of God under the guidance of his Spirit, would not affect in the least the substance of the Pentateuch. It would still remain in every practical sense the work of Moses, and be so regarded in the New Testament.

Whether there are, or are not, in the Pentateuch, such clauses added by a later hand, and not affecting either its essential contents or its Mosaic authorship, is an open question to be determined by impartial criticism. At the present day editors carefully indicate their explanatory notes; but this was not the usage of high antiquity. At the close of the book of Deuteronomy, for example, there is immediately added, without any explanatory remark, a notice of Moses' death. We are at liberty to assume, if we have cogent reasons for so doing, that brief explanatory clauses were sometimes interwoven into the Mosaic text; as, for example, the remark in Genesis 36:31, which is repeated in 1 Chronicles 1:43, a book ascribed to Ezra; Exodus 16:35-36, etc.

4. Going back now to the days of the Restoration under Zerubbabel and his associates, about 536 B.C., we find that the very first act of the restored captives was to set up "the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God." The narrative goes on to specify that "they offered burnt-offerings thereon unto the Lord, even burnt-offerings morning and evening. They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt-offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required; and afterwards offered the continual burnt-offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the Lord that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a free-will offering unto the Lord." Ezra 3:1-5. About ninety years afterwards, upon {123} the completion of the walls of Jerusalem under Nehemiah, about 445 B.C., we find Ezra the priest-"a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given," Ezra 7:6 -on the occasion of the feast of tabernacles bringing forth "the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel," and reading in it "from the morning unto midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand." In this work he was assisted by a body of men, who "caused the people to understand the law;" and the reading was continued through the seven days of the feast: "day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God." Neh. ch. 8. It was not the book of Deuteronomy alone that they read. We might infer this from the extent of the reading, which was sufficient for all the preceptive parts of the Pentateuch. But here we are not left to mere inference. On the second day "they found written in the law which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month;" and that they should "fetch olive-branches, and pine-branches, and myrtle-branches, and palm-branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written." Nehemiah 8:13-17.

The precept concerning booths with boughs of trees occurs in Leviticus 23:40-43 hew-43 hew-43, a passage which they might naturally enough reach on the second day.

Ezra’s assistants gave the sense not by labored expositions, but by interpreting the Hebrew in the Chaldee vernacular of the people. This would about double the time devoted to a given section. All that pertained to the structure of the tabernacle was superseded by the first temple, which served the returned captives as their model in the erection of the second. We may well suppose that this was omitted. There would then remain only four or five chapters in the book of Exodus. Thus the passage in question would naturally fall on the second day.

5. Jewish tradition ascribes to Ezra the work of settling the canon of the Old Testament, and setting forth a corrected edition of the same. Though some things included in this tradition are fabulous, the part of it now under consideration is {124} corroborated by all the scriptural statements concerning him, nor is there any reasonable ground for doubting its correctness. Be this as it may, it is admitted that from Ezra’s day onward the Pentateuch existed in its present form. We are sure, therefore, that "the book of the law of Moses," out of which he read to the people, was the book as we now have it-the whole Pentateuch, written, according to uniform Jewish usage, on a single roll. Ezra belonged to the priestly order that had in charge the keeping of the sacred books, Deuteronomy 31:25-26, compared with 2 Kings 22:8, and was moreover "a ready scribe in the law of Moses." His zeal for the reëstablishment of the Mosaic law in its purity shines forth in his whole history. In his competency and fidelity we have satisfactory evidence that the law of Moses which he set forth was the very law which had been handed down from ancient times, and of which we have frequent notices in the books of Kings and Chronicles.

It is generally supposed that Ezra himself wrote the books of Chronicles. They were certainly composed about his time. To admit, as all do, that in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah the law of Moses means the Pentateuch as a whole, and to deny that it has the same meaning in the books of Chronicles, is very inconsistent. Certainly the book which Ezra set forth was the book which he found ready at hand, and therefore the book referred to in the Chronicles, and the Kings also. Any explanatory additions which he may have made did not affect its substance. It remains for the objector to show why it was not, in all essential respects, the book which Hilkiah found in the temple, 2 Chronicles 34:14, and to which David referred in his dying charge to Solomon, 1 Kings 2:3.

6. Passing by, for the present, the notices of the law of Moses contained in the book of Joshua, we come to the testimony of the book of Deuteronomy. We have seen that the Mosaic authorship of the book, as a part of the Pentateuch, is everywhere assumed by the writers of the New Testament. But, in addition to this, they make quotations from it under the forms, "Moses wrote," "Moses truly said unto the fathers," etc. Mark 10:3-5; Acts 3:22; Romans 10:19. If we examine the book itself, its own testimony is equally explicit. In chap. {125} 17:24 Moses directs that when the Israelites shall appoint a king, "he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites." In the opinion of some, this language refers to the whole law of Moses, while others would restrict it to the book of Deuteronomy; but all are agreed that it includes the whole of the latter work, with the exception of the closing sections. By a comparison of this passage with chaps. 28:58; 31:9, 24-26, the evidence is complete that Moses wrote this law, and delivered it to the priests, to be laid up by the side of the ark in the tabernacle. If this testimony

needed any corroboration, we should have it in the character of the work itself. It is the solemn farewell of the aged lawgiver to the people whose leader he had been for the space of forty years. In perfect harmony with this are the grandeur and dignity of its style, its hortatory character, and the exquisite tenderness and pathos that pervade every part of it. It is every way worthy of Moses; nor can we conceive of any other Hebrew who was in a position to write such a book.

7. The book of Deuteronomy contains a renewal of the covenant which God made with the children of Israel at Sinai. Chap. 29:10-15. Moses himself distinguishes between the former and the latter covenant. "These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which he made with them in Horeb." Chap. 29:1. With each covenant was connected a series of laws; those belonging to the latter being mainly, but not entirely, a repetition of laws given with the first covenant. We have seen that Moses wrote the second covenant, and all the laws connected with it. From Exodus, ch. 24, we learn that he wrote also the book of the first covenant containing, we may reasonably suppose, all of God’s legislation up to that time. The inference is irresistible that he wrote also the laws that followed in connection with the first covenant. It is an undeniable fact that these laws underlie the whole constitution of the Israelitish nation, religious, {126} civil, and social. They cannot, then, have been the invention of a later age; for no such fraud can be imposed, or was ever imposed upon a whole people. They are their own witness also that they were given by the hand of Moses, for they are all prefaced by the words, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying." When we consider their fundamental character, their extent, and the number and minuteness of their details, we cannot for a moment suppose that they were left unwritten by such a man as Moses, who had all the qualifications for writing them. Why should not the man who received them from the Lord have also recorded them-this man educated at the court of Egypt, and learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, who had already written "the book of the covenant," and afterwards wrote the journeyings of the Israelites, Numb. ch. 23, and the book of Deuteronomy? An express statement from Moses himself is not needed. The fact is to be understood from the nature of the case, and to call it in question is gratuitous skepticism.

8. The form of the Mosaic laws that precede the book of Deuteronomy is in perfect harmony with the assumption that Moses himself not only received them, but wrote them. They bear the impress of having been recorded not continuously, but from time to time, as they were communicated to him. In this way the historical notices which are woven into them-the matter of the golden calf, Exodus, ch. 32, the death of Nadab and Abihu, Leviticus, ch. 10, the blasphemy of Shelomith’s son, Leviticus, ch. 24, and the numerous incidents recorded in the book of Numbers-all these narratives find a perfectly natural explanation. Some of these incidents-as, for example, the blasphemy of Shelomith’s son-come in abruptly, without any connection in the context; and their position can be accounted for only upon the assumption that they were recorded as they happened. In this peculiar feature of the Mosaic code before Deuteronomy, we have at once a proof that Moses was the writer, and that the historical notices connected with it were also recorded by him. The result at which we arrive is that the whole record from God’s appearance to Moses and {127} his mission to Pharaoh has Moses himself for its author. The authorship of the preceding part of the Pentateuch will be considered separately.

9. The above result in reference to that part of the law which precedes Deuteronomy, is confirmed by the testimony of the New Testament. In disputing with the Sadducees, our Lord appealed to the

writings of Moses, which they acknowledged: "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Luke 20:37. It was by recording the words of God, as given in Exodus 3:6, that Moses called the Lord the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The apostle Paul, again, referring to Leviticus 18:5, says: "Moses describeth"-literally, writeth-"the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them." Romans 10:5. Here also belong certain passages that speak of precepts in "the law of Moses," as Luke 2:22-24, where the reference is to various precepts in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers- Exodus 13:2; Exodus 22:29; Exodus 34:19; Leviticus 12:2, seq.; Numb. 3:13; 8:17; 18:15- John 7:22-23, where the reference is to Leviticus 12:2; for with the New Testament writers "the law of Moses" means the law written by Moses. In like manner we find references in the Old Testament to the books of the law of Moses that precede Deuteronomy- 2 Chronicles 23:18 compared with Numb. 28:2, seq.; 2 Chronicles 24:6 compared with Exodus 30:12, seq.; Ezra 3:2-5 compared with Numb. 28:2, seq., and 29:12, seq.; Nehemiah 8:15 compared with Leviticus 23:40 1010:1-42. The relation of the book of Deuteronomy to the earlier portions of the law deserves a careful consideration. And, first, in regard to time. All that portion of the law which precedes the sixteenth chapter of the book of Numbers was given in the first and second years after the exodus; consequently thirty-eight years before the composition of the book of Deuteronomy. The four chapters of Numbers that follow, chaps. 16-19, are generally dated about twenty years later-that is, about eighteen years before the composition of Deuteronomy. {128} Only the last seventeen chapters of Numbers, which are mostly occupied with historical notices, were written in the preceding year.

Then, as it respects general design. At Horeb the entire constitution of the theocracy was to be established. This part of the law is, therefore, more formal and circumstantial. It gives minute directions for the celebration of the passover; for the construction of the tabernacle and its furniture; for the dress, consecration, duties, and perquisites of the priesthood and Levitical order; for the entire system of sacrifices; for the distinction between clean and unclean animals; for all those duties that were especially of a priestly character, as judgment in the case of leprosy, and purification from ceremonial uncleanness; for the order of journeying and encamping in the wilderness, etc. In a word, it gives more prominence to the forms of the law, and the duties of those to whom its administration was committed. Not so on the plains of Moab. The theocracy had then been long in operation. The details of its service were well understood, and there was no need of formal and circumstantial repetition. The work of Moses now was not to give a new law, but to enforce the law of Horeb, with such subordinate modifications and additions as were required by the new circumstances of the people, now about to take possession of the promised land and change their wandering life for fixed abodes. He had to do, therefore, more prominently not with the administrators of law, but with the people; and accordingly his precepts assume a hortatory character, and his style becomes more diffuse and flowing. The personal relation of Moses to the people was also greatly changed. At Horeb he had the great work of his life before him, but now it is behind him. He is about to leave his beloved Israel, whom he has borne on his heart and guided by his counsels for forty years. Hence the inimitable tenderness and pathos that pervade the book of Deuteronomy. When now we take into account all these altered circumstances, we have a full explanation of the peculiarities which {129} mark the book of Deuteronomy as compared with the preceding books. Were these peculiarities wanting, we should miss a main proof of its genuineness. Nevertheless the book is thoroughly Mosaic in its style, and

the scholar who reads it in the original Hebrew can detect peculiar forms of expression belonging only to the Pentateuch. As to alleged disagreements between some of its statements and those of the earlier books, it is sufficient to remark that upon a candid examination they mostly disappear; and even where we cannot fully explain them, this furnishes no valid ground for denying the genuineness of either portion of the law. Such seeming discrepancies are not uncommon when a writer of acknowledged credibility repeats what he has before written. Compare, for example, the three narratives of the apostle Paul's conversion which are recorded in the book of Acts. The question as to the extent of meaning which should be given in Deuteronomy to the expressions, "a copy of this law," "the words of this law," "this book of the law," is one upon which expositors are not agreed, nor is it essential; since, as we have seen, the Mosaic authorship of the former part of the law rests upon broader grounds. In Deuteronomy 27:3; Deuteronomy 27:8, it seems necessary to understand the expression, "all the words of this law," which were to be written upon tables of stone set up on mount Ebal, of the blessings and curses-ver. 12, 13-contained in this and the following chapter. But elsewhere, chs. 17:18; 31:9, 24-26, we must certainly include at least the whole of Deuteronomy. If we suppose that it was Moses' custom to write out the precepts of the law with the historical notices pertaining to them in a continuous roll, which was enlarged from time to time, and that he added to this roll the book of Deuteronomy, then the words in question must be understood of the entire body of precepts from the beginning. But if, as seems to be intimated in Deuteronomy 31:24, he wrote Deuteronomy in a separate book, ("in a book," without the article,) the words naturally refer to Deuteronomy alone. This work, as containing a summary of the law-a second law, as the word Deuteronomy signifies-might well be spoken of as "this law," without any denial of an earlier law; just as the covenant made with the people at this time is called "this covenant," ch. 29:14, without any denial of an earlier covenant. The reverent scholar will be careful not to be wise above what {130} is written. It might gratify our curiosity to know exactly in what outward form Moses left the Law with the historical notices woven into it; whether in one continuous roll, or in several rolls which were afterwards arranged by some prophet, perhaps with connecting and explanatory clauses; but it could add nothing to our knowledge of the way of salvation. In either case it would be alike the law of Moses and the law which Moses wrote, invested with full divine authority.

11. It being established that Moses wrote the whole law with the historical notices appertaining to it, we naturally infer that he must have written the book of Genesis also, which is introductory to the law. For this work he had every qualification, and we know of no other man that had the like qualifications. On this ground alone the Mosaic authorship of the book might be reasonably assumed, unless decided proofs to the contrary could be adduced. But we find, upon examination, that the book of Genesis is so connected with the following books that without the knowledge of its contents they cannot be rightly understood. The very first appearance of God to Moses is introduced by the remark that he "remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob." In addressing Moses he calls the children of Israel "my people," Exodus 3:6-10; and sends Moses to Pharaoh with the message, "Let my people go." All this implies a knowledge of the covenant which God made with Abraham and his seed after him, by virtue of which the Israelites became his peculiar people. It is not simply as an oppressed people that God undertakes to deliver them and give them possession of the land of Canaan, but as his people. Again and again does Moses describe the promised land as "the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them." With the book of

Genesis these declarations are plain; but without it they are unintelligible. The Abrahamic covenant, which is recorded in the book of Genesis, is not a subordinate, but an essential part of the history of the Israelites. It underlies the whole plan of redemption, and upon it the Mosaic economy, as a part of that plan, is erected. {131} Why should any one suppose that Moses, who recorded the establishment of this economy with all its details, omitted to record the great transactions with the patriarchs which lie at its foundation? There are other references to the book of Genesis in the law of Moses. The institution of the Sabbath is expressly based on the order of creation recorded in the first two chapters; and when the people leave Egypt they carry with them the bones of Joseph, in accordance with the oath which he had exacted of them. Genesis 50:25, compared with Exodus 13:19. To the Mosaic authorship of Genesis it has been objected, that it contains marks of a later age. But these marks, so far as they have any real existence, belong not to the substance of the book. They are restricted to a few explanatory notices, which may well have been added by Ezra or some prophetical man before him, in setting forth a revised copy of the law. See No. 3, above. The passages which can, with any show of probability, be referred to a later age, are, taken all together, very inconsiderable, and they refer only to incidental matters, while the book, as a whole, bears all the marks of high antiquity. To the Mosaic authorship of this book it has been objected again, that it contains the writings of different authors. This is especially argued from the diversity of usage in respect to the divine name, some passages employing the word Elohim, God, others the word Jehovah, or a combination of the two terms. Whatever force there may be in this argument, the validity of which is denied by many who think that the inspired writer designedly varied his usage between the general term God and the special covenant name Jehovah, it goes only to show that Moses may have made use of previously existing documents; a supposition which we need not hesitate to admit, provided we have cogent reasons for so doing. Whatever may have been the origin of these documents, they received through Moses the seal of God’s authority, and thus became a part of his inspired word.

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Several writers have attempted to distinguish throughout the book of Genesis the parts which they would assign to different authors; but beyond the first chapters they are not able to agree among themselves. All attempts to carry the distinction of different authors into the later books rest on fanciful grounds.

12. That the Pentateuch, as a whole, proceeded from a single author, is shown by the unity of plan that pervades the whole work. The book of Genesis constitutes, as has been shown, a general introduction to the account which follows of the establishment of the theocracy; and it is indispensable to the true understanding of it. In the first part of the book of Exodus we have a special introduction to the giving of the law; for it records the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt, and their journey to Sinai. The Mosaic institutions presuppose a sanctuary as their visible material centre. The last part of Exodus, after the promulgation of the ten commandments and the precepts connected with them, is accordingly occupied with the construction of the tabernacle and its furniture, and the dress and consecration of the priests who ministered there. In Leviticus, the central book of the Pentateuch, we have the central institution of the Mosaic economy, namely, the system of sacrifices belonging to the priesthood, and also, in general, the body of ordinances intrusted to their administration. The theocracy having been founded at Sinai, it was necessary that arrangements should be made for the orderly march of the

people to the land of Canaan. With these the book of Numbers opens, and then proceeds to narrate the various incidents that befell the people in the wilderness, with a record of their encampments, and also the addition from time to time of new ordinances. The book of Deuteronomy contains the grand farewell address of Moses to the Israelites, into which is woven a summary of the precepts already given which concerned particularly the people at large, with various modifications and additions suited to their new circumstances and the new duties about to be devolved upon them. We see then that the Pentateuch constitutes a consistent whole. Unity of {133} design, harmony of parts, continual progress from beginning to end-these are its grand characteristics; and they prove that it is not a heterogeneous collection of writings put together without order, but the work of a single master-spirit, writing under God’s immediate direction, according to the uniform testimony of the New Testament.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [BibleAuthenticity]

10. Authenticity and Credibility of the Pentateuch

CHAPTER X.

AUTHENTICITY AND CREDIBILITY OF THE PENTATEUCH.

1. The historic truth of the Pentateuch is everywhere assumed by the writers of the New Testament in the most absolute and unqualified manner. They do not simply allude to it and make quotations from it, as one might do in the case of Homer's poems, but they build upon the facts which it records arguments of the weightiest character, and pertaining to the essential doctrines and duties of religion. This is alike true of the Mosaic laws and of the narratives that precede them or are interwoven with them. In truth, the writers of the New Testament know no distinction, as it respects divine authority, between one part of the Pentateuch and another. They receive the whole as an authentic and inspired record of God's dealings with men. A few examples, taken mostly from the book of Genesis, will set this in a clear light. In reasoning with the Pharisees on the question of divorce, our Lord appeals to the primitive record: "Have ye not read that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." And when, upon this, the Pharisees ask, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" Deuteronomy 24:1, he answers in such a way as to recognize both the authority of the Mosaic legislation and the validity of the ante-Mosaic record: "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so." He then proceeds to {135} enforce the marriage covenant as it was "from the beginning." Matthew 19:3-9, compared with Genesis 2:23-24. In like manner the apostle Paul establishes the headship of the man over the woman: "He is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man." 1 Corinthians 11:7-9, compared with Genesis 2:18-22. And again: "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." 1 Timothy 2:12-14, compared with Genesis 2:18-22; Genesis 3:1-24 :l-6, 13. So also he argues from the primitive record that, as by one man sin and death came upon the whole human race, so by Christ Jesus life and immortality are procured for all. Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, compared with Genesis 2:17; Genesis 3:19; Genesis 3:22. The story of Cain and Abel, Genesis 4:3-12, is repeatedly referred to by the Saviour and his apostles as a historic truth: Matthew 23:35; Luke 11:51; Hebrews 11:4; Hebrews 12:24; 1 John 3:12; Jude 1:11. So also the narrative of the deluge: Gen. chs. 6-8, compared with Luke 17:26-27; Hebrews 11:7; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5; and of the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. ch. 19, compared with Luke 17:28-29; 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 1:7. It is useless to adduce further quotations. No man can read the New Testament without the profound conviction that the authenticity and credibility of the Pentateuch are attested in every conceivable way by the Saviour and his apostles. To reject the authority of the former is to deny

that of the latter also.

2. For the authenticity and credibility of the Pentateuch we have an independent argument in the fact that it lay at the foundation of the whole Jewish polity, civil, religious, and social. From the time of Moses and onward, the Israelitish nation unanimously acknowledged its divine authority, even when, through the force of sinful passion, they disobeyed its commands. The whole life of the people was moulded and {136} shaped by its institutions; so that they became, in a good sense, a peculiar people, with "laws diverse from all people." They alone, of all the nations of the earth, held the doctrine of God’s unity and personality, in opposition to all forms of polytheism and pantheism; and thus they alone were prepared to receive and propagate the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. Chap. 8, No. 2. If now we admit the truth of the Mosaic record, all this becomes perfectly plain and intelligible; but if we deny it, we involve ourselves at once in the grossest absurdities. How could the Jewish people have been induced to accept with undoubting faith such a body of laws as that contained in the Pentateuch-so burdensome in their multiplicity, so opposed to all the beliefs and practices of the surrounding nations, and imposing such severe restraints upon their corrupt passions-except upon the clearest evidence of their divine authority? Such evidence they had in the stupendous miracles connected with their deliverance from Egypt and the giving of the law on Sinai. The fact that Moses constantly appeals to these miracles, as well known to the whole body of the people, is irrefragable proof of their reality. None but a madman would thus appeal to miracles which had no existence; and if he did, his appeal would be met only by derision. Mohammed needed not the help of miracles, for his appeal was to the sword and to the corrupt passions of the human heart; and he never attempted to rest his pretended divine mission on the evidence of miracles. He knew that to do so would be to overthrow at once his authority as the prophet of God. But the Mosaic economy needed and received the seal of miracles, to which Moses continually appeals as to undeniable realities. But if the miracles recorded in the Pentateuch are real, then it contains a revelation from God, and is entitled to our unwavering faith. Then too we can explain how, in the providence of God, the Mosaic institutions prepared the way for the advent of "Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write." Thus we connect the old dispensation with the new, and see both together as one whole.

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Other arguments might be adduced; but upon these two great pillars-the authority, on the one side, of the New Testament, and, on the other, the fact that the Pentateuch contains the entire body of laws by which the Jewish nation was moulded and formed, and that its character and history can be explained only upon the assumption of its truth-on these two great pillars the authenticity and credibility of the Pentateuch rest, as upon an immovable basis.

3. The difficulties connected with the Pentateuch, so far as its contents are concerned, rest mainly on two grounds, scientific and historical, or moral. The nature of the scientific difficulties forbids their discussion within the restricted limits of the present work. It may be said, however, generally, that so far as they are real, they relate not so much to the truth of the Mosaic record, as to the manner in which certain parts of it should be understood.

How long, for example, that state of things continued which is described in Genesis 1:2, or what particular results were produced by the operation of the divine Spirit there recorded, we do not know. What extent of meaning should be assigned to the six days of creation-whether they should

be understood literally or in a symbolical way, like the prophetical days of Daniel and Revelation-Daniel 7:25; Daniel 9:24-27; Revelation 9:15; Revelation 11:3, etc.-is a question on which devout believers have differed ever since the days of Augustine. See Prof. Tayler Lewis' Six Days of Creation, ch. 14. But all who receive the Bible as containing a revelation from God agree in holding the truth of the narrative. So also in regard to the Deluge and other events involving scientific questions which are recorded in the book of Genesis. Some of these questions may perhaps be satisfactorily solved by further inquiry. Others will probably remain shrouded in mystery till the consummation of all things. To the class of historical difficulties belong several chronological questions, as, for example, that of the duration of the Israelitish residence in Egypt. It is sufficient to say that however these shall be settled-if settled at all-they cannot with any reasonable man affect the divine authority of the Pentateuch which is certified to us by so many sure proofs.

4. The difficulties which are urged against the Pentateuch on moral grounds rest partly on misapprehension, and are partly of such a character that, when rightly considered, they {138} turn against the objectors themselves. This will be illustrated by a few examples. A common objection to the Mosaic economy is drawn from its exclusiveness. It contains, it is alleged, a religion not for all mankind, but for a single nation. The answer is at hand. That this economy may be rightly understood, it must be considered not separately and independently, but as one part of a great plan. It was, as we have seen, subordinate to the covenant made with Abraham, which had respect to "all the families of the earth." Chap. 8, No. 4. It came in temporarily to prepare the way for the advent of Christ, through whom the Abrahamic covenant was to be carried into effect. It was a partial, preparatory to a universal dispensation, and looked, therefore, ultimately to the salvation of the entire race. So far then as the benevolent design of God is concerned, the objection drawn from the exclusiveness of the Mosaic economy falls to the ground. It remains for the objector to show how a universal dispensation, like Christianity, could have been wisely introduced, without a previous work of preparation, or how any better plan of preparation could have been adopted than that contained in the Mosaic economy.

If the laws of Moses interposed, as they certainly did, many obstacles to the intercourse of the Israelites with other nations, the design was not to encourage in them a spirit of national pride and contempt of other nations, but to preserve them from the contagious influence of the heathen practices by which they were surrounded. On this ground the Mosaic laws everywhere rest the restrictions which they impose upon the Israelites: "Thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take to thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods." Deuteronomy 7:3-4. How necessary were these restrictions was made manifest by the whole subsequent history of the people. So far was the Mosaic law from countenancing hatred towards the persons of foreigners, that it expressly enjoined kindness: "If a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. {139} But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Leviticus 19:34.

5. Another ground of objection to the Mosaic law has been the number and minuteness of its ordinances. That this feature of the theocracy was, absolutely considered, an imperfection, is boldly asserted in the New Testament. The apostle Peter calls it "a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear." Acts 15:10. Nevertheless the wisdom of God judged it necessary in the infancy of the nation, that it might thus be trained, and through it the world, for the future

inheritance of the gospel. It is in this very aspect that the apostle Paul says: "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." Galatians 3:24-25. The divine plan was to prescribe minutely all the institutions of the Mosaic economy, leaving nothing to human discretion, apparently to prevent the intermixture with them of heathenish rites and usages; perhaps also that in this body of outward forms the faith of the Israelites might have a needful resting-place, until the way should be prepared for the introduction of a simpler and more spiritual system.

We must be careful, however, that we do not fall into the error of supposing that the Mosaic law prescribed a religion of mere outward forms. On the contrary, it was pervaded throughout by an evangelical principle. It knew nothing of heartless forms in which the religion of the heart is wanting. The observance of all its numerous ordinances it enjoined on the spiritual ground of love, gratitude, and humility. If any one would understand in what a variety of forms these inward graces of the soul, which constitute the essence of religion, are inculcated in the Pentateuch, he has but to read the book of Deuteronomy; there he will see how the law of Moses aimed to make men religious not in the letter, but in the spirit; how, in a word, it rested the observance of the letter on the good foundation of inward devotion to God. The summary which {140} our Saviour gave of the Mosaic law, and in it of all religion, he expressed in the very words of the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," Deuteronomy 6:4-5; "this is the first and great commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Leviticus 19:18. Nor is this love towards our neighbor restricted to a narrow circle; for it is said of the stranger also sojourning in Israel, "Thou shalt love him as thyself." Leviticus 19:34.

6. Of one usage which the Mosaic law tolerated, our Saviour himself gives the true explanation when he says: "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so." Matthew 19:8. This general principle applies also to polygamy and the modified form of servitude which prevailed among the Hebrew people. That the Mosaic economy suffered, for the time being, certain usages not good in themselves, is no valid objection to it, but rather a proof of the divine wisdom of its author. Though it was his purpose to root out of human society every organic evil, he would not attempt it by premature legislation, any more than he would send his Son into the world until the way was prepared for his advent.

7. The extirpation of the Canaanitish nations by the sword of the Israelites was contemplated by the Mosaic economy. The names of these nations were carefully specified, and they were peremptorily forbidden to molest other nations; as, for example, the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites. Deuteronomy 2:4-5; Deuteronomy 2:8-9; Deuteronomy 2:18-19. The whole transaction is to be regarded as a sovereign act of Jehovah, which had in view the manifestation of his infinite perfections for the advancement of the cause of truth and righteousness in this fallen world. Though we may not presume to fathom all the divine counsels, we can yet see how God, by the manner in which he gave Israel possession of the promised land, displayed his awful holiness, his almighty power, and his absolute supremacy over the nations of the earth, not only to the covenant people, but also to the surrounding {141} heathen world. Had the Canaanites perished by famine, pestilence, earthquake, or fire from heaven, it might have remained doubtful to the heathen by whose anger their destruction had been effected, that of the Canaanitish gods, or of the God of Israel. But now that God went forth with his people, dividing the Jordan before them,

overthrowing the walls of Jericho, arresting the sun and the moon in their course, and raining down upon their enemies great hailstones from heaven, it was manifest to all that the God of Israel was the supreme Lord of heaven and earth, and that the gods of the gentile nations were vanity. This was one of the great lessons which the Theocracy was destined to teach the human family. At the same time the Israelites, who executed God’s vengeance on the Canaanites, were carefully instructed that it was for their sins that the land spewed out its inhabitants, and that if they imitated them in their abominations, they should in like manner perish.

8. The Mosaic economy was but the scaffolding of the gospel. God took it down ages ago by the hand of the Romans. It perished amid fire and sword and blood, but not till it had accomplished the great work for which it was established. It bequeathed to Christianity, and through Christianity to "all the families of the earth," a glorious body of truth, which makes an inseparable part of the plan of redemption, and has thus blessed the world ever since, and shall continue to bless it to the end of time.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [BibleAuthenticity]

11. Remaining Books of the Old Testament

CHAPTER XI.

REMAINING BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

1. The divine authority of the Pentateuch having been established, it is not necessary to dwell at length on the historical books which follow. The events which they record are a natural and necessary sequel to the establishment of the theocracy, as given in the five books of Moses. The Pentateuch is occupied mainly with the founding of the theocracy; the following historical books describe the settlement of the Israelitish nation under this theocracy in the promised land, and its practical operation there for the space of a thousand years. There is no history in the world so full of God’s presence and providence. It sets forth with divine clearness and power, on the one side, God’s faithfulness in the fulfilment of the promises and threatenings contained in the Mosaic law; and on the other, the perverseness and rebellion of the people, and their perpetual relapses into idolatry, with the mighty conflict thus inaugurated between the pure monotheism of the theocracy, and the polytheism and image-worship of the surrounding heathen nations-a conflict which lasted through many ages, which enlisted on both sides the great and mighty men of the world, and which resulted in the complete triumph of the Mosaic law, at least so far as its outward form was concerned, thus preparing the way for the advent of that great Prophet in whom the theocracy had its end and its fulfilment.

2. How fully the divine authority of these books is recognized by Christ and his apostles, every reader of the New Testament understands. It is not necessary to establish this point by the quotation of particular passages. Though the writers of the historical books which follow the Pentateuch are for the most part unknown, the books themselves are put in the New {143} Testament on the same basis as the Pentateuch. To those who deny Christ, the Mosaic economy, with the history that follows, is a mystery; for when they read it "the veil is upon their heart." But to those who receive Christ as the Son of God, and the New Testament as containing a true record of his heavenly mission, Moses and the historical books that follow are luminous with divine wisdom and glory, for they contain the record of the way in which God prepared the world for the manifestation of his Son Jesus Christ.

3. The Old Testament contains a body of writings which are not historical; neither are they prophetical, in the restricted sense of the term, although some of them contain prophecy. The enumeration of these books, prominent among which are Job, Psalms, and Proverbs, with an account of their contents and the place which each of them holds in the plan of revelation, belongs to the Introduction to the Old Testament. It is sufficient to say here, that they are precious offshoots of the Mosaic economy, that they contain rich and varied treasures of divine truth for the instruction and encouragement of God’s people in all ages, and that they are, as a whole, recognized in the New Testament as part of God’s revelation to men. The book of Psalms, in particular, is perpetually quoted by the writers of the New Testament as containing prophecies which had their fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth.

4. The prophetical books-according to our classification, the Jews having a different arrangement-are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the twelve minor prophets. The vast body of prophecies contained in these books-the prophetical portions of the other books being also included-may be contemplated in different points of view.

Many of these prophecies, considered independently of the New Testament, afford conclusive proof that the Old Testament is the word of God, for they bear on their front the signet of their divine origin. They contain predictions of the distant future which lie altogether beyond the range of human sagacity and foresight. Such is the wonderful prophecy of {144} Moses respecting the history of the Israelitish people through all coming ages, Lev. ch. 26; Deut. ch. 28, a prophecy which defies the assaults of skepticism, and which, taken in connection with our Lord's solemn declaration, "They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," Luke 21:24, marks both the Old Testament and the New as given by the same omniscient God, who declares the end from the beginning. Such also are the predictions of the utter and perpetual desolation of Babylon, uttered ages beforehand, and which presuppose a divine foresight of the course of human affairs to the end of time: "Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation." "I will also make it a possession for the bittern and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the Lord of hosts." Isaiah 13:19-20; Isaiah 14:23. See also the prophecy of the overthrow of Nineveh, Nahum, chs. 2, 3, and of Tyre: "I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea." "I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more." Ezekiel 26:4-5; Ezekiel 26:14. On all the above prophecies, and many more that might be quoted, the descriptions of modern travellers furnish a perfect comment.

5. But it is preëminently in Christ that the prophecies of the Old Testament have their fulfilment. As the rays of the sun in a burning-glass all converge to one bright focus, so all the different lines of prophecy in the Old Testament centre in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Separated from him they have neither unity nor harmony; but are, like the primitive chaos, "without form and void." But in him predictions, apparently contradictory to each other, meet with divine unity and harmony.

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He is a great Prophet, like Moses; the Mediator, therefore, of the new economy, as Moses was of the old, and revealing to the people the whole will of God. As a Prophet, the Spirit of the Lord rests upon him, "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." Isaiah 11:2. As a Prophet, he receives from God the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. Isaiah 50:4. As a Prophet, "the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider." Isaiah 52:15.

He is also a mighty King, to whom God has given the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. He breaks the nations with a rod of iron; he dashes them in pieces as a potter's vessel, Psalms 2:8-9; and yet "he shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he

not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth." Isaiah 42:2-3. "All kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him," Psalms 72:11; and yet "he is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:" "he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." Isaiah 53:3; Isaiah 53:7. Many other like contrasts could be added. With the kingly he unites the priestly office. Sitting as a king "upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever," Isaiah 9:7, he is yet "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Nor is his priestly office any thing of subordinate importance, for he is inducted into it by the solemn oath of Jehovah: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Psalms 110:4. As a priest he offers up himself "an offering for sin:" "he was wounded for our transgressions, he {146} was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isa., ch. 53. When we find a key that opens all the intricate wards of a lock, we know that the key and the lock have one and the same author, and are parts of one whole. The history of Jesus of Nazareth is the key which unlocks all the wards of Old Testament prophecy. With this key Moses and the prophets open to the plainest reader; without it, they remain closed and hidden from human apprehension. We know, therefore, that he who sent his Son Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of the world, sent also his prophets to testify beforehand of his coming, and of the offices which he bears for our redemption.

6. To sum up all in a word, we take the deepest, and therefore the most scriptural view of the Jewish institutions and history, when we consider the whole as a perpetual adumbration of Christ-not Christ in his simple personality, but Christ in his body the church. It is not meant by this that the Mosaic economy was nothing but type. Apart from all reference to the salvation of the gospel, it was to the Israelitish people before the Saviour’s advent a present reality meeting a present want. The deliverance of the people from the bondage of Egypt, their passage through the Red sea, the cloud which guided them, the manna which fed them, the water out of the rock which they drank-all these things were to them a true manifestation of God’s presence and favor, aside from their typical import, the apprehension of which indeed was reserved for future ages. So also the Mosaic institutions were to them a true body of laws for the regulation of their commonwealth, and in their judges, kings, and prophets they had true rulers and teachers. But while all this is important to be remembered, it is also true that the Mosaic economy was thickly sown by God’s own hand with the seeds of higher principles-those very principles which Christ and his apostles unfolded out of the law and the prophets. {147} Thus it constituted a divine training by which the people were prepared for that spiritual kingdom of heaven which "in the fulness of time" the Saviour established. "All the prophets and the law prophesied until John"-not the prophets and the law in certain separate passages alone, but the prophets and the law as a whole. They prophesied of Christ, and in Christ their prophecy has its fulfilment.

7. The consideration of the extent of the canon of the Old Testament does not properly belong here. It is sufficient to say that we have no valid reason for doubting the truth of the Jewish tradition, which assigns to Ezra and "the great synagogue" the work of setting forth the Hebrew canon as we now have it. That this tradition is embellished with fictions must be conceded; but we ought not, on such a ground, to deny its substantial truth, confirmed as it is by all the scriptural

notices of Ezra’s qualifications and labors. It is certain that the canon of the Jews in Palestine was the same in our Lord’s day that it is now. The Greek version of the Septuagint contains indeed certain apocryphal books not extant in the Hebrew. These seem to have been in use, more or less, among the Alexandrine Jews; but there is no evidence that any canonical authority was ascribed to them, and it is certain that the Jews of Palestine adhered strictly to the Hebrew canon, which is identical with our own.

8. The principle upon which the canon of the Old Testament was formed is not doubtful. No books were admitted into it but those written by prophets or prophetical men. As under the New Testament the reception or rejection of a book as canonical was determined by the writer’s relation to Christ, so was it under the Old by his relation to the theocracy. The highest relation was held by Moses, its mediator. He accordingly had the prophetical spirit in the fullest measure: "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and {148} not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold." Numb. 12:6-8. The next place was held by prophets expressly called and commissioned by God, some of whom also, as Samuel, administered the affairs of the theocracy. Finally, there were the pious rulers whom God placed at the head of the covenant people, and endowed with the spirit of prophecy, such as David, Solomon, and Ezra. To no class of men besides those just mentioned do the Jewish rabbins ascribe the authorship of any book of the Old Testament, and in this respect their judgment is undoubtedly right.

9. The inspiration of the books of the Old Testament is everywhere assumed by our Lord and his apostles; for they argue from them as possessing divine authority. "What is written in the law?" "What saith the scripture?" "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me;" "This scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost spake before concerning Judas;" "The scripture cannot be broken"-all these and other similar forms of expression contain the full testimony of our Lord and his apostles to the truth elsewhere expressly affirmed of the Old Testament, that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God," 2 Timothy 3:16, and that "the prophecy came not in the old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21. When the Saviour asks the Pharisees in reference to Psalms 110:1-7, "How then doth David in spirit call him Lord?" he manifestly does not mean that this particular psalm alone was written "in spirit," that is, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; but he ascribes to it the character which belongs to the entire book, in common with the rest of Scripture, in accordance with the express testimony of David: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." 2 Samuel 23:2.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [BibleAuthenticity]

12. Evidences Internal and Experimental

CHAPTER XII.

EVIDENCES INTERNAL AND EXPERIMENTAL.

1. The external evidences of revealed religion are, in their proper place and sphere, of the highest importance. Christianity rests not upon theory, but upon historical facts sustained by an overwhelming mass of testimony. It is desirable that every Christian, so far as he has opportunity, should make himself acquainted with this testimony for the strengthening of his own faith and the refutation of gainsayers. Nevertheless, many thousands of Christians are fully established in the faith of the gospel who have but a very limited knowledge of the historical proofs by which its divine origin is supported. To them the Bible commends itself as the word of God by its internal character, and the gospel as God's plan of salvation by their inward experience of its divine power, and their outward observation of its power over the hearts and lives of all who truly receive it. This is in accordance with the general analogy of God's works. We might be assured beforehand that a system of religion having God for its author, would shine by its own light, and thus commend itself at once to the human understanding and conscience, irrespective of all outward testimony to its truth. Although the internal evidences of Christianity have already been considered to some extent in connection with those that are outward and historical, it is desirable in the present closing chapter to offer some suggestions pertaining to the internal character of the Bible as a whole, and also to the testimony of Christian experience, individual and general.

2. To every unperverted mind the Bible commends itself at once as the word of God by the wonderful view which it gives {150} of his character and providence. It exhibits one personal God who made and governs the world, without the least trace of polytheism on the one hand, or pantheism on the other-the two rocks of error upon which every other system of religion in the world has made shipwreck. And this great Spirit, "infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth," is not removed to a distance from us, but is ever nigh to each one of his creatures. He is our Father in heaven, who cares for us and can hear and answer our prayers. His providence extends to all things, great and small. He directs alike the sparrow's flight, and the rise and fall of empires. To the perfect view of God's character and government which the pages of the Bible unfold, no man can add anything, and whoever takes any thing away only mars and mutilates it. How now shall we explain the great fact that the Hebrew people, some thousands of years ago, had this true knowledge of God and his providence, while it was hidden from all other nations? The Bible gives the only reasonable answer: God himself revealed it to them. The superficial view which accounts for the pure monotheism of the Hebrews from their peculiar national character, is sufficiently refuted by their history. Notwithstanding the severe penalties with which the Mosaic code of laws visited idolatrous practices in every form, the people were perpetually relapsing into the idolatry of the surrounding nations, and could be cured of this propensity only by the oft-repeated judgments of their covenant God.

3. Next we have the wonderful code of morals contained in the Bible. Of its perfection, we in Christian lands have but a dim apprehension, because it is the only system of morals with which we are familiar; but the moment we compare it with any code outside of Christendom, its supreme excellence at once appears.

It is a spiritual code, made for the heart. It proposes to regulate the inward affections of the soul, and through them the outward life. Thus it lays the axe at the root of all sin.

It is a reasonable code, giving to God the first place in the {151} human heart, and to man only a subordinate place. Its first and great commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" its second, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Thus it lays broad and deep the foundations of a righteous character. If any moral proposition is self-evident, it is that such a code as this, which exalts God to the throne of the human soul and humbles man beneath his feet, is not the offspring of human self-love. If any one would know the difference between the Bible and a human code of morals, let him read Cicero's treatise on Duties, perhaps the best system of ethics which pure heathenism ever produced, but from which man's relation to deity is virtually left out.

It is a comprehensive code, not insisting upon one or two favorite virtues, but upon all virtues. Just as the light of the sun is white and glistering because it contains in itself, in due proportion, all the different sorts of rays, so the morality of the Bible shines forth, like the sun, with a pure and dazzling brightness, because it unites in itself, in just proportion, all the duties which men owe to God and each other.

Many who outwardly profess Christianity do not make the precepts of the Bible their rule of life, or they do so only in a very imperfect way, and thus scandal is brought upon the name of Christ, whose servants they profess to be. But it is self-evident that he who obeys the Bible in sincerity and truth is thus made a thoroughly good man; good in his inward principles and feelings, and good in his outward life; good in his relations to God and man; good in prosperity and adversity, in honor and dishonor, in life and death; a good husband and father, a good neighbor, a good citizen. If there is ever to be a perfect state of society on earth, it must come from simple obedience to the precepts of the Bible, obedience full and universal. No man can conceive of any thing more glorious and excellent than this. We may boldly challenge the unbeliever to name a corrupt passion in the heart or a vicious practice in the life that could remain. Let every man love God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself, and bolts and bars, {152} prisons and penitentiaries, would be unnecessary. One might safely journey around the world unarmed and unattended, for every man would be a friend and brother. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men," would reign from pole to pole. The whole earth would be at rest and be quiet: it would break forth into singing. That such a glorious result would certainly come from simple obedience to the precepts of the Bible is undeniable. And can any man persuade himself that this perfect code of morals comes not from heaven, but from sinful man?

4. We have, once more, the wonderful harmony between the different parts of the Bible, written as it was in different and distant ages, and by men who differed widely from each other in natural character and education, and lived in very different states of society. In outward form and institutions the manifestation of God has indeed undergone great changes; for it has existed successively under the patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian dispensations. But if we look beneath the surface to the substance of religion in these different dispensations, we shall find it

always the same. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Moses, Samuel, and David, is also the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. While he changes from time to time the outward ordinances of his people, he remains himself "the same yesterday and to-day and for ever." Under the Old Testament, not less than under the New, he is "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Exodus 34:6-7, etc. Under the New Testament, not less than under the Old, he is to all the despisers of his grace "a consuming fire," Hebrews 12:29; and his Son Jesus Christ, whom he sent to save the world, will be revealed hereafter "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8. If the New Testament insists on the obedience of the heart, and not of the outward {153} letter alone, the Old Testament teaches the same doctrine: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." 1 Samuel 15:22. "Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Psalms 51:16-17. "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs." Psalms 69:30-31. "Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." Amos 5:23-24. If the Old Testament insists on obedience to all God’s commandments as an indispensable condition of salvation, so does the New: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and offend in one point, he is guilty of all," James 2:10; "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." Matthew 5:29, etc. The Old Testament, as well as the New, teaches the doctrine of regeneration and sanctification by the Holy Ghost: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," Psalms 51:10. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." Ezekiel 36:25-27. The Old Testament, as well as the New, denounces self-righteousness in every form, and teaches men that they are saved not for the merit of their good works, but through God’s free mercy: "Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thy heart dost thou go in to possess their land," Deuteronomy 9:5; "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and {154} confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel." Ezekiel 36:32. When the holy men of the Old Testament so often beseech God to hear and answer their prayers for his name’s sake, they renounce all claim to be heard on the ground of their own merit. Faith that works by love and purifies the heart from sin-this is the substance of the religion taught in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. This wonderful unity of doctrine and spirit that pervades the books of the Bible from first to last, finds its natural explanation in the fact that they were all written "by inspiration of God."

5. The Bible is distinguished from all other books by its power over the human conscience. The apostle says: "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," Hebrews 4:12; and this declaration is confirmed

by the experience of every thoughtful reader. Whoever studies the pages of the Bible in an earnest spirit, feels that in them One speaks who has a perfect understanding of his heart in its inmost workings; one who knows not only what he is, but also what he ought to be, and who therefore speaks to him with authority. The young are sometimes advised to study certain authors, that they may thus gain "a knowledge of men." It cannot be denied that, within the sphere of this world, the knowledge of men which some of these writers possess is admirable. But the Bible contains not only all this knowledge in its most complete and practical form, but also, what is wanting in the authors referred to, a perfect knowledge of men in their higher relation to God. With wonderful accuracy does the Bible describe men's character and conduct as citizens of this world. But here it does not stop. It regards them as subjects of God's everlasting government, and thus as citizens of eternity also; and it portrays in vivid and truthful colors the way in which they harden their hearts, blind their minds, and stupefy their consciences by their continued wilful resistance of God's claim to their supreme love and obedience. {155} In a word, it describes men in their relation to God as well as to their fellow-men; and every man who reads the description, hears within his soul the still small voice of conscience saying, "Thou art the man." Whence this all-comprehensive knowledge of man contained in the Bible? The answer is: He who made man has described man in his own word with infallible accuracy; "because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man."

6. We come now to the argument from personal experience. To receive Christ in sincerity and truth, is to know that his salvation is from God. Many thousands have thus a full and joyous conviction of the truth of Christianity. They were oppressed with a deep consciousness of guilt, which no tears of sorrow or supposed good works could remove. But they read in the Holy Scriptures that Jesus is "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." They put their trust in his atoning sacrifice, and thus obtained peace of conscience, and joyous access in prayer to God as their Father in heaven. They were earthly in their affections, and able therefore to render to God's holy and spiritual law only an obedience of the letter, which they knew would not be acceptable. But through faith in Christ they have been lifted up to a holy and blessed communion with God, and thus enabled to render to God's law an obedience of love "in the spirit and not in the letter." They were oppressed with a painful sense of the empty and unsatisfying nature of every thing earthly; but they have found in Christ and his glorious service an all-sufficient portion. In a word, they are assured that the gospel is from God, because it meets all their wants as sinners. They have the same evidence that God made the gospel for the immortal soul, as that he made bread for the stomach, air for the lungs, and light for the eyes. The sincere believer has in himself the witness that the gospel is from heaven, for he is daily experiencing its healing, strengthening, and purifying power. To tell him that the Bible is a cunningly devised fable, is like telling a man who daily feeds on "the finest of the wheat," and is nourished and {156} strengthened by it, that the field of golden grain which waves before his door is only wormwood and gall; or that the pure water from the bosom of the earth which daily quenches his thirst is a deadly poison; or that the blessed air of heaven which fans his lungs is a pestilential vapor. Not until error becomes the nutriment of the soul and truth its destruction, can this argument from personal experience be set aside or gainsaid.

7. The argument from the character of Jesus has already been considered at length in chap, 4, No. 8. It is sufficient to repeat here that the very description of such a character, so gloriously

perfect, so far above all that the greatest minds of antiquity ever conceived, is itself a proof of its reality. Very plain men may describe what they have actually seen and heard. But that any man left to himself-and God would not help in a work of error and delusion-should have conceived of such a character as that of Jesus of Nazareth, without the reality before him, is impossible; how much more that four unlettered men should have consistently carried out the conception in such a life as that recorded by the four evangelists.

8. Passing now from individual to general experience, we find another proof of the divine origin of the Bible in the power of the gospel-which includes in itself the whole word of God-over the human heart. This is closely connected with the preceding head, since the Christian's religion takes the shape of personal love towards the Saviour-love which is awakened in the sinner's soul, as the New Testament teaches, by the Holy Spirit revealing to him his lost condition and the character and offices of the Redeemer, whereby he is drawn into an inward spiritual union with him. This love of Jesus is the mightiest principle on earth for both doing and suffering. The man of whose soul it has taken full possession is invincible, not in his own strength, but in the strength of Him to whom he has given his supreme confidence and affection. No hardships, privations, or dangers can deter him from Christ's service; no persecutions can drive him from it. In the early days of Christianity, {157} at the period of the Reformation, in many missionary fields in our own time, not only strong men, but tender women and children, have steadfastly endured shame and suffering in every form-banishment and the spoiling of their goods, imprisonment, torture, and death-for Christ's sake. In times of worldly peace and prosperity, the power of this principle is dimly seen; but were the Christians of this day required, under penalty of imprisonment, confiscation, and death, to deny Christ, it would at once manifest itself. Many would apostatize, because they are believers only in name; but true believers would remain steadfast, as in the days of old. It is a fact worthy of special notice, that persecution not only fails to conquer those who love Jesus, but it fails also to hinder others from embracing his religion. It has first a winnowing power. It separates from the body of the faithful those who are Christians only in name. Then the manifestation of Christian faith and patience by those who remain steadfast, draws men from the world without to Christ. Hence the maxim, as true as trite, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." The Christian religion at the beginning had no worldly advantages, and it was opposed by all the power of imperial Rome in alliance with the heathen priesthood. Had it been possible that any combination of men should crush it, it must have perished at the outset; but it only grew stronger in the midst of its fierce and powerful enemies. It went through ten bloody persecutions, "conquering and to conquer," until it overthrew paganism, and became the established religion of the Roman empire. Then it was not strengthened by its alliance with the state, but only corrupted and shorn of its true power. And so it has been ever since. The gospel has always shown itself mightiest to subdue men to Christ, when it has been compelled to rely most exclusively on its own divinely furnished strength. What the apostle said of himself personally, the gospel which he preached can say with equal truth: "When I am weak, then am I strong." How shall we account for this fact? The only reasonable explanation is, that God is the author of the gospel, {158} and his power is in it, so that it is able to overcome the world without any help from without. Were it the invention of man, we might reasonably expect that it would be greatly strengthened by an alliance with the kings and rulers of the world, instead of being thereby corrupted and weakened, as we find to be the invariable result. Because God made the gospel, and not men, when it is left free to work according to his appointment, it is mighty in its power over the human heart; but the moment

worldly men take it under their patronage, that they may make it subservient to their worldly ends, they bind it in fetters, and would kill it, had it not a divine and indestructible life.

9. We notice, further, that the same love of Jesus which makes men invincible to the world without, also enables them to conquer their own corrupt passions, and this is the greater victory of the two. It is easy to declaim on the sins and inconsistencies of visible Christians. The church of Christ, like every thing administered by men, is imperfect. Unworthy men find their way into it, making it, as the great Master foretold, a field in which wheat and tares grow together. Nevertheless, wherever the gospel is preached in its purity, bright examples are found of its power to reclaim the vicious, to make the proud humble, and the earthly-minded heavenly. It draws all who truly receive it, by a gradual but certain process, into a likeness to Christ, which is the sum of all goodness. In proportion also as the principles of the gospel gain ground in any community, they ennoble it, purify it, and inspire it with the spirit of truth and justice. Very imperfectly is our country pervaded by this good leaven. Yet it is this, small as is its measure, which makes the difference between the state of society here at home and in India or China. Many thousands who do not personally receive the gospel thus experience its elevating power. They receive at its hand innumerable precious gifts without understanding or acknowledging the source from which they come.

10. As a final argument, may be named the power of the {159} Christian religion to purify itself from the corruptions introduced into it by men. It is not alone from the world without that Christ's church has been assailed. Corrupt men have arisen within her pale who have set themselves to deny or explain away her essential doctrines, to change her holy practice, or to crush and overlay her with a load of superstitious observances. But the gospel cannot be destroyed by inward any more than by outward enemies. From time to time it asserts its divine origin and invincible power, by bursting the bands imposed on it by men, and throwing off their human additions, thus reappearing in its native purity and strength. So it did on a broad scale at the era of the Reformation, and so it has often done since in narrower fields.

10. Let now the candid inquirer ask himself whether a book which gives such gloriously perfect views of God's character and government; whose code of morals is so spotlessly pure that simple obedience to it is the sum of all goodness, and would, if full and universal, make this world a moral paradise; all whose parts, though written in different and distant ages by men of such diversified character and training, are in perfect harmony with each other; which displays such a wonderful knowledge of man in all his relations to God and his fellow-men, and therefore speaks with such authority and power to his conscience; which reveals a religion that satisfies all the wants of those who embrace it, that makes them victorious alike over outward persecution and inward sinful passion, and that asserts its invincible power by throwing off from itself the corrupt additions of men-whether such a book can possibly have man for its author. Assuredly in character it resembles not sinful man, but the holy God. It must be from heaven, for it is heavenly in all its features.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [BibleAuthenticity]

Chapter 14

13. Names and External Form of the Old Testament

PART II.

INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

{163} PREFATORY REMARKS. To consider at length all the questions which the spirit of modern inquiry has raised concerning the books of the Old Testament-their genuineness, integrity, date, chronology, and credibility; their relation to science, to profane history, to each other, and to the New Testament-would far exceed the limits allowed by the plan of the present work. To the Pentateuch alone, or even a single book of it, as Genesis or Deuteronomy; to the books of Chronicles; to Isaiah or Daniel, a whole volume might be devoted without exhausting the subject. In the present Introduction to the books of the Old Testament, the aim has been to give the results of biblical research, ancient and modern, with a concise statement of the lines of argument employed, wherever this could be done without involving discussions intelligible only to those who are familiar with the original languages of Scripture and the ancient versions. For such discussions the biblical student is referred to the more extended Introductions which abound at the present day. The author has endeavored, first of all, to direct the reader’s attention to the unity of Scripture. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." The plan of Redemption is the very highest of these works, and it constitutes a gloriously perfect whole, gradually unfolding itself from age to age. The earliest revelations have reference to all that follow. The later revelations shed light on the earlier, and receive {164} light from them in return. It is only when the Scriptures are thus studied as a whole, that any one part of them can be truly comprehended. The effort has accordingly been made to show the relation of the Old Testament, considered as a whole, to the New; then, the relation of the several great divisions of the Old Testament-the law, the historical books, the prophets, the poetical books-to each other, and the place which each holds in the system of revelation; and finally, the office of each particular book, with such notices of its authorship, date, general plan, and contents, as will prepare the reader to study it intelligently and profitably. To all who would have a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of the New Testament, the diligent study of the preparatory revelation contained in the Old, is earnestly commended. The present Introduction will be followed by one to the New Testament on the same general plan. It is hardly necessary to add that for much of the materials employed, in these two parts, particularly what relates to ancient manuscripts, the author is dependent on the statements of those who have had the opportunity of making original investigations.

{165} INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT.

FIRST DIVISION, GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER XIII.

NAMES AND EXTERNAL FORM OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. The word Bible comes to us from the Greek (ta biblia, the books; that is, emphatically, the sacred canonical books) through the Latin and Norman French. In the ancient Greek and Latin churches, its use, as a plural noun applied to the whole collection of sacred books of the Old and New Testaments, can be traced as far back as the fifth century. In the English, as in all the modern languages of Europe, it has become a singular noun, and thus signifies the Book-the one book containing in itself all the particular books of the sacred canon. In very ancient usage, the word Law (Heb. Torah) was applied to the five books of Moses; but there was no general term to denote the whole collection of inspired writings till after the completion of the canon of the Old Testament, when they were known in Jewish usage as: The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (see below, No. 5). In accordance with the same usage, the writers of the New Testament speak of the "law and the prophets," and more fully, "the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms," Luke 24:44. And they apply to {166} the collected writings of the Old Testament, as well as to particular passages, the term the Scripture, that is, the writings, thus: "The Scripture saith," John 7:38, etc. Or they employ the plural number: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures," Matthew 22:29, etc. Once the epithet holy is added, 2 Timothy 3:15. In 2 Peter 3:16, the term Scriptures is applied to at least the epistles of Paul; apparently also to the other canonical writings of the New Testament then extant. In the usage of Christian writers, the application of this term to the books of the New Testament soon became well established; but the above is the only example of such an application that occurs in the New Testament itself.

2. The terms Old and New Testament arose in the following way: God’s dealings with the Israelitish people, under both the patriarchs and Moses, took the form of a covenant; that is, not a mutual agreement as between two equal parties, but an arrangement or dispensation, in which God himself, as the sovereign Lord, propounded to the chosen people certain terms, and bound himself, upon condition of the fulfilment of these terms, to bestow upon them blessings temporal and spiritual. Now the Greek word diatheke, by which the Septuagint renders the Hebrew word for covenant, signifies both covenant, in the general sense above given, and testament, as being the final disposition which a man makes of his worldly estate. The new covenant introduced by Christ is, in a sense, a testament, as being ratified by his bloody death. Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20. So it is expressly called in the epistle to the Hebrews, 9:15-17, where the new covenant, considered in the light of a testament, is contrasted with the old. It was probably in connection with this view that the Old Latin version of the Bible (made in the Old Testament not from the original Hebrew, but from the Greek Septuagint) everywhere rendered the Greek word diatheke by the Latin testamentum. When Jerome undertook the work of correcting this version, he did not everywhere pursue the same plan. The books of the Old Testament he rendered in general from the Hebrew; and here he employed for the Hebrew word denoting covenant the appropriate Latin {167} words foedus and pactum. But in the Psalms, and the whole New Testament, from deference to established usage, he gave simply a revision of the Old Latin, leaving the word testamentum, by which that version had rendered the word diatheke, covenant, untouched. Hence in Latin usage we have in the New Testament the two covenants, the old and the new, expressed by the terms old testament (vetus testamentum, prius or primum testamentum) and new testament (novum testamentum), and sometimes in immediate contrast with each other, as in 2 Corinthians 3:6; 2 Corinthians 3:14; Hebrews 9:15-18. The transfer of these terms from the covenants themselves to the writings which give an account of them was easy, and soon became established in general usage. Hence the terms Old and New Testament for the two great divisions of the Bible.

Another Latin term for the two great divisions of the Bible was instrumentum, instrument, document; a term applied to the documents or body of records relating to the Roman empire, and very appropriate, therefore, to the records of God's dealings with men. But as early as the time of Tertullian, about the close of the second century, the word testamentum, testament, was more in use. See Tertullian against Marcion, 4. 1. A striking example of the superior accuracy of Jerome's independent version above his simple revision of the old Latin is the passage Jeremiah 31:31-33 as compared with the quotation of the same, Hebrews 8:8-10. In the former, where the translation is made immediately from the Hebrew, we read: "Behold the days shall come, saith the Lord, that I will make for the house of Israel and the house of Judah a new covenant (foedus): not according to the covenant (pactum) which I made with their fathers," etc. In the same passage, as quoted in the epistle to the Hebrews, where we have only a revision of the old Latin, we read: "Behold the days shall come, saith the Lord, that I will accomplish for the house of Israel and for the house of Judah a new testament (testamentum): not according to the testament (testamentum) which I made for their fathers," etc.

3. The unity of the Bible has its ground only in divine inspiration. So far as human composition is concerned, both parts of it have a great variety of authors. The writers of the Old Testament, especially, lived in different, and some of them in very distant ages. They were widely separated from each other in native character and endowments, in education, and {168} in their outward circumstances and position in life. It is of the highest importance that the student of Scripture not only know these facts, but ponder them long and carefully, till he fully understands their deep significance. He has been accustomed from childhood to see all the books of the Bible comprised within the covers of a single volume. He can hardly divest himself of the idea that their authors, if not exactly contemporary, must yet somehow have understood each other's views and plans, and acted in mutual concert. It is only by long contemplation that he is able to apprehend the true position which these writers held to each other, separated from each other, as they often were, by centuries of time, during which great changes took place in the social and political condition of the Hebrew people. Then, for the first time, he begins to discern, in the wonderful harmony that pervades the writings of the Old Testament, taken as a whole, the clear proofs of a superintending divine Spirit; and learns to refer this harmony to its true ground, that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21.

According to the received chronology, Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy about 1451 B.C, and Malachi, the last of the prophets, wrote about 397 B.C. The difference, then, between the time of these two authors Isaiah 1054 years; or say, in round numbers, about 1000 years. From Moses to the anointing of David is, according to the shorter chronology, 388 years; and from Moses to the composition of the books of Kings, nearly nine centuries. From Joel to Malachi we must assume a period of about 400 years, within which space our present prophetical books were composed. The earlier of the psalms written by David differ in time from those composed at the close of the captivity by about 530 years. Let the reader who has been in the habit of passing from one book of the Bible to another, as if both belonged to the same age, ponder well the meaning of these figures. They confirm the arguments already adduced (ch. 12, No. 4) that the unity of Scripture has its ground not in human concert, but in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

4. The books of the Old Testament have been differently classified and arranged. But in no system of distribution has the chronological order been strictly observed.

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(A.) The Jewish classification and arrangement is as follows. They first distribute the books of the Old Testament into three great classes, the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings; that is, the canonical writings not included in the other two divisions-the Hagiographa (holy writings), as they are commonly designated at the present day. The Law is then subdivided into five books, as we now have them; for the names of which see the introduction to the Pentateuch. Chap. 19, No. 1. With reference to this five-fold division of the Law, the Rabbins call it the five-fifths of the Law, each book being reckoned as one-fifth. This term answers to the word Pentateuch, that is, the five-fold book. Chap. 9, beginning. The second great class consists of the so-called Prophets. These are first divided into the former and the latter Prophets. The former Prophets consist of the historical books: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, in the order named. The latter comprise the prophetical books in the stricter sense of the word, with the exception of Daniel; and these are subdivided into the greater and the less. The greater Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The less are the twelve Minor Prophets from Hosea to Malachi, in the same order as that followed in our English version. The remaining books of the Old Testament constitute the third great class, under the name of Writings, Hagiographa; and they are commonly arranged in the following order: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles. These books naturally fall into three groups. First, devotional and didactic-the three so-called poetical books of Psalms, Proverbs, and Job, which have in Hebrew a stricter rhythm; secondly, the five rolls-Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther; so called because written on five separate rolls for use in the synagogue service on the occasion of special festivals; thirdly, books that are chiefly of an historical character-Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

{170} The Talmud arranges the Greater Prophets thus: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah. Of the Hagiographa, various other arrangements, Masoretic and Talmudic, are given, which it is not necessary here to specify. That the writing of sacred history belonged to the prophetical office is clear from various scriptural notices. Compare 1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles, 9:29; 12:15; 20:34; 26:22; 32:32, 33:19. The narrative concerning Sennacherib inserted in the second book of Kings (18:13-19:37) is manifestly from the pen of Isaiah. The Rabbins rightly ascribed the composition of the historical as well as the other books which compose, according to their division, the Prophets, to prophetical men. But the grounds upon which they separated from these certain books, as, for example, Daniel, and placed them among the Hagiographa, are not clear. Some of the rabbins made the distinction to lie in the degree of inspiration, Moses enjoying it in the fullest measure (Numb. 12:6-8), the authors of the books which are classed among the prophets having the Spirit of prophecy, and those of the books belonging to the Hagiographa simply the Holy Spirit (the Holy Spirit, but not in the degree necessary for prophetic revelation). But this distinction is untenable. Who had the spirit of prophecy if not Daniel? In the opinion of some modern scholars, they reckoned to the Prophets only books written by men who were prophets in the stricter sense of the term; that is, men trained to the prophetical office, and exercising it as their profession; while the writings of men like David, Solomon, and Daniel, who though they had the Spirit of prophecy, were yet in their office not prophets, but rulers and statesmen, were assigned to the Hagiographa. But this is inconsistent with the fact that the book of Ruth (which in respect to authorship must go with that of Judges) and also the book of Lamentations are in the Hagiographa. Others, with more

probability, find the main ground of classification in the character of the writings themselves-the Law, as the foundation of the Theocracy; the Prophets, that record the history of the Theocracy and make prophetic revelations concerning it; the sacred Writings, occupied with the personal appropriation of the truths of revelation, and as such exhibiting the religious life of the covenant people in its inward and outward form. But even here we do not find perfect consistency.

(B.) Classification of the Greek Version of the Seventy. The ancient Greek version of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint (Latin Septuaginta, seventy), because, according to Jewish tradition, it was the work of seventy men, interweaves the apocryphal with the canonical books. Its arrangement is as follows, the apocryphal books and parts of books being indicated by italic letters. We follow the edition of Van Ess from the {171} Vatican manuscript, which omits the apocryphal Prayer of Manasseh:

1. Genesis 2:1-25. Exodus 3:1-22. Leviticus 4:1-35. Numbers 5:1-31. Deuteronomy 6:1-25. Joshua 7:1-26. Judges 8:1-35. Ruth 9. 1 Kings (our 1 Samuel).

10. 2 Kings (our 2 Samuel).

11. 3 Kings (our 1 Kings).

12. 4 Kings (our 2 Kings).

13. 1 Chronicles 14:1-17. 2 Chronicles 15:1 Esdras.

16. 2 Esdras (our Ezra).

17. Nehemiah 18. Tobit.

19. Judith.

20. Esther, with apocryphal additions.

21. Job 22:1-30. Psalms 23:1-6. Proverbs 24:1-34. Ecclesiastes 25. Song of Solomon 26. Wisdom of Solomon.

27. Ecclesiasticus.

28. Hosea 29. Amos 30. Micah 31. Joel 32. Obadiah 33. Jonah 34. Nahum 35. Habakkuk 36. Zephaniah 37. Haggai 38. Zechariah 39. Malachi.

. Isaiah 41:1-29. Jeremiah 42:1-22. Baruch.

43. Lamentations 44. Epistle of Jeremiah 45:1-5. Ezekiel 46:1-24. Daniel, with apocryphal additions-Song of the Three Children in the Furnace, History of Susannah, Story of Bel and the Dragon.

47. 1 Maccabees.

48. 2 Maccabees.

49. 3 Maccabees. The arrangement of books in the Latin Vulgate agrees with that of the Septuagint with the following exceptions: the two canonical books of Ezra and Nehemiah appear together, as in the Septuagint, but under the titles of 1 Esdras and 2 Esdras. Next follow the two

apocryphal books of Esdras (the latter wanting in the Septuagint), under the titles of 3 Esdras and 4 Esdras. The Greater Prophets, with Lamentations after Jeremiah and Daniel after Ezekiel, are inserted before the twelve Minor Prophets, which last stand in the order followed in our version. Throwing out of account, therefore, the apocryphal {172} books, the order of the Vulgate is that followed by our English Bible. From the above it is manifest that in neither the Hebrew, the Greek, nor the Latin arrangement is the order of time strictly followed. The Hebrew, for example, to say nothing of the Psalms, which were written in different ages, throws into the Hagiographa Ruth, Job, Proverbs, etc., which are older than any of the so-called latter prophets. The Hebrew places the books of Kings, and the Greek and Latin not only these, but also the books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, before all the proper prophetical books, though it is well known that several of these were much earlier. In the Hebrew arrangement, the three Greater Prophets precede all the Minor Prophets, though several of the latter were earlier than Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and even Isaiah. In the Greek, on the contrary, Isaiah and Jeremiah, as well as Ezekiel, are placed after even the prophets of the Restoration. The biblical student should carefully remember these facts. He must not hastily assume that the books of the Old Testament stand in the order in which they were written, but must determine the age of each for itself, according to the best light that he can obtain. See further in the introductions to the several books.

5. In high antiquity, the continuous mode of writing, (scriptio continua,) without divisions between the words, was common. We cannot indeed infer, from the continuous writing of the oldest manuscripts of the New Testament, that the same method prevailed in the ancient Hebrew writing; for in very ancient inscriptions and manuscripts, belonging to different languages, the words are distinguished from each other more or less completely by points. Yet the neglect of these is common. In most Greek and Phoenician inscriptions there is no division of words. The translators of the Septuagint may be reasonably supposed to have employed the best manuscripts at their command. Yet their version shows that in these the words were either not separated at all, or only partially. The complete separation of words by intervening spaces did not take place till after the introduction of the Assyrian, or square character. Ch. 14, No. 2. With the separation is connected the use of the so-called final letters, that is, forms of certain letters employed exclusively at the ends of words.

6. A very ancient Jewish division of the sacred text is into {173} open and closed sections. The former, which are the larger of the two, are so named because in the Hebrew manuscripts, and in some printed editions, the remainder of the line at their close is left open, the next section beginning with a new line. The closed sections, on the contrary, are separated from each other only by a space in the middle of a line-shut in on either hand. The origin of these sections is obscure. They answer in a general way to our sections and paragraphs, and are older than the Talmud, which contains several references to them, belonging at least to the earliest time when the sacred books were read in public. Davidson, Biblical Criticism, vol. 1, ch. 5.

Different from these, and later in their origin, are the larger sections of the Law, called Parshiyoth (from the singular Parashah, section), which have exclusive reference to the reading of the Law in the synagogue service. These are fifty-four in number, one for each Sabbath of the Jewish intercalary year, while on common years two of the smaller sections are united. Corresponding to these sections of the Law are sections from the Prophets, (the former and latter, according to the Jewish classification,) called Haphtaroth, embracing, however, only selections from the prophets,

and not the whole, as do the sections of the Law. The Jewish tradition is that this custom was first introduced during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, (about 167 B.C.,) because the reading of the Law had been prohibited by him. But this account of the matter is doubted by many. In the Pentateuch, the smaller sections called open and closed are indicated, the former by the Hebrew letter [Hebrew: P], that is, P, the initial letter of the word pethuhah, open; the latter by the Hebrew letter [Hebrew: S]=S, the first letter of the word sethumah, closed. The larger sections, arranged for the reading of the Law in the synagogues, are indicated by three [Hebrew: P]'s or three [Hebrew: S]'s, according as they coincide at their beginning with an open or closed section. In the other portions of the sacred text these divisions are simply indicated by the appropriate spaces. But some printed editions do not observe the distinction between the two in respect to space, so that the open and closed sections are confounded with each other.

7. Chapters and Verses. The division of the poetical books and passages of the Old Testament into separate lines, Hebrew, {174} pesukim, (answering in general to our half-verses, sometimes to the third of a verse,) is very ancient, if not primitive. It is found in the poetical passages of the Law and the historical books, (Exod., ch. 15; Deut., ch. 32; Judges, ch. 5; 2 Sam. ch. 22,) and belonged originally to the three books of Job, Psalms, and Proverbs, which alone the Hebrews reckon as poetical. See below, Ch. 21, No. 1. The division of the whole Old Testament into verses, (likewise called by the Hebrews pesukim,) is also the work of Jewish scholars. It existed in its completeness in the ninth century, and must have had its origin much earlier in the necessity that grew out of the public reading and interpretation of the sacred books in the synagogue service. In the Hebrew text the verses are distinguished by two points called soph-pasuk (:), except in the synagogue rolls, where, according to ancient usage, this mark of distinction is omitted. The present division into chapters is much later, and is the work of Christian scholars. By some it is ascribed to Stephen Langton, archbishop of Canterbury, who died in 1227; by others to Cardinal Hugo de St. Cher of the same century. The Jews transferred it from the Latin Vulgate to the Hebrew text. There are, however, some discrepancies between the chapters of the Hebrew text and those of the Vulgate and our English version. The division of the sacred text into chapters and verses is indispensable for convenience of reference. But the student should remember that these distinctions are wholly of human origin, and sometimes separate passages closely connected in meaning. The first verse, for example, of Isaiah, ch. 4, is immediately connected in sense with the threatenings against "the daughters of Zion" contained in the close of the preceding chapter In the beginning of ch. 11 of the same book, the words: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots," contrast the Branch of the Messiah with the Assyrian bough, the lopping off of which has just been foretold; chap. 10:33, 34. The last three verses, again, of Isaiah, ch. 52, evidently belong to the following chapter. The connections of the sacred text, therefore, must be determined independently of these human distinctions.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin]

14. The Original Text and its History

CHAPTER XIV. THE ORIGINAL TEXT AND ITS HISTORY.

1. The original language of the Old Testament is Hebrew, with the exception of certain portions of Ezra and Daniel and a single verse of Jeremiah, (Ezra 4:8-24; Ezra 5:1-17; Ezra 6:1-18; Ezra 7:12-26; Daniel 2:4, from the middle of the verse to end of chap. 7; Jeremiah 10:11,) which are written in the cognate Chaldee language. The Hebrew belongs to a stock of related languages commonly called Shemitic, because spoken mainly by the descendants of Shem. Its main divisions are: (1,) the Arabic, having its original seat in the southeastern part of the Shemitic territory, and of which the Æthiopic is a branch; (2,) the Aramæan in the north and northeast, comprising the eastern Aramæan or Chaldee, and the western or Syriac; (3,) the Hebrew, occupying a middle place between the two. The Samaritan is essentially Aramæan, but with an intermixture of Hebrew forms; the Phoenician, or Punic, on the other hand, is most closely allied to the Hebrew. All these languages, with the exception of the Æthiopic, are written from right to left, and exhibit many peculiarities of orthography and grammatical forms and structure.

2. The Hebrew characters in present use, called the Assyrian, or square writing, are not those originally employed. The earlier form is undoubtedly represented by the inscriptions on the coins struck by the Maccabees, of which the letters bear a strong resemblance to the Samaritan and Phoenician characters. The Jewish tradition is that the present square character was introduced by Ezra, and that it was of Assyrian origin. The question of the correctness of this tradition has been much discussed. Some wholly reject it, and hold that the present square writing came by a gradual process of change from a more ancient type. See Davidson’s Bib. Crit., vol. I, ch. 3.

{176} That the present square writing existed in our Saviour’s day has been argued with much force from Matth. 5:18, where the Saviour says: "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot (iota) or one tittle (keraia) shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." The iota (Hebrew yod) is the letter i or y, which in the square writing is the smallest in the alphabet ([Hebrew: y]), but not in the ancient Hebrew, Ph[oe]nician, or Samaritan. The keraia, little turn, is that which distinguishes one letter from another; as [Hebrew: d], d, from [Hebrew: r], r; or [Hebrew: b], b, from [Hebrew: k], k. See Alford on Matth. 5:18. (The recent discovery in the Crimea of inscriptions on the tombs of Caraite Jews, some of them dating back, it is alleged, to the first century, proves that the Assyrian or square character was then in use. In these inscriptions the Yod (iota) is represented by a simple point. See Alexander’s Kitto, vol. 3, p. 1173.) The Rabbinic is a modification of the Assyrian or square writing, for the purpose of giving it a more cursive character.

3. The Hebrew alphabet, like all the other Shemitic alphabets-with the exception of the Æthiopic, which is syllabic, the vowels being indicated by certain modifications in the forms of the consonants-was originally a skeleton alphabet, an alphabet of consonants, in which, however, certain letters, called vowel-letters, performed in a measure the office of vowels. The Shemite did not separate the vowels from the consonants, and express them, as we do, by separate signs. He rather conceived of the vowels as inhering in the consonants-as modifications in the utterance of

the consonants, which the reader could make for himself. Various particulars in respect to the pronunciation of certain consonants were, in like manner, left to the reader's own knowledge. For example, the three Hebrew letters, [Hebrew: sh], sh; [Hebrew: m], m; [Hebrew: r], r, ([Hebrew: shmr], to be read from right to left,) might be pronounced, shamar, he kept; shemor, keep thou; shomer, keeping-the reader determining from the connection which of these forms should be used, just as we decide in English between the different pronunciations of the word bow. As long as the Hebrew remained a living language, that is, the language of the masses of the people, this outline alphabet was sufficient for all practical purposes. The modern Arabs read without difficulty their ordinary books, which omit, in like manner, the signs for the vowels. The regularity of structure {177} which belongs to the Shemitic languages generally, makes this omission less inconvenient for them than a like omission would be for us in our western tongues.

4. During the long Babylonish captivity the mass of the Jewish people, who were born and educated in Babylon and the adjacent regions, adopted of necessity the language of the country; that is, the Aramæan or Chaldee language. After the exile, the Hebrew was indeed spoken and written by the prophets and learned men, but not by the people at large. In Nehemiah 8:8 we are told that "they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." This has been explained by some as meaning simply that they expounded to them the sense. But the more natural meaning is that they interpreted to the people the words read from the law. We find, soon after the captivity at least, the old Hebrew supplanted as a living language among the people at large by the Aramæan or Chaldee. Why not date the change from the latter part of the captivity itself?

It was natural that the prophets and historians, all of whom wrote soon after the exile, should employ the sacred language of their fathers. This fact cannot be adduced as a valid argument that the body of the people continued to speak Hebrew. The incorporation, on the other hand, of long passages in Chaldee into the books of Daniel and Ezra implies at least that this language was known to the people at large. As to the children spoken of in Nehemiah 13:24, who "could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people"-the people, to wit, to which their mothers belonged-"the Jews' language" here is probably the language used by the Jews, as distinguished from that used by the people of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. Keil, Introduction to Old Testament, § 18.

5. After the Hebrew had ceased to be the language of the common people, its traditional pronunciation was carefully preserved for many successive centuries in the synagogue-reading. It was not till several centuries after Christ (somewhere between the sixth and the tenth centuries) that the vowel-signs and other marks of distinction were added in order to perpetuate, {178} with all possible accuracy, the solemn traditional pronunciation of the synagogue. This work is ascribed to learned Jews of Tiberias, called Masoretes, from Masora, tradition; and the Hebrew text thus furnished by them is called the Masoretic, in distinction from the unpointed text, which latter is, according to Jewish usage, retained in the synagogue-rolls. From reverence to the word of God, the punctuators (as these men are also called) left the primitive text in all cases undisturbed, simply superadding to it their marks of distinction. After giving with great minuteness the different vowel-signs and marks (commonly called diacritical) for the varying pronunciation of the consonants, they superadded a complicated system of accents. These serve the threefold office of guides in cantillating the sacred text (according to ancient usage in the synagogue-reading); of

indicating the connection in meaning among the words and clauses; and of marking, though with certain exceptions, the tone-syllables of words. In addition to all the above, they added a mass of notes, partly of a critical and partly of a grammatical character, relating to various readings, grammatical forms and connections, modes of orthography, and the like. These are called collectively the Masorah, of which there is a fuller Masorah called the greater (found only in Rabbinical Bibles), and a briefer, called the less, the main part of which is found in common editions of the Hebrew Bible. To illustrate the Masoretic as contrasted with the unpointed text, we give the first verse of Genesis, first, in its simple unpointed form; secondly, with the vowel-signs and diacritical marks for the consonants; thirdly, with both these and the accents, the last being the complete Masoretic text.

[Hebrew: br'shit br' 'lhim et hshmym vet h'rts] [Hebrew: bere'shit bara' 'elohim et hashamayim veet ha'arets] [Hebrew: o bere'shit bara' 'elohim et hashamayim veet ha'arets] ha-arets. ve-eth hasshamayim eth elohim bara Bereshith the-earth. and-it the heavens them God created In-the-beginning

{179} The round circle above the initial letter in the third line refers to a marginal note of the Masorah indicating that it is to be written large.

Respecting the origin and antiquity of the Hebrew points a warm controversy existed in former times. Some maintained that they were coeval with the language itself; others that they were first introduced by Ezra after the Babylonish captivity. But their later origin-somewhere between the sixth and tenth centuries-is now generally conceded. It is further agreed that their inventors were able scholars, thoroughly acquainted as well with the genius and structure of the language as with the traditional pronunciation of the synagogue; and that they have given a faithful representation of this pronunciation, as it existed in their day. Their judgment, therefore, though not invested with any divine authority, is very valuable. "It represents a tradition, it is true; but a tradition of the oldest and most important character." Horne's Introduction, vol. 2, p. 15, edition of 1860.

6. The deep reverence of the Jews for their sacred books manifests itself in their numerous rules for the guidance of copyists in the transcription of the rolls designed for use in the synagogue service. They extend to every minute particular-the quality of the ink and the parchment (which latter must always be prepared by a Jew from the skin of a clean animal, and fastened by strings made from the skins of clean animals); the number, length, and breadth of the columns; the number of lines in each column, and the number of words in each line. No word must be written till the copyist has first inspected it in the example before him, and pronounced it aloud; before writing the name of God he must wash his pen; all redundance or defect of letters must be carefully avoided: prose must not be written as verse, or verse as prose; and when the copy has been completed, it must be examined for approval or rejection within thirty days. Superstitious, and even ridiculous, as these rules are, we have in them a satisfactory assurance of the fidelity with which the sacred text has been perpetuated. Though their date may be posterior to the age of the Talmudists (between 200 and 500 after Christ), the spirit of reverence for the divine word which they manifest goes far back beyond this age. We see it, free from these later superstitious observances, in the transactions recorded in the eighth chapter of {180} Nehemiah, when Ezra opened the book of the law in the sight of all the people, "and when he opened it, all the people stood up." The early history of the sacred text is confessedly involved in great obscurity; but in the

profound reverence with which the Jews have ever regarded it since the captivity, we have satisfactory proof that it has come down to us, in all essential particulars, as Ezra left it. Of the primitive text before the days of Ezra and his associates we have but a few brief notices in the historical books. But in the fidelity and skill of Ezra, who was "a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given," as well as in the intelligence and deep earnestness of the men associated with him, we have a reasonable ground of assurance that the sacred books which have come down to us through their hands contain, in all essential particulars, the primitive text in a pure and uncorrupt form.

7. As to the age of Hebrew manuscripts, it is to be noticed that not many have come down to us from an earlier century than the twelfth. In this respect there is a striking difference between them and the Greek and Latin manuscripts of the New Testament, a few of which are as old as the fourth and fifth centuries, and quite a number anterior to the tenth. The oldest known Hebrew manuscript, on the contrary, is a Pentateuch roll on leather, now at Odessa, which, if the subscription stating that it was corrected in the year 580 can be relied on, belongs to the sixth century. One of De Rossi's manuscripts is supposed to belong to the eighth century, and there are a few of the ninth and tenth, and several of the eleventh. Bishop Walton supposes that after the Masoretic text was fully settled, the Jewish rulers condemned, as profane and illegitimate, all the older manuscripts not conformed to this: whence, after a few ages, the rejected copies mostly perished. The existing Hebrew manuscripts give the Masoretic text with but little variation from each other.

Earnest effort has been made to find a reliable ante-Masoretic text, but to no purpose. The search in China has thus far been fruitless. When {181} Dr. Buchanan in 1806 brought from India a synagogue-roll which he found among the Jews of Malabar, high expectations were raised. But it is now conceded to be a Masoretic roll, probably of European origin. Respecting the manuscripts of the Samaritan Pentateuch, see below, No. 9.

(A synagogue-roll has recently been discovered in the Crimea of the date answering to A.D. 489. See Alexander's Kitto, vol. 3, pp. 1172-5.)

8. In respect to form, Hebrew manuscripts fall into two great divisions, public and private. The public manuscripts consist of synagogue-rolls carefully written out on parchment, as already described, without vowel-points or divisions of verses. The Law is written on a single roll; the sections from the prophets (Haphtaroth, ch. 12. 6) and the Five Rolls-Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther (ch. 12. 4)-each on separate rolls. The private manuscripts are written with leaves in book form-folio, quarto, octavo, and duodecimo; mostly on parchment, but some of the later on paper. The poetical passages are generally arranged in hemistichs; the rest is in columns which vary according to the size of the page. The text and points were always written separately; the former with a heavier, the latter with a lighter pen, and generally with different ink. The square or Assyrian character is employed as a rule, but a few are written in the rabbinic character. The Chaldee paraphrase (less frequently some other version) may be added. The margin contains more or less of the Masorah; sometimes prayers, psalms, rabbinical commentaries, etc.

9. There is also a Samaritan Pentateuch; that is, a Hebrew Pentateuch written in the ancient Samaritan characters, and first brought to light in 1616, respecting the origin of which very different

opinions are held. Some suppose that the Samaritans received it as an inheritance from the ten tribes; others that it was introduced at the time of the founding of the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim; others that it was brought by the Israelitish priest sent to instruct the Samaritans in the knowledge of God, 2 Kings 17:27-28. It is agreed among biblical scholars that its text has been subjected to many alterations which greatly impair its critical authority. These, however, {182} are not sufficient to account for its remarkable agreement with the Septuagint version against the Masoretic text, in numerous readings, some of them of importance. The explanation of this phenomenon must be the agreement of the original Samaritan codex with the manuscripts from which the Alexandrine version was executed. Probably both were of Egyptian origin. See Alexander's Kitto, art. Samaritan Pentateuch. In a brief compend, like the present work, it is not thought necessary to notice particularly the printed editions of the Hebrew Bible. The reader will find an account of them in the "Bibliographical List" appended to the fourth volume of Horne's Introduction, edition of 1860. The text of Van der Hooght's Hebrew Bible, (Amsterdam and Utrecht, 1705,) which was chiefly based on the earlier text of Athias, (Amsterdam, 1667,) is generally followed at the present day, and may be regarded as the received text of the Hebrew Scriptures.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin]

15. Formation and History of the Hebrew Canon

CHAPTER XV.

FORMATION AND HISTORY OF THE HEBREW CANON.

1. The Greek word canon (originally a straight rod or pole, measuring-rod, then rule) denotes that collection of books which the churches receive as given by inspiration of God, and therefore as constituting for them a divine rule of faith and practice. To the books included in it the term canonical is applied. The Canon of the Old Testament, considered in reference to its constituent parts, was formed gradually; formed under divine superintendence by a process of growth extending through many centuries. The history of its formation may be conveniently considered under the following divisions: (1,) the Pentateuch; (2,) the historical books; (3,) the prophetical books in the stricter sense of the term; (4,) a somewhat miscellaneous collection of books which may be designated in a general way as poetical.

I. THE PENTATEUCH.

2. In the name applied to the Pentateuch-"the book of the law," and more fully, "the book of the law of Moses," "the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel"-we have from the beginning the general idea of the canon. A canonical writing is one that contains a communication from God to men, and has therefore the impress of divine authority. In its outward form it may be preceptive, historical, or meditative. But in all these different modes it still reveals to men God’s character, and the duties which he requires of them. The Hebrews never admitted to the number of their sacred books a writing that was secular in its character. Even those who deny the canonical authority of certain parts of the {184} Old Testament acknowledge that the Jews received these parts because they believed them to be of a sacred character.

3. In Deuteronomy 31:9-13; Deuteronomy 31:24-26; Deuteronomy 17:18-19, we read: "And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and unto all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: and that their children which have not known anything, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it:" "and it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side" (that is, not within, but by the side. Compare Joshua 12:9; Ruth 2:14; 1 Samuel 20:25; Psalms 91:7; where the same word is used in the original) "of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee;" "and it shall be when he"-the king

whom the Israelites in some future age shall set over themselves-"sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and the statutes, to do them." These passages are of the weightiest import; for they teach us how the nucleus of the canon of the Old Testament was formed, and give us all the particulars that enter into the idea of a canonical writing. It is given by God as an authoritative rule of faith {185} and practice; it is committed to the custody of his people through their recognized officers, and that for all future time; it is to be published to the people at large, and diligently studied by the rulers, that they and the people together may know and do the will of God. It is not necessary to decide the question how much is included in the words "this book of the law," Deuteronomy 31:26, whether the whole Pentateuch, or only the book of Deuteronomy. The arguments to show that the four preceding books came, in all essential respects, from the pen of Moses have been already given (Ch. 9, Nos. 7-9), and need not be here repeated. We only add that even if the reference is to Deuteronomy alone, as some suppose, the rule for this book would naturally be the rule for all the previous writings. They also would be laid up by the side of the ark; for it is plain that the priests and Levites, who had charge of the sanctuary, were made the keepers of the sacred writings generally. As a matter of simple convenience the book of Deuteronomy was written on a separate roll ("in a book," Deuteronomy 31:24). But if this book, when finished, was laid up with the earlier portions of the law at the side of the ark, so as to constitute with them a single collection, and if, as we may reasonably suppose, Moses, in writing the book of Deuteronomy, contemplated such a collection of all the parts of the law into one whole; then, when the law is mentioned, whether in Deuteronomy or in the later books, we are to understand the whole law, unless there be something in the context to limit its meaning, as there is, for example, in Joshua 8:32 compared with Deuteronomy 27:1-8. The command to "read this law before all Israel in their hearing," "at the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles," was understood in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah of the whole law, and not of Deuteronomy alone (Ch. 9, No. 4); and so Josephus plainly understood it: "But when the multitude is assembled in the holy city at the septennial sacrifices on the occasion of the feast of tabernacles, let the high priest, standing on a lofty stage whence he can be plainly heard, read the laws to all." Antiq. 4.8, 12. "The laws," in the usage of Josephus, naturally mean the whole collection of laws.

II. THE HISTORICAL BOOKS.

4. The history of these is involved in obscurity. In respect to most of them we know not the authors, nor the exact date of {186} their composition. There are, however, two notices that shed much light on the general history of the earlier historical books. In the last chapter of the book of Joshua, after an account of the renewal of the covenant at Shechem, it is added: "And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord." Joshua 24:26. Again, upon the occasion of the establishment of the kingdom under Saul, we are told that "Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord." 1 Samuel 10:25. From the first of these passages we learn that a theocratic man after Moses, who had the spirit of prophecy, connected his writings (or at least one portion of them) with the law. This addition by Joshua, though never formally regarded as a part of the law, virtually belonged to it, since it contained a renewal of the covenant

between God and his people. From the second passage we learn that the place for other important documents pertaining to the theocracy was "before the Lord," where the law was deposited. Hence we infer with much probability that, besides the addition made to "the book of the law of God," important historical writings, proceeding from prophetical men, like Joshua and Samuel, were in process of collection at the sanctuary all the time from Moses to Samuel.

5. If now we examine the books of Joshua and Judges, we must be satisfied that the men who compiled them made use of such materials. In the book of Joshua is recorded, with much detail, the allotment of the land of Canaan among the several tribes. A document of this nature must have been written at the time, and by Joshua himself, or under his immediate direction. The same may be reasonably supposed of other portions of the book. If then it was put into its present form after the death of Joshua, as some suppose, the materials must still have been furnished by him to a great extent. The book of Judges covers a period of more than three centuries. Who composed it we do not know, but the materials employed by him must {187} have existed, in part at least, in a written form. The book of Ruth may be regarded as an appendix to that of the Judges 6:1-40 The two books of Samuel (which originally constituted one whole) bring down the history of the Theocracy from the birth of Samuel to the close of David’s reign-a period of about a century and a half. The author, therefore, can have been, upon any supposition, only in part contemporary with the events which he records. Yet if we examine the biographical sketches of Saul, Samuel, and David contained in these books, the conviction forces itself upon us that they must have been written by contemporaries. Their freshness, minute accuracy of detail, and graphic vividness of style mark them as coming from eye-witnesses, or from writers who had received their accounts from eye-witnesses. Who were authors of these original documents we cannot determine. It is certain that Samuel was one of them. 1 Chronicles 29:29. Who composed the books, again, is a question that we are unable to answer. It was probably a prophet living not very long after the separation of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. From the days of Samuel and onward there was a flourishing school of the prophets at hand which could furnish, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, both the writers of the original materials and the author of the books in their present form. The attempt has been made to set aside the evidence that the writer of the books of Samuel made use of earlier documents, from the example of such men as Swift and Defoe, who composed works of fiction with all the simplicity and circumstantial detail of those who write authentic history as eye-witnesses. But, unless the design be to class the books of Samuel with "Gulliver’s Travels" and "Robinson Crusoe," the argument is wholly irrelevant. With Swift and Defoe simplicity and minuteness of detail were a matter of conscious effort-a work of art, for which they naturally chose the region of fiction; and here they, and other men of genius, have been eminently successful. Shakespeare has portrayed ideal scenes in the life of Julius Cæsar with more vividness and circumstantiality than any authentic historian of Cæsar’s age. But real history, written simply in the interest of truth, never has the graphic character, artless simplicity, and circumstantiality of detail which belong to these inimitable narratives, unless the writer be either an eye-witness, or draw his materials from eye-witnesses.

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7. We come next to the books of Kings and Chronicles, the writers of which confessedly employed previously existing materials. In the two books of Kings (which, like the two of Samuel and of Chronicles, originally constituted one work) reference is made to the following sources: For the

reign of Solomon, "the book of the acts of Solomon" (1 Kings 11:41); for the kingdom of Judah after the revolt of the twelve tribes from Rehoboam to Jehoiakim, "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah;" for the kingdom of Israel, "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel." In the books of Chronicles we have: For the reign of David, "the book" (history) "of Samuel the seer, the book of Nathan the prophet, and the book of Gad the seer" (1 Chronicles 29:29); for the reign of Solomon, "the book of Nathan the prophet, the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite," and "the vision of Iddo the seer against Jeroboam the son of Nebat" (2 Chronicles 9:29); for the reign of Rehoboam, "the book of Shemaiah the prophet," and "of Iddo the seer concerning genealogies," that is, in the manner of a genealogical record (2 Chronicles 12:15); for the reign of Abijah, "the story" (commentary) "of the prophet Iddo" (2 Chronicles 13:22); for the reign of Jehoshaphat, "the book of Jehu the son of Hanani," who is mentioned (rather, who is inserted, i.e., as an author) in the book of the kings of Israel (2 Chronicles 20:34); for the reign of Uzziah, "the prophet Isaiah" (2 Chronicles 26:22); for the reign of Hezekiah in part, "the vision of Isaiah the prophet" (2 Chronicles 32:32); for the reign of Manasseh in part, "the sayings of the seers," or, as many prefer to render, "the words of Hosai" (2 Chronicles 33:18). Besides the above, reference is made to "the book of the kings of Judah and Israel," "the book of the kings of Israel and Judah," "the story of the book of the kings;" "the book of the kings of Israel." These last are probably only different titles of the same collection of annals, embracing in its contents the history of both kingdoms; since the references to the book of the kings of Israel are for the affairs of the kingdom of Judah (2 Chronicles 20:34; 2 Chronicles 33:18).

8. With regard to the above original sources, it should be {189} carefully noticed that the references in the books of Kings are not to our present books of Chronicles, which did not exist when the books of Kings were written. Chap. 20, No. 21. Neither can the allusions in the books of Chronicles be restricted to our present books of Kings; for (1) they refer to matters not recorded in those books-for example, to the wars of Jotham, 2 Chronicles 27:7; (2) they refer to the book of the kings of Judah and Israel for a full account of the acts of a given monarch "first and last," while the history of the same monarch in our present books of Kings refers for further information to the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah. It is plain that both writers had access to a larger collection of original documents, which were in great part the same. The chief difference in outward form is that, when the books of Chronicles were written, the annals of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel seem to have constituted a single collection, whereas in the books of Kings they are always mentioned as two separate works. In making his selections from these annals, each writer proceeded independently. Hence the remarkable agreements, where both used the same materials; and the remarkable differences, where one employed documents, or parts of documents, which the other omitted to use.

9. As to the character of these original documents, it is plain that a portion of them were written by prophets. By some the books of the kings of Israel and Judah so often referred to, have been regarded as simply the public annals of the two kingdoms written by the official annalists, the "scribes" or "recorders" so often spoken of. No doubt such annals existed, and entered largely into the documents in question. But the right interpretation of 2 Chronicles 20:34, shows that, in some cases at least, the writings of prophets were incorporated into these annals. The extended history of Elijah and Elisha cannot have been the work of the public scribes of the kingdom of Israel, but of prophets, writing from the prophetic point of view. The question, however, is not one of practical

importance, since, whatever may have been the source or character {190} of the materials employed, the writers of the books now under consideration, used them at their discretion under the guidance of the Spirit of God. To us, therefore, they come with the weight of prophetic authority. The further consideration of the relation between the books of Kings and Chronicles is reserved for the special introductions to these books. It may be added here that the probable date of the former is the first half of the Babylonish captivity; of the latter, the time of Ezra under the Persian rule.

10. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah constitute a continuation of the books of Chronicles, and need not be particularly noticed in the present connection. For their authorship and date, as also for the book of Esther, see the particular introductions to these books.

III. THE PROPHETICAL BOOKS.

11. Under the prophetical books, in the stricter sense of the word, may be included the three Greater prophets-Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel-Daniel (though largely historical), and the twelve Minor prophets. These will all come up hereafter for separate consideration. At present we view them simply with reference to the growth of the Old Testament Canon. From the settlement of the Israelities in the land of Canaan to the time of Samuel, a period of several centuries (according to the chronology followed by the apostle Paul, Acts 13:20, four hundred and fifty years), we read of several appearances of the "angel of the Lord." Judges 2:1; Judges 6:11; Judges 13:3. The notices of prophets during the same period are only three in number. Judges 4:4; Judges 6:8; 1 Samuel 2:27. But with Samuel began a new era. He was himself one of the greatest of the prophets, and he established a school of the prophets over which he himself presided. 1 Samuel 10:5; 1 Samuel 10:10; 1 Samuel 19:20. From his day onward such schools seem to have flourished as a theocratic institution throughout the whole period of the kings, though more vigorously at certain times. 1 Kings 18:4; 1 Kings 20:35; 2 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 2:5; {191} 4:1, 38, 43; 5:22; 6:1; 9:1. So far as we have notices of these schools, they were under the instruction of eminent prophets; and "the sons of the prophets" assembled in them received such a training as fitted them, so far as human instrumentality is concerned, for the exercise of the prophetical office, as well as for being, in a more general sense, the religious instructors of the people. From these schools came, apparently, most of those whom God called to be his messengers to the rulers and people, though with exceptions according to his sovereign wisdom. Amos 1:1; Amos 7:14. We find, accordingly, that from the days of Samuel and onward the prophets were recognized as a distinct order of men in the Jewish theocracy, who derived their authority immediately from God, and spoke by direct inspiration of his Spirit, as they themselves indicate by the standing formula: "Thus saith the Lord."

12. It is a remarkable fact, however, that from Samuel to about the reign of Uzziah, a period of some three centuries, we have no books of prophecy written by these men, if we except, perhaps, the book of Jonah. Their writings seem to have been mainly historical (like the historical notices incorporated into the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel); and what remains to us of them is preserved in the historical books of the Old Testament. See above, Nos. 6 and 7. But about the time of Uzziah begins a new era, that of written prophecy. During his reign appeared Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, and probably Jonah, Joel, and Obadiah. Micah followed immediately afterwards, being contemporary in part with Isaiah; and then, in succession, the rest of the

prophets whose writings have come down to us. When the theocracy was now on its decline, waxing old and destined to pass away for ever, they felt themselves called to put on record, for the instruction of all coming ages, their words of warning and encouragement. Thus arose gradually our present collection of prophetical books; that of Lamentations included, which is but an appendix to the writings of Jeremiah.

{192} IV. THE POETICAL BOOKS.

13. These are a precious outgrowth of the theocratic spirit, in which the elements of meditation and reflection predominate. Concerning the date and authorship of the book of Job, which stands first in order in our arrangement, we have no certain information. Learned men vary between the ante-Mosaic age and that of Solomon. Its theme is divine providence, as viewed from the position of the Old Testament. See further in the introduction to this book.

14. With the call of David to the throne of Israel began a new and glorious era in the history of public worship, that of "the service of song in the house of the Lord." 1 Chronicles 6:31. As when Moses smote the rock in the wilderness the water gushed forth in refreshing streams, so the soul of David, touched by the spirit of inspiration, poured forth a rich and copious flood of divine song, which has in all ages refreshed and strengthened God’s people in their journey heavenward "through this dark vale of tears." Nor was the fountain of sacred poetry confined to him alone. God opened it also in the souls of such men as Asaph, Ethan, Heman, and the sons of Korah; nor did its flow wholly cease till after the captivity. The Psalms of David and his coadjutors were from the first dedicated to the service of the sanctuary; and thus arose our canonical book of Psalms, although (as will be hereafter shown) it did not receive its present form and arrangement till the time of Ezra and Nehemiah 15. After David came Solomon in the sphere of practical wisdom. This, according to the divine record, he received as a special endowment from God, though doubtless he had in a peculiar measure a natural capacity for such an endowment. In Gibeon the Lord appeared to him in a dream by night, and said: "Ask what I shall give thee." Passing by wealth, long life, and the death of his enemies, the youthful monarch besought God to give him "an understanding heart," that he might be qualified to judge the great people committed to his care. The answer was: "Behold, I have done according to thy word: {193} lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee." 1 Kings 3:5-12. Thus divinely qualified, he embodied, in a vast collection of proverbs, his observations on human life, and the course of human affairs. Our canonical book of Proverbs is a selection from these, with some additions at the end from other sources. For notices respecting the arrangement of these proverbs in their present form, as well as respecting the books of Ecclesiastes and Canticles, which are also ascribed to Solomon, the reader may consult the introductions to these books.

V. THE COMPLETION OF THE CANON. The subject thus far before us has been the growth of the materials which constitute our canonical books. The question of their preservation and final embodiment in their present form remains to be considered.

16. Respecting the preservation of the sacred books till the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, our information is very scanty. Each king was required to have at hand for his own personal use a transcript of the law of Moses (Deuteronomy 17:18), the original writing being carefully laid up in the inner sanctuary, where Hilkiah, the high priest, found it in the reign of Josiah. 2 Kings 22:8. We

cannot doubt that such kings as David, Solomon, Asa, and Hezekiah complied with this law: though after the disorders connected with the reign of Manasseh and his captivity, the good king Josiah neglected it. Jehoshaphat, we are expressly told, sent men to teach in the cities of Judah, who had "the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people." 2 Chronicles 17:7-9. Of course it was a copy, and not the original autograph, which might not be removed from the sanctuary. It is a natural supposition that other transcripts of the law were made under the direction of the high priest, for {194} the use of pious men, especially pious prophets, princes, and Levites, who needed its directions for the right discharge of their official duties, though on this point we can affirm nothing positively. As to the prophetical books, we know that Jeremiah had access to the writings of Isaiah, for in repeated instances he borrowed his language. We know again that Daniel had at hand the prophecies of Jeremiah; for he understood "by books" (literally "by the books," which may be well understood to mean that collection of sacred books of which the prophecies of Jeremiah formed a part) "the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." Daniel 9:2. The consecration of the Psalms of David and his coadjutors to the public service of the sanctuary must have insured their careful preservation by the Levites who had charge of the temple music; and, in general, the deep reverence of the Jews for their sacred writings is to us a reasonable evidence that they preserved them from loss and mutilation to the captivity, and through that calamitous period.

17. To Ezra and his coadjutors, the men of the Great Synagogue, the Jews ascribe the completion of the canon of the Old Testament. Their traditions concerning him are embellished with extravagant fictions; yet we cannot reasonably deny that they are underlaid by a basis of truth. All the scriptural notices of Ezra attest both his zeal and his ability as "a scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of his statutes to Israel," a man who "had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." Ezra 7:10-11. The work in which he and his associates were engaged was the reëstablishment of the Theocracy on its old foundation, the law of Moses, with the ordinances pertaining to the sanctuary-service afterwards added by David; and that too in the vivid consciousness of the fact that disobedience to the divine law had brought upon the nation the calamities of the captivity. In such circumstances their first {195} solicitude must have been that the people might have the inspired oracles given to their fathers, and be thoroughly instructed in them. The work, therefore, which Jewish tradition ascribes to Ezra and the men of the Great Synagogue was altogether appropriate to their situation, nor do we know of any man or body of men afterwards so well qualified for its performance, or upon whom it would so naturally have devolved. That they arranged the inspired volume in substantially its present form, we have no good reason for doubting. But we should not, perhaps, be warranted in saying that they brought the canon of the Old Testament absolutely and formally to a close. Josephus (against Apion 1. 8) affirms that no book belongs to the sacred writings of his nation "which are justly believed to be divine," that had its origin after the reign of Artaxerxes, Xerxes' son (Artaxerxes Longimanus, under whom Ezra led forth his colony, Ezra, chap. 7); and that on the ground that from this time onward "the exact succession of the prophets" was wanting. This declaration of the Jewish historian is in all essential respects worthy of full credence. We cannot, however, affirm with confidence that all the later historical books were put by Ezra and his contemporaries into the exact form in which we now have them. The book of Nehemiah, for example, contains some genealogical notices (chap. 12:11, 22) which, according to any fair

interpretation, are of a later date. We are at liberty to suppose that these were afterwards added officially and in good faith, as matters of public interest; or, as some think, that the book itself is an arrangement by a later hand of writings left by Nehemiah, perhaps also by Ezra; so that while its contents belong, in every essential respect, to them, it received its present form after their death. Respecting the question when the canon of the Old Testament received its finishing stroke, a question which the wisdom of God has left in obscurity, we must speak with diffidence. We know with certainty that our present Hebrew canon is identical with that collection of sacred writings to which our Saviour and his apostles constantly appealed as {196} invested throughout with divine authority, and this is a firm basis for our faith. The attempt has been made, but without success, to show that a portion of the Psalms belongs to the Maccabean age. The words of the Psalmist (Psalms 74:8) rendered in our version: "They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land," have no reference to the synagogues of a later age, as is now generally admitted. The Hebrew word denotes places of assembly, and was never applied by the later Jews to their synagogues. The Psalmist wrote, moreover, in immediate connection with the burning of the temple-"they have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled by casting down the dwelling-place of thy name to the ground"-and this fixes the date of the Psalm to the Chaldean invasion (2 Kings 25:9); for the temple was not burned, but only profaned, in the days of the Maccabees. By "the assemblies of God," we are probably to understand the ancient sacred places, such as Ramah, Bethel, and Gilgal, where the people were accustomed to meet, though in a somewhat irregular way, for the worship of God. But whether this interpretation be correct or not, the words have no reference to the buildings of a later age called synagogues.

Some of the apocryphal writings, as, for example, the book of Wisdom, the book of Ecclesiasticus, the first book of Maccabees, were highly valued by the ancient Jews. But they were never received into the Hebrew canon, because their authors lived after "the exact succession of the prophets," which ended with Malachi. They knew how to make the just distinction between books of human wisdom and books written "by inspiration of God."

18. The earliest notice of the contents of the Hebrew Canon is that contained in the prologue to the Greek translation of Ecclesiasticus, where it is described as "the law, the prophets, and the other national books," "the law, and the prophecies, and the rest of the books," according to the three-fold division already considered. Chap. 18, No. 4. Josephus, in the passage already referred to (against Apion, 1. 8), says: "We have not among us innumerable books discordant and contrary to each other, but only two-and-twenty, containing the history of all time, which are justly believed to be divine. And of these five belong to Moses, which contain the laws and the transmission of human genealogy to the time of his death. This period of time wants but little of three thousand years" (the longer chronology followed by him). "But from the death of Moses {197} to the reign of Artaxerxes, who was king of the Persians after Xerxes, the prophets after Moses wrote the history of their times in thirteen books. The remaining four contain hymns to God and precepts for human life. From Artaxerxes to our time various books have been written; but they have not been esteemed worthy of credence like that given to the books before them, because the exact succession of the prophets has been wanting." In this list the books of the Old Testament are artificially arranged to agree with the number two-and-twenty, that of the Hebrew alphabet. The four that contain "hymns to God and precepts for human life" are, in all probability: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles; and the thirteen prophetical books (see below) are: (1) Joshua,

(2) Judges and Ruth, (3) the two books of Samuel, (4) the two books of Kings, (5) the two books of Chronicles, (6) Ezra and Nehemiah, (7) Esther, (8) Isaiah, (9) Jeremiah and Lamentations, (10) Ezekiel, (11) Daniel, (12) the book of the twelve Minor Prophets, (13) Job. See Oehler in Hertzog's Encyclopædia, Art. Canon of the Old Testament. Origen, as quoted by Eusebius (Hist. Ecclesiastes 6.25), and Jerome (both of whom drew their information concerning the Hebrew Canon immediately from Jewish scholars, and may, therefore, be regarded as in a certain sense the expositors of the above list of Josephus) make mention of the same number, twenty-two. Origen's list unites Ruth with Judges, puts together the first and second of Samuel, the first and second of Kings, the first and second of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah (under the names of the first and second of Ezra), and Jeremiah and Lamentations (with the addition of the apocryphal Epistle of Jeremiah-an inconsistency, or rather oversight, to be explained from his constant habit of using the Septuagint version). In the present text of Eusebius, the book of the twelve Minor Prophets is wanting. But this is simply an old error of the scribe, since it is necessary to complete the number of twenty-two. Jerome's list (Prologus galeatus) is the same, only that he gives the contents of the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa in accordance with the {198} Hebrew arrangement, placing Daniel in the last class, and adding that whatever is without the number of these must be placed among the Apocryphal writings. Smith's Dict. of the Bible, Art. Canon. The catalogue of these two distinguished Christian scholars-Origen of the Eastern church, and Jerome of the Western, both of whom drew their information immediately from Hebrew scholars-is decisive, and we need add nothing further.

19. The Apocryphal books of the Old Testament were incorporated into the Alexandrine version called the Septuagint; but they were never received by the Jews of Palestine as a part of the sacred volume. Concerning them and their history, see further in the Appendix to this part.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin]

16. Ancient Versions of the Old Testament

CHAPTER XVI.

ANCIENT VERSIONS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. In the present chapter only those versions of the Old Testament are noticed which were made independently of the New. Versions of the whole Bible, made in the interest of Christianity, are considered in the following part.

I. THE GREEK VERSION CALLED THE SEPTUAGINT.

1. This is worthy of special notice as the oldest existing version of the holy Scriptures, or any part of them, in any language; and also as the version which exerted a very large influence on the language and style of the New Testament; for it was extensively used in our Lord's day not only in Egypt, where it originated, and in the Roman provinces generally, but also in Palestine; and the quotations in the New Testament are made more commonly from it than from the Hebrew.

2. The Jewish account of its origin, first noticed briefly by Aristobulus, a Jew (as quoted by Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius), then given at great length in a letter which professes to have been written by one Aristeas, a heathen and a special friend of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, and the main part of which Josephus has copied (Antiq. 12. 2), is for substance as follows: Ptolemy Philadelphus (who reigned from B.C. 285 to 247), at the suggestion of his librarian Demetrius Phalereus, after having first liberated all the Jewish captives found in his kingdom, sent an embassy with costly gifts to Eleazar the high priest at Jerusalem, requesting that he would send him chosen men, six from each of the twelve tribes, with a copy of the Jewish law, that it might be interpreted from the Hebrew into the Greek and laid up in the royal library at Alexandria. {200} Eleazar accordingly sent the seventy-two elders with a copy of the laws written on parchments in letters of gold, who were received by the king with high honors, sumptuously feasted, and afterwards lodged in a palace on an island (apparently Pharos in the harbor of Alexandria), where they completed their work in seventy-two days, and were then sent home with munificent gifts. The story that they were shut up in seventy-two separate cells (according to another legend two by two in thirty-six cells), where they had no communication with each other and yet produced as many versions agreeing with each other word for word, was a later embellishment designed (as indeed were all the legends respecting the origin of this version) to exalt its character in the apprehension of the people, and to gain for it an authority equal to that of the inspired original.

3. The letter ascribed to Aristeas is now generally admitted to be spurious. It purports to have been written by a heathen scholar, yet it bears throughout marks of a Jewish origin. It represents the translators as Jewish elders sent by the high priest from Jerusalem. Yet the version is acknowledged to be in the Alexandrine Greek dialect. For these and other reasons learned men ascribe its authorship to a Jew whose object was to exalt the merits of the Alexandrine version in the estimation of his nation. But we are not, for this reason, warranted to pronounce the whole account a pure fable, as many have done. We may well believe that the work was executed under the auspices of Ptolemy, and for the purpose of enriching his library. But we must believe that it

was executed by Jews born in Egypt to whom the Greek language was vernacular, and probably from manuscripts of Egyptian origin. Thus much is manifest from the face of the version, that it was made by different men, and with different degrees of ability and fidelity. The name Septuagint (Latin, Septuaginta), seventy, a round number for the more exact seventy-two, probably arose from this tradition of the execution of the work by seventy-two elders in seventy-two days. The story {201} of the parchments sent from Jerusalem for the use of the translators (with the request that they might be returned with them) has been rejected on the ground that the text used by them differs too widely from the Palestinian text. See further on this subject in No. 5, below. It has been further affirmed that Demetrius Phalereus did not belong to the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, but to that of his father Ptolemy Soter, the son having banished him from court in the beginning of his reign. For this reason some have proposed to assign the founding of the Alexandrian library to the father and not the son. But whatever be our judgment in respect to Demetrius and his relation to the two Ptolemies, the voice of history is decisive in favor of the son and not the father, as the patron of learning.

4. It has been a question whether the Hebrew Scriptures were translated at one time, or in successive portions. The tradition above considered speaks only of the law, or, in the plural, the laws. These might, perhaps, be understood as comprehensive terms for the whole Old Testament, but they probably mean the Pentateuch alone, in which both the Egyptian king and the Jews of his realm would feel a special interest. It is probable that the Pentateuch-the Law in the proper sense of the term-was first translated, and afterwards the remaining books. But how long a period of time was thus occupied cannot be determined. Respecting the incorporation into this version of the apocryphal book, see in the appendix to this Part, No. 2. When the translator of the Wisdom of Jesus, son of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), says in his prologue, in immediate connection with his residence and labors in Egypt, that "the law itself and the prophets, and the rest of the books have no small difference [as to force] when read in their own tongue," he plainly refers to the Septuagint version as complete in his day. He visited Egypt "under Euergetes." But to which of the two monarchs who bore that title he refers is uncertain. If to the former, it was between 246-221 B.C.; if to the latter, between 145-116 B.C.

5. The version varies so much in its different parts that it is not easy to give its character as a whole. It is agreed among biblical scholars that the translators of the Pentateuch excelled in ability and fidelity, according to the well-known judgment of {202} Jerome-"which [the books of Moses] we also acknowledge to agree more than the others with the Hebrew." Among the historical books the translations of Samuel and Kings are the most faulty. Those of the prophets are in general poor, especially that of Isaiah. That of Daniel was so faulty that the Christians in later times substituted for it the translation of Theodotion. See below, No. 10. Among the poetical books that of Proverbs is the best. As a whole the Septuagint version cannot for a moment enter into competition with the Hebrew original. Yet, as the most ancient of versions and one which also represents a text much older than the Masoretic, its use is indispensable to every scholar who would study the Old Testament in the original language.

6. Independently of its critical value, the Septuagint must be regarded with deep interest from its close connection with the New Testament. In the days of Christ and his apostles it was known and read throughout the whole Roman empire by the Hellenists; that is, by those Jews and Jewish proselytes who had the Greek civilization and spoke the Greek language. As the Alexandrine

Greek, in which this version was made, was itself pervaded throughout with the Hebrew spirit, and to a great extent also with Hebrew idioms and forms of thought, so was the language of the New Testament, in turn, moulded and shaped by the dialect of the Septuagint, nor can the former be successfully studied except in connection with the latter. Then again the greatest number of quotations in the New Testament from the Old is made from the Septuagint. According to Mr. Greenfield (quoted in Smith's Bible Dict., art. Septuagint) "the number of direct quotations from the Old Testament in the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles, may be estimated at three hundred and fifty, of which not more than fifty materially differ from the seventy. But the indirect verbal allusions would swell the number to a far greater amount." The discussion of the principles upon which the writers of the New Testament quote from the Old belongs to another part of this work. It may be briefly remarked here that they quote in a free spirit, {203} not in that of servile adherence to the letter, aiming to give the substance of the sacred writers' thoughts, rather than an exactly literal rendering of the original word for word. The prophecy of Isaiah, for example (6:9, 10), is six times quoted in the New Testament, wholly or in part, with very free variations of language. Matthew 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40Acts 28:26-27; Romans 11:8. From neither of these quotations, nor from all of them combined, could we draw a critical argument respecting either the Hebrew or Greek text of the passage quoted. Neither can we argue from the exact agreement of a quotation in the New Testament with the Septuagint where that differs from the Hebrew, that the Hebrew text has been corrupted. The New Testament writers are occupied with the spirit of the passages to which they refer, rather than with the letter.

7. The Hebrew text from which the Septuagint version was executed was unpointed and much older than the Masoretic text. Were the version more literal and faithful, and had its text come down to us in a purer form (see below, Chap. 17, No. 2), it would be of great service in settling the exact text of the original Hebrew. With its present character, and in the present condition of its text, it is of but comparatively small value in this respect. Yet its striking agreement with the text of the Samaritan Pentateuch (Ch. 13, No. 8) is a phenomenon worthy of special notice. Biblical scholars affirm that the two agree in more than a thousand places where they differ from the Hebrew. For the probable explanation of this see above, Ch. 14, No. 9. The reader must be on his guard against the error of supposing that these more than a thousand variations from the Hebrew text are of such a nature as to affect seriously the system of doctrines and duties taught in the Pentateuch. They are rather of a critical and grammatical character, changes which leave the substance of revelation untouched. See on this point Ch. 3. There is one striking agreement between the Samaritan text and that of the Septuagint in which many biblical scholars think that the true ancient reading has been preserved. It is that of Genesis 4:8 : "And Cain said to Abel his brother, Let us go out into the field. And it came to pass when they were in the field." etc.

II. OTHER GREEK VERSIONS.

8. In the beginning of Christianity the Septuagint enjoyed, as we have seen, a high reputation among the Jews; and as a {204} natural consequence, among the Jewish converts also, as well as the Gentile Christians. To the great body of Gentile believers it was for the Old Testament the only source of knowledge, as they were ignorant of the Hebrew original. They studied it diligently, and used it efficiently against the unbelieving Jews. Hence there naturally arose in the minds of the latter a feeling of opposition to this version which became very bitter. They began to disparage its authority, and to accuse it of misrepresenting the Hebrew. The next step was to oppose to it

another version made by Aquila, which was soon followed by two others, those of Theodotion and Symmachus.

9. Aquila is represented to have been a Jewish proselyte of Pontus, and to have lived in the second century. His version was slavishly literal, following the Hebrew idiom even where it is contrary to that of the Greek. For this very reason, not withstanding all the barbarisms thus introduced, the Jews highly valued it, calling it the Hebrew verity. All that remains of it to us is contained in the fragments of Origen's Hexapla. See below, No. 12. Had we the whole work, its extremely literal character would give it great value in a critical point of view, as it would shed much light on the state of the Hebrew text when it was executed.

10. Theodotion was, according to Irenæus, an Ephesian. Jerome calls him and Symmachus Ebionites, Judaizing heretics, and semi-Christians. He is supposed to have made his version in the last half of the second century. According to the testimony of the ancients, it had a close resemblance in character to the Septuagint. He seems to have had this version before him, and to have made a free use of it. Of the three later versions, that of Theodotion was most esteemed by the Christians, and they substituted his translation of the book of Daniel for that of the Seventy.

11. Symmachus, called by the church fathers an Ebionite, but by some a Samaritan, seems to have flourished not far from the close of the second century. His version was free, aiming to give the sense rather than the words. His idiom was Hellenistic, {205} and in this respect resembled the Septuagint, from the author's familiarity with which, indeed, it probably took its complexion. Of other ancient Greek versions discovered by Origen in his Eastern travels and made by unknown authors it is not necessary to speak.

12. The text of the Septuagint was never preserved so carefully as that of the Hebrew, and in the days of Origen it had fallen into great confusion. To meet the objections of the Jews, as well as to help believers in their study of the Old Testament, Origen undertook first the work called the Tetrapla (Greek, fourfold), which was followed by the Hexapla (Greek, sixfold). To prepare himself he spent twenty-eight years, travelling extensively and collecting materials. In the Tetrapla, the text of the Septuagint (corrected by manuscripts of itself), and those of Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus were arranged side by side in four parallel columns. In the Hexapla there were six columns-(1) the Hebrew in Hebrew characters; (2) the Hebrew expressed in Greek letters; (3) Aquila; (4) Symmachus; (5) the Septuagint; (6) Theodotion. See Davidson's Bib. Crit., 1, p. 203; Smith's Bib. Diet., 2, p. 1202. In some books he used two other Greek versions, and occasionally even a third, giving in the first case eight, in the second, nine columns.

"The great work," says Davidson, "consisting of nearly fifty volumes; on which he had spent the best years of his life, does not seem to have been transcribed-probably in consequence of its magnitude and the great expense necessarily attending a transcript. It lay unused as a whole fifty years after it was finished, till Eusebius and Pamphilus drew it forth from its concealment in Tyre, and placed it in the library of the latter in Cæsarea. It is thought to have perished there when Cæsarea was taken and plundered by the Saracens, A.D. 653." Bib. Criticism, 1, p. 206. Well did Origen merit by his vast researches and labors the epithet Adamantinus [Adamantine] bestowed on him by the ancients. Fragments of the Hexapla, consisting of extracts made from it by the ancients, have been collected and published in two folio volumes by Montfauçon, Paris, 1713, and reprinted by Bahrdt in two volumes octavo, Leipzig and Lubeck, 1769, 1770. It is the hope of

biblical scholars that these may be enriched from the Nitrian manuscripts. See further, Chap. 28, No. 8.

{206} For the four "Standard Text Editions" of the Septuagint Greek version, with the principal editions founded on them, the reader may consult the Bibliographical List appended to the fourth volume of Home's Introduction, edition of 1860.

III. THE CHALDEE TARGUMS.

13. The Chaldee word Targum means interpretation, and is applied to the translations or paraphrases of the Old Testament in the Chaldee language. When, after the captivity, the Chaldee had supplanted the Hebrew as the language of common life, it was natural that the Jews should desire to have their sacred writings in the language which was to them vernacular. Thus we account, in a natural way, for the origin of these Targums, of which there is a considerable number now extant differing widely in age as well as character. No one of them extends to the whole Old Testament. The question has been raised whether the Targums have for their authors single individuals, or are the embodiment of traditional interpretations collected and revised by one or more persons. Many biblical scholars of the present day incline strongly to the latter view, which is not in itself improbable. But the decision of the question, in the case of each Targum, rests not on theory, but on the character of its contents, as ascertained by careful examination.

14. The first place in worth, and probably in time also, belongs to the Targum on the Pentateuch which bears the name of Onkelos. It is a literal and, upon the whole, an able and faithful version (not paraphrase) of the Hebrew text, written in good Aramæan, and approaching in style to the Chaldee parts of Daniel and Ezra. In those passages which describe God in language borrowed from human attributes (anthropomorphic, describing God in human forms, as having eyes, hands, etc.; anthropopathic, ascribing to God human affections, as repenting, grieving, etc.), the author is inclined to use paraphrases; thus: "And Jehovah smelled a sweet savor" (Genesis 8:21) becomes in this Targum: "And Jehovah received the sacrifice with favor;" and "Jehovah went down to see" (Genesis 11:5), "Jehovah revealed himself." So also strong expressions discreditable {207} to the ancient patriarchs are softened, as: "Rachel took" instead of "Rachel stole." Genesis 31:19. In the poetical passages, moreover, the Targum allows itself more liberty, and is consequently less satisfactory.

According to a Jewish tradition, Onkelos was a proselyte and nephew of the emperor Titus, so that he must have flourished about the time of the destruction of the second temple. But all the notices we have of his person are very uncertain. There is even ground for the suspicion that the above tradition respecting Onkelos relates, by a confusion of persons, to Aquila (Chaldee Akilas), the author of the Greek version already considered. In this case the real author of the Targum is unknown, and we can only say that it should not probably be assigned to a later date than the close of the second century.

15. Next in age and value is the Targum of Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Prophets; that is, according to the Jewish classification (Chap. 13, No. 4), Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve Minor Prophets. In the historical books, this Targum is in the main literal; but in the prophets (in the stricter sense of the term) paraphrastic and allegorical. The Jewish tradition represents that Jonathan wrote the paraphrase of the prophets from the mouth of

Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi; a mere fable. Who was the real author cannot be determined with certainty, only that he lived after the so-called Onkelos.

16. There are two other Targums on the Pentateuch, one of them commonly known as the Targum of the Pseudo-Jonathan (because falsely ascribed to the author of the preceding Targum) and the Jerusalem Targum. The latter is of a fragmentary character; and its agreement with the corresponding passages of the former is so remarkable that it is generally considered as consisting of extracts taken from it with free variations. But according to Davidson (in Alexander's Kitto): "The Jerusalem Targum formed the basis of that of Jonathan; and its own basis was that of Onkelos. Jonathan used both his predecessors' paraphrases; the author of the Jerusalem Targum that of Onkelos alone." The style of Pseudo-Jonathan is barbarous, {208} abounding in foreign words, with the introduction of many legends, fables, and ideas of a later age. He is assigned to the seventh century. Keil, Introduc. to Old Testament, § 189.

17. The Targums on the Hagiographa are all of late date. There is one on Psalms, Job, and Proverbs, the last tolerably accurate and free from legendary and paraphrastic additions; one on the five rolls-Ruth, Esther, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Canticles; which is not a translation, but rather a commentary in the Talmudic style; two on Esther, one on Chronicles. In the present connection, though not belonging properly to the Targums, may be named the Samaritan version of the Samaritan Pentateuch, printed with the originals in the Paris and London Polyglotts. It is a literal translation executed in the spirit of the Targum of Onkelos, and admitting the same class of variations from the letter of the original.

IV. THE SYRIAC PESHITO.

18. This is the oldest version made by Christians from the original Hebrew. The word Peshito signifies simple, indicating that it gives the simple meaning of the original, without paraphrastic and allegorical additions. It is upon the whole an able and faithful version. It often exhibits a resemblance to the Alexandrine version. We may readily suppose that the translator, though rendering from the original Hebrew, was familiar with the Septuagint, and that this exerted upon his work a certain degree of influence. The Peshito was the standard version for the Syriac Christians, being used alike by all parties; a fact which is naturally explained by its high antiquity. If it be of the same date as the New Testament Peshito, it may be placed not far from the close of the second century. The Old Latin, and in connection with this, the Vulgate of Jerome, with some other ancient versions of the Old Testament, will be considered in connection with the New Testament.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin] [BibleVersions]

17. Criticism of the Sacred Text

CHAPTER XVII.

CRITICISM OF THE SACRED TEXT.

1. The only legitimate criticism of the sacred text is that which has for its object to restore it, as far as possible, to its primitive form. Had we the autograph of Moses in the exact form in which he deposited it in the sanctuary (Deuteronomy 31:26), this would be a perfect text; and so of any other book of the Old Testament. In the absence of the autographs, which have all perished, we are still able to establish the form of their text with a reasonable degree of certainty for all purposes of faith and practice. The means of accomplishing this are now to be considered.

2. Here ancient manuscripts hold the first place. It is obvious, however, that in settling the true reading of a given passage we cannot look simply to the number of manuscript testimonies. The quality of the manuscripts must also be taken into account. Here age is of primary importance. Other things being equal, the oldest are the most worthy of credence, as being nearest to the original sources. But, in estimating the testimony of a manuscript, there are other qualities besides age that must be carefully considered-the care of the transcriber; its freedom from interpolations by later hands (which can, however, as a general rule, be easily detected); and especially its independence, that is, its independence as compared with other manuscripts. We may have a group of manuscripts whose peculiar readings mark them as having come from a single source. Properly speaking, their testimony is valid only for the text of their source. The authority of a single independent manuscript may be equal in weight to their combined testimony. Then, again, the character of the different readings must be considered. The easiest reading-that which most {210} naturally suggests itself to the scribe-has less presumption in its favor than a more difficult reading; and that on the simple ground that it is more likely that an easy should have been substituted for a difficult reading than the reverse. There are many other points which would need discussion in a work designed for biblical critics; but for the purposes of this work the above brief hints are sufficient. The Masoretic manuscripts have a great degree of uniformity, and are all comparatively recent. Chap. 14, No. 7. We have reason to believe that the Hebrew text which they exhibit has a good degree of purity. But we cannot consider these manuscripts as so many independent witnesses. The text of the Samaritan Pentateuch is independent of the Masoretic text. Could we believe that we possess it in a tolerably pure form, its critical value would be very great. But, according to the judgment of the best biblical scholars, it has been subjected to so many alterations, that its critical authority is of small account.

3. Next in order come ancient versions, the value of which for critical purposes depends on their character as literal or free, and also upon the state of their text as we possess it. Other things being equal, the authority of a version is manifestly inferior to that of a manuscript of the original. But a version may have been made from a more ancient form of the original text than any which we have in existing manuscripts; and thus it may be indirectly a witness of great value. The extremely literal version of Aquila (Chap. 16, No. 9) was made in the second century. Could we

recover it, its testimony to the Hebrew text, as it then existed, would be of great value. The Septuagint version was made (at least begun) in the third century before Christ. But its free character diminishes, and the impure state of its text greatly injures its critical authority. Of the Targums, those of Onkelos and Jonathan alone are capable of rendering any service in the line of sacred criticism, and this is not of much account.

4. We have also primary-printed editions of the Hebrew Bible-those printed from Hebrew manuscripts, which the reader may see noticed in Horne's Bibliographical List, Appendix {211} to vol. 4. The critical authority of these depends on that of the manuscripts used, which were all of the Masoretic recension.

5. Parallel passages-parallel in a critical and not simply in a historical respect-are passages which profess not merely to give an account of the same transaction, but to repeat the same text. Well known examples are: the song of David recorded in the twenty-second chapter of the second book of Samuel, and repeated as the eighteenth psalm; the fourteenth and fifty-third psalms, etc. Such repetitions possess for every biblical student a high interest. But in the critical use of them great caution is necessary. It must be ascertained, first of all, whether they proceed from the same, or from a different writer. In the latter case they are only historical imitations. If, as in the case of the above-named passages, they manifestly have the same author, the inquiry still remains how the differences arose. They may be different recensions of the same writer (in this case, of David himself), or of another inspired writer, who thus sought to adapt them more perfectly-the fifty-third psalm, for example-to the circumstances of his own day. The gift of inspiration made the later writer, in this respect, coördinate in authority with the earlier.

Historical parallelism, such as those in the books of Chronicles, as compared with the earlier historical books, do not properly belong here. Yet these also sometimes furnish critical help, especially in respect to names and dates.

6. The quotations from the Old Testament in the New have for every believer the highest authority; more, however, in a hermeneutical than a critical respect. For, as already remarked (Chap. 16, No. 6), the New Testament writers quote mostly from the Septuagint, and in a very free way. The whole subject of these quotations will come up hereafter under the head of Biblical Interpretation.

7. Quotations from the Old Testament in the Talmud and later rabbinical writers are another source of sacred criticism. {212} The Talmud, embodying the ecclesiastical and civil law of the Jews according to their traditions, consists of two parts, the Mishna, or text, generally referred to the last half of the second century, and the Gemara, or commentary on the Mishna. The Mishna is one; but connected with this are two Gemaras of later origin; the more copious Babylonian, and the briefer Jerusalem Gemara; whence the distinction of the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud. Whether because the Hebrew text was rigidly settled in its present form in the days of the Talmudists, or because their quotations have been made to agree with the Masorah, an examination of the Talmud furnishes few various readings that are of any importance. Most of them relate to trifling particulars. The quotations of later rabbinical writers are of small account in a critical respect.

8. It remains to speak of critical conjecture. Of this a wise and reverent scholar will make a very cautious use. He will content himself with offering to the public his suggestions, without venturing

to incorporate them into the text itself. The recklessness of some modern critics, who make an abundance of conjectural emendations, and then embody them in their versions, with only a brief note, deserves severe condemnation. Had the ancient critics generally adopted this uncritical method, the sacred text would long ago have fallen into irretrievable confusion.

We add an example where critical conjecture is in place, though it may not venture to alter the established reading. In Psalms 42:1-11, the last clause of verse 6 and the beginning of verse 7, written continuously without a division of words (Chap. 13, No. 5), would read thus:

[Hebrew: ky'od'odnu'sho'tpnyu'lhy'lynpshytshtvhh] With the present division of words:

[Hebrew: ky 'od 'odnu 'sho't pnyu 'lhy 'ly npshy tshtvhh] the clauses are to be translated, as in our version: For I shall yet praise him [for] the salvation of his countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me.

Divided as follows (by the transfer of a single letter to the following word).

{213} [Hebrew: ky 'od 'odnu 'sho't pny u'lhy 'ly npshy tshtvhh] the rendering would be: For I shall yet praise him, [who is] the salvation of my countenance and my God. My soul is cast down within me.

Thus the refrain would agree exactly with the two that follow (ver. 11 and 43:5). Yet this conjecture, however plausible, is uncertain, since we do not know that the sacred writer sought exact uniformity in the three refrains.

9. General remark on the various readings of the sacred text. As a general rule, the various readings with which textual criticism is occupied have respect to minor points-for the most part points of a trivial nature; and even where the variations are of more importance, they are not of such a character as to obscure, much less change, the truths of revelation in any essential respect. Biblical critics tell us, for example, that the Samaritan Pentateuch agrees with the Septuagint version in more than a thousand places where they differ from the Masoretic Hebrew text. Chap. 16, No. 7. Yet these three texts all exhibit the same God, and the same system of doctrines and duties. Revelation does not lie in letters and syllables and grammatical forms, but in the deep and pure and strong and broad current of truth "given by inspiration of God." Reverence for the inspired word makes us anxious to possess the sacred text in all possible purity. Yet if we cannot attain to absolute perfection in this respect, we have reasonable assurance that God, who gave the revelation contained in the Old Testament, has preserved it to us unchanged in any essential particular. The point on which most obscurity and uncertainty rests is that of scriptural chronology; and this is not one that affects Christian faith or practice.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin] [BibleAuthenticity]

18. Books of the Old Testament as a Whole

SECOND DIVISION: PARTICULAR INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AS A WHOLE.

1. The province of Particular Introduction is to consider the books of the Bible separately, in respect to their authorship, date, contents, and the place which each of them holds in the system of divine truth. Here it is above all things important that we begin with the idea of the unity of divine revelation-that all the parts of the Bible constitute a gloriously perfect whole, of which God and not man is the author. No amount of study devoted to a given book or section of the Old Testament, with all the help that modern scholarship can furnish, will give a true comprehension of it, until we understand it in its relations to the rest of Scripture, We cannot, for example, understand the book of Genesis out of connection with the four books that follow, nor the book of Deuteronomy separated from the four that precede. Nor can we fully understand the Pentateuch as a whole except in the light of the historical and prophetical books which follow; for these unfold the divine purpose in the establishment of the Theocracy as recorded in the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch itself gives us only the constitution of the Theocracy. The books that follow, taken in connection with, the New Testament, reveal its office in the plan of redemption; and not till we know this can we be said to have an intelligent comprehension of the theocratic system. The same is true of every other part of revelation. The words of the apostle: "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7), apply to many learned commentaries. Their authors have brought to them much accurate scholarship {215} and research; but they have not seen the unity of divine truth. They have written mainly in an antiquarian spirit and interest, regarding the work under consideration simply as an ancient and venerable record. They have diligently sought for connections in philology, in antiquities, and in history. In these respects they have thrown much light on the sacred text. But they have never once thought of inquiring what place the book which they have undertaken to interpret holds in the divine system of revelation-perhaps have had no faith in such a system. Consequently they cannot unfold to others that which they do not themselves apprehend. On a hundred particulars they may give valuable information, but that which constitutes the very life and substance of the book remains hidden from their view.

2. It is necessary that we understand, first of all, the relation of the Old Testament as a whole to the system of revealed truth. It is a preparatory revelation introductory to one that is final. This the New Testament teaches in explicit terms. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son." Galatians 4:4. Christ could not have come in the days of Enoch before the flood, nor of Abraham after the flood, because "the fulness of the time" had not yet arrived. Nor was the way for his advent prepared in the age of Moses, or David, or Isaiah, or Ezra. The gospel everywhere assumes that when the Saviour appeared, men had attained to a state of comparative maturity in respect to both the knowledge of God and the progress of human society. The attentive reader of the New Testament cannot fail to notice how fully its writers avail themselves of all the revelations which God had made in the Old Testament of himself, of the course of his providence, and of his

purposes towards the human family. The unity of God, especially, is assumed as a truth so firmly established in the national faith of the Jews, that the doctrine of our Lord's deity, and that of the Holy Spirit, can be taught without the danger of its being misunderstood in a polytheistic sense-as if the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were three gods. It is certain that this could not have been done any time before the Babylonish captivity. The idea of vicarious sacrifice, moreover-that great fundamental idea of the gospel that "without shedding of blood there is no remission"-the writers of the {216} New Testament found ready at hand, and in its light they interpreted the mission of Christ. Upon his very first appearance, John the Baptist, his forerunner, exclaimed to the assembled multitudes: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." To the Jew, with his training under the Mosaic system of sacrifices, how significant were these words! Without such a previous training, how meaningless to him and to the world for which Christ died! Then again the gospel, in strong contrast with the Mosaic law, deals in general principles. Herein it assumes a comparative maturity of human thought-a capacity to include many particulars under one general idea. A beautiful illustration of this is our Lord's summary of social duties; "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." Matthew 7:12. We may add (what is indeed implied in the preceding remark) that the gospel required for its introduction a well-developed state of civilization and culture, as contrasted with one of rude barbarism. Now the Hebrews were introduced, in the beginning of their national existence, to the civilization of Egypt; which, with all its defects, was perhaps as good a type as then existed in the world. Afterwards they were brought successively into intimate connection with Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman civilization; particularly with the last two. This was, moreover, at a time when their national training under the Mosaic institutions had given them such maturity of religious character that they were not in danger of being seduced into the idolatrous worship of these nations. Dispersed throughout all the provinces of the Roman empire, they still maintained firmly the religion of their fathers; and their synagogues everywhere constituted central points for the introduction of the gospel, and its diffusion through the Gentile world. Such are some of the many ways in which the world was prepared for the Redeemer's advent. This is a vast theme, on which volumes could be written. The plan of the present work will only admit of the above brief hints.

{217} Our Lord's command is: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The history of missions shows that the gospel can be preached with success to the most degraded tribes-to the Hottentots of South Africa and the cannibals of the South sea islands, and that this is the only remedy for their barbarism. But the gospel did not begin among savages, nor does it have its centres of power and influence among them. Christ came at the culminating point of ancient civilization and culture; not that he might conform his gospel to existing institutions and ideas, but that he might through his gospel infuse into them (as far as they contained elements of truth) the purifying and transforming leaven of divine truth. As the gospel began in the midst of civilization, so does its introduction among barbarous tribes always bring civilization in its train.

3. When we have learned to regard the revelation of which we have a record in the Old Testament as preparatory to the gospel, we see it in its true light. This view furnishes both the key to its character and the answer to the objections commonly urged against it. It is not a revelation of abstract truths. These would neither have excited the interest of the people, nor have been apprehended by them. God made known to the covenant people his character and the duties

which he required of them by a series of mighty acts and a system of positive laws. The Old Testament, is, therefore, in an eminent degree documentary-a record not simply of opinions, but rather of actions and institutions. Of these actions and institutions we are to judge from the character of the people and the age in connection with the great end proposed by God. This end was not the material prosperity of Israel, but the preparation of the nation for its high office as the medium through which the gospel should afterwards be given to the world. The people were rebellious and stiff-necked, and surrounded by polytheism and idolatry. Their training required severity, and all the severity employed by God brought forth at last its appropriate fruits. The laws imposed upon them were stern and burdensome from their multiplicity. But no one can show that in either of these respects they could have been wisely modified; for the nation was then in its childhood and pupilage (Galatians 4:1-3), and needed to be treated accordingly.

{218} An objection much insisted on by some is the exclusive character of the Mosaic institutions-a religion, it is alleged, for only one nation, while all the other nations were left in ignorance. To this a summary answer can be given. In selecting Israel as his covenant people, God had in view the salvation of the whole world: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3)-such was the tenor of the covenant from the beginning. His plan was to bring one nation into special relation to himself, establish in it the true religion, prepare it for the advent of Christ, and then propagate the gospel from it as a centre throughout all nations. If men are to be dealt with in a moral way, as free, responsible subjects of law (and this is the only way in which God deals with men under a system of either natural or revealed religion), can the objector propose any better way? He might as well object to the procedure of a military commander that, instead of spreading his army over a whole province, he concentrates it on one strong point. Let him wait patiently, and he will find that in gaining this point the commander gains the whole country.

4. Having seen the relation of the Old Testament as a whole to the system of divine revelation, we are now prepared to consider the place occupied by its several divisions.

(1.) To prepare the way for our Lord’s advent, one nation was to be selected and trained up under a system of divine laws and ordinances-the theocracy established under Moses. The Pentateuch records the establishment of the theocracy, with the previous steps that led to it, and the historical events immediately connected with. it. Hence the five books of Moses are called emphatically the Law; and as such, their province in the Old Testament is clear and well defined.

(2.) The end of the Mosaic law being the preparation of the Israelitish people, and through them the world, for Christ’s advent, it was not the purpose of God that it should be hidden as a dead letter beside the ark in the inner sanctuary. It was a code for practice, not for theory. It contained the constitution of the state, civil as well as religious; and {219} God’s almighty power and faithfulness were pledged that it should accomplish in a thorough way the office assigned to it. The theocracy must therefore have a history; and with the record of this the historical books are occupied.

(3.) God did not leave the development of this history to itself. He watched over it from the beginning, and directed its course, interposing from time to time, not only in a providential way, but also by direct revelation. Sometimes, for specific ends, he revealed himself immediately to particular individuals, as to Gideon, and Manoah and his wife. But more commonly his revelations were made to the rulers or people at large through persons selected as the organs of his Spirit;

that is, through prophets. The prophet held his commission immediately from God. Since God is the author, not of confusion, but of order, he came to the people under the Law, not above it; and his messages were to be tried by the Law. Deuteronomy 13:1-5. No prophet after Moses enjoyed the same fulness of access to God which was vouchsafed to him, or received the same extent of revelation. Numb. 12:6-8; Deuteronomy 34:10-12. Nevertheless, the prophet came to rulers and people, like Moses, with an authority derived immediately from God, introducing his messages with the words: "Thus saith the Lord." In God's name he rebuked the people for their sins; explained to them the true cause of the calamities that befell them; recalled them to God's service as ordained in the Law, unfolding to them at the same time its true nature as consisting in the spirit, and not in the letter only- 1 Samuel 15:22; Isaiah 1:11-20; Isaiah 57:15; Isaiah 66:2; Jeremiah 4:4; Ezekiel 18:31; Hosea 10:12; Hosea 14:2; Joel 2:12-13; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8 -denounced upon them the awful judgments of God as the punishment of continued disobedience; and promised them the restoration of his favor upon condition of hearty repentance. In the decline of the Theocracy, it was the special province of the prophets to comfort the pious remnant of God's people by unfolding to them the future glory of Zion-the true "Israel of God," and her dominion over all the earth. From about the reign of Uzziah and onward, as {220} already remarked (ch. 15. 12), the prophets began, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to reduce their prophecies to writing, and thus arose the series of prophetical books that form a prominent part of the Old Testament canon. Their office is at once recognized by every reader as distinct from that of either the Pentateuch or the historical books; although these latter were, as a general rule, written by prophets also.

(4.) There is a class, more miscellaneous in character, that may be described in general terms as the poetical books, in which the elements of meditation and reflection predominate. It includes the book of Job, which has for its theme divine providence, as viewed from the position of the Old Testament; the book of Psalms, that wonderful treasury of holy thought and feeling embodied in sacred song for the use of God's people in all ages; the book of Proverbs, with its inexhaustible treasures of practical wisdom; the book of Ecclesiastes, having for its theme the vanity of this world when sought as a satisfying good; and the book of Canticles, which the church has always regarded as a mystical song having for its ground-idea, under the Old Testament, that God is the husband of Zion, and under the New, that the church is the bride of Christ. How high a place this division of the canon holds in the system of divine revelation every pious heart feels instinctively. Without it, the revelation of the Old Testament could not have been complete for the work assigned to it.

5. We have seen the relation of the Old Testament as a whole to the entire system of revelation, and also the place occupied by its several divisions. It will further appear, as we proceed, that each particular book in these divisions contributes its share to the perfection of the whole.

6. Although the revelation contained in the Old Testament was preparatory to the fuller revelation of the New, we must guard against the error of supposing that it had not a proper significance and use for the men of its own time. "Unto us," says the apostle, "was the gospel preached, as well as unto them." Hebrews 4:2. And again: "These all died in faith, not {221} having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better tiling for us,

that they without us should not be made perfect." Hebrews 11:13; Hebrews 11:39-40 They had a part of the truth, but not its fulness; and the measure of revelation vouchsafed to them was given for their personal salvation, as well as to prepare the way for further revelations. The promise made to Abraham-"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"-was fulfilled in Christ. In this respect Abraham "received not the promise." Nevertheless, it was a promise made for his benefit, as well as for that of future ages. Into the bosom of the patriarch it brought light and joy and salvation. "Your father Abraham," said Jesus, "rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad." John 8:56. "He believed in the Lord," says the inspired record, "and he counted it to him for righteousness." Genesis 15:6. The deliverance of Israel from Egypt typified the redemption of Christ; and it was, moreover, one of the grand movements that prepared the way for his advent. But it was neither all type nor all preparation. To the covenant people of that day it was a true deliverance; and to the believing portion of them, a deliverance of soul as well as of body. "The law," says Paul, "was our school-master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Galatians 3:24. But while it had this preparatory office, it was to the Israelitish nation a true rule of life; and under it many, through faith, anticipated its end. The prophets prophesied for the men of their own age, as well as for distant generations. The sweet psalmist of Israel, while he foreshadowed the Messiah’s reign, sung for the comfort and edification of himself and his contemporaries; and Solomon gave rules of practical wisdom as valid for his day as for ours. The revelation of the Old Testament was not complete, like that which we now possess; but it was sufficient for the salvation of every sincere inquirer after truth. {222} When the rich man in hell besought Abraham that Lazarus might be sent to warn his five brethren on the ground that, if one went to them from the dead they would repent, Abraham answered: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

7. There is another practical error against which Christians of the present day need to be warned. It is the idea that the full revelation of the New Testament supersedes in a great measure the necessity of studying the previous revelation contained in the Old Testament. Few will openly avow this, but too many inwardly cherish the delusion in a vague and undefined form; and it exerts a pernicious influence upon them, leading them to undervalue and neglect the Old Testament Scriptures. Even if the idea under consideration were in accordance with truth, it would still be to every earnest Christian a matter of deep historical interest to study the way by which God prepared the world for the full light of the gospel. But it is not true. It rests on a foundation of error and delusion. For, (1.) The system of divine revelation constitutes a whole, all the parts of which are connected, from beginning to end, so that no single part can be truly understood without a knowledge of all the rest. The impenetrable darkness that rests on some portions of Scripture has its ground in the fact that the plan of redemption is not yet completed. The mighty disclosures of the future can alone dissipate this darkness.

"God is his own interpreter, And he will make it plain."

(2.) We know that the writers of the New Testament constantly refer to the Old for arguments and illustrations. A knowledge of the Old Testament is necessary, therefore, for a full comprehension of their meaning. How can the reader, for example, understand the epistles to the Romans and Galatians, or that to the Hebrews, without a thorough acquaintance with "Moses and the prophets," to which these epistles have such constant reference? (3.) The Old Testament is occupied with the record of God’s dealings with men. Such a record must {223} be a perpetual

revelation of God’s infinite attributes, and of human character also, and the course of human society, every part of which is luminous with instruction. (4.) Although the old theocracy, with its particular laws and forms of worship, has passed away, yet the principles on which it rested, which interpenetrated it in every part, and which shone forth with a clear light throughout its whole history-these principles are eternal verities, as valid for us as for the ancient patriarchs. Some of these principles-for example, God’s unity, personality, and infinite perfections; his universal providence; his supremacy over all nations; the tendency of nations to degeneracy, and the stern judgments employed by God to reclaim them-are so fully unfolded in the Old Testament that they needed no repetition in the New. There they became axioms rather than doctrines. (5.) "The manifold wisdom of God" in adapting his dealings with men to the different stages of human progress cannot be seen without a diligent study of the Old Testament as well as the New. Whoever neglects the former, will want breadth and comprehensiveness of Christian culture. All profound Christian writers have been well versed in "the whole instrument of each Testament," as Tertullian calls the two parts of revelation. Chap. 13, No. 2.

Modern skepticism begins with disparaging the Old Testament, and ends with denying the divine authority of both the Old and the New. In this work it often unites a vast amount of learning in regard to particulars with principles that are superficial and false.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin] [BibleAuthenticity]

19. The Pentateuch

CHAPTER XIX. THE PENTATEUCH.

1. The unity of the Pentateuch has already been considered (Ch. 9, No. 12), and will appear more fully as we proceed with the examination of the separate books included in it. Even if we leave out of view the authority of the New Testament, this unity is too deep and fundamental to allow of the idea that it is a patchwork of later ages. Under divine guidance the writer goes steadily forward from beginning to end, and his work when finished is a symmetrical whole. Even its apparent incongruities, like the interweaving of historical notices with the laws, are marks of its genuineness; for they prove that, in those parts at least, events were recorded as they transpired. Such a blending of history with revelation does not impair the unity of the work; for it is a unity which has its ground not in severe logical arrangement and classification, but in a divine plan historically developed. Whether the division of the Pentateuch into five books (whence its Greek name Pentateuchos, fivefold book) was original, proceeding from the author himself, or the work of a later age, is a question on which biblical scholars are not agreed. It is admitted by all that the division is natural and appropriate. The Hebrew titles of the several books are taken from prominent words standing at or near the beginning of each. The Greek names are expressive of their prominent contents; and these are followed in the Latin Vulgate and in our English version, only that the name of the fourth book is translated.

I.Genesis 2:1-25. The Hebrews name this book Bereshith, in the beginning, from the first word. Its Greek name Genesis signifies generation, {225} genealogy. As the genealogical records with which the book abounds contain historical notices, and are, in truth, the earliest form of history, the word is applied to the history of the creation, and of the ancient patriarchs, as well as to the genealogical lists of their families. Genesis 2:4; Genesis 25:19; Genesis 37:2 etc. In the same wide sense is it applied to the book itself.

3. Genesis is the introductory book to the Pentateuch, without which our understanding of the following books would be incomplete. Let us suppose for a moment that we had not this book. We open the book of Exodus and read of "the children of Israel which came into Egypt;" that "Joseph was in Egypt already," and that "there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." Who were these children of Israel? we at once ask; and how did they come to be in Egypt? Who was Joseph? and what is the meaning of the notice that the new king knew not Joseph? All these particulars are explained in the book of Genesis, and without them we must remain in darkness. But the connection of this book with the following is not simply explanatory; it is organic also, entering into the very substance of the Pentateuch. We are told (Exodus 2:24-25) that God heard the groaning of his people in Egypt, and "God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob; and God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them." The remembrance of his covenant with their fathers is specified as the ground of his interposition. Now the covenant made with Abraham, and afterwards renewed to Isaac and Jacob, was not a mere incidental event in the history of the patriarchs and their posterity. It constituted the

very essence of God’s peculiar relation to Israel; and, as such, it was the platform on which the whole theocracy was afterwards erected. The nation received the law at Sinai in pursuance of the original covenant made with their fathers; and unless we understand the nature of this covenant, we fail to understand the meaning and end of the law itself. The very information which we need is contained in Genesis; for from {226} the twelfth chapter onward this book is occupied with an account of this covenant, and of God’s dealings with the patriarchs in connection with it. The story of Joseph, which unites such perfect simplicity with such deep pathos, is not thrown in as a pleasing episode. Its end is to show how God accomplished his purpose, long before announced to Abraham (ch. 15:13), that the Israelites should be "a stranger in a land not theirs." But the Abrahamic covenant itself finds its explanation in the previous history. For two thousand years God had administered the government of the world without a visible church. And what was the result? Before the flood the degeneracy of the human family was universal. God, therefore, swept them all away, and began anew with Noah and his family. But the terrible judgment of the deluge was not efficacious to prevent the new world from following the example of the old. In the days of Abraham the worship of God had been corrupted through polytheism and idolatry, and ignorance and wickedness were again universal. The time had manifestly come for the adoption of a new economy, in which God should, for the time being, concentrate his special labors upon a single nation but with ultimate reference to the salvation of the whole world. Thus we have in the book of Genesis in a certain measure (for we may not presume to speak of God’s counsels as fully apprehended by us) an explanation of the Abrahamic covenant, and, in this, of the Mosaic economy also.

4. In accordance with the above view, the book of Genesis falls into two unequal, but natural divisions. The first part extends through eleven chapters, and is occupied with the history of the human family as a whole. It is the oldest record in existence, and its contents are perfectly unique. It describes in brief terms: the order of creation; the institution of the Sabbath and marriage; the probation to which man was subjected, with its disastrous result in his fall and expulsion from Eden; the murder of Abel by Cain, and, in connection with this, the division of mankind into two families; man’s universal {227} degeneracy; the deluge; the covenant made by God with the earth through Noah, and the law of murder; the confusion of tongues at Babel, and the consequent dispersion of the different families of men, a particular account of which is given by way of anticipation in the tenth chapter. In addition to these notices there are two genealogical tables; the first from Adam to Noah (ch. 5), the second from Shem to Abraham (ch. 11). The second part comprises the remainder of the book. In this we have no longer a history of the whole race, but of Abraham’s family, with only incidental notices of the nations into connection with whom Abraham and his posterity were brought. It opens with an account of the call of Abraham and the covenant made with him; notices the repeated renewal of this covenant to Abraham, with the institution of the rite of circumcision; its subsequent renewal to Isaac and Jacob; and the exclusion, first of Ishmael and afterwards of Esau, from a share in its privileges. In immediate connection with the covenant relation into which God took Abraham and his family, we have the history of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, sometimes with much detail, but always with reference to the peculiar prerogative conferred upon them. The book closes with an account of the wonderful train of providences by which Israel was brought into Egypt.

Though Ishmael and Esau were excluded from the covenant, yet, apparently in consequence of their near relation to the patriarchs, genealogical tables are devoted to them; to Ishmael, ch. 25:12-18; to Esau, the whole of ch. 36.

5. The Mosaic authorship of Genesis has already been considered; and, in connection with this, the question whether the Pentateuch, and especially Genesis, contains any clauses of a later date, Ch. 9, No. 11. Some, as Hengstenberg and his followers, deny the existence of such clauses; but others think that a few must be admitted, which were afterwards added, as needful explanations, by prophetical men. We are at liberty {228} to decide either way concerning them according to the evidence before us. On the question whether Moses made use of earlier written documents, see Ch. 9, No. 11. The clauses for which a later date can with any show of reason be claimed are few in number, and none of them enter essentially into the texture of the book. They are just such extraneous remarks as the necessities of a later age required; for example, Genesis 36:31; Exodus 16:35. On the last of these, Graves, who considers it "plainly a passage inserted by a later hand," says: "I contend that the insertion of such notes rather confirms than impeaches the integrity of the original narrative. If this were a compilation long subsequent to the events it records" (according to the false assumption of some respecting the origin of the Pentateuch), "such additions would not have been plainly distinguishable, as they now are, from the main substance of the original." On the Pentateuch, Appendix, sec. 1, No. 13.

6. The contents of the first part of this book are peculiar. It is not strange, therefore, that we should encounter difficulties in the attempt to interpret them. To consider these difficulties in detail would be to write a commentary on the first eleven chapters. Only some general remarks can here be offered. Some difficulties are imaginary, the inventions of special pleading. In these the commentaries of modern rationalists abound. They are to be set aside by fair interpretation. But other difficulties are real, and should not be denied or ignored by the honest expositor. If he can give a valid explanation of them, well and good; but if not, let him reverently wait for more light, in the calm assurance that the divine authority of the Pentateuch rests on a foundation that cannot be shaken. To deny a well-authenticated narrative of facts on the ground of unexplained difficulties connected with it is to build on a foundation of error.

(A.) Of the difficulties connected with the first part of Genesis some are scientific. Such is the narrative of the creation of the world in six days. Respecting this it has already been remarked (Ch. 10, No. 3) that with all who believe in the reality of divine revelation the question is not respecting the truth of this narrative, but respecting the interpretation of it. As long ago as the time of Augustine the question was raised whether these days {229} are to be understood literally, or symbolically of long periods of time. The latter was his view, and it is strengthened by the analogy of the prophetic days of prophecy.

Another difficulty relates to the age of the antediluvian patriarchs, which was about tenfold the present term of life for robust and healthful men. According to the laws of physiology we must suppose that the period of childhood and youth was protracted in a corresponding manner; since in man, as in all the higher animals, the time of physical growth-physical growth in the widest sense, the process of arriving at physical maturity-has a fixed relation to the whole term of existence. After the deluge, in some way not understood by us, the whole course of human life began to be gradually quickened-to run its round in a shorter time-till the age of man was at last

reduced to its present measure. All that we can say here is that we do not know how God accomplished this result. He accomplished it in a secret and invisible way, as he does so many other of his operations in nature. On the discrepancy between the Masoretic Hebrew text, the text of the Samaritan Pentateuch, and that of the Septuagint, in respect to the genealogical tables in Genesis, see below. The unity of the human race is everywhere assumed in Scripture. Some modern scientific men have denied this, but their arguments for a diversity of origin do not amount to positive proof. They are theoretic rather than demonstrative, and the weight of evidence is against them. We must remember, moreover, that man lives under a supernatural dispensation. The narrative in the eleventh chapter of Genesis seems to imply that God interposed miraculously to confound human speech, in accordance with his plan to scatter men "abroad upon the face of all the earth." In like manner he may have interposed in a secret way to intensify the diversity in the different races of men. It does not appear certain, however, on physiological grounds, that any miraculous interposition was needed; and we may leave the question of the manner in which the present diversity among the children of Adam was produced among the secret things of which it is not necessary that we should have an explanation. The question of the universality of the deluge is with believers in revelation one of words only, on which it is hardly necessary to waste time. The end of the deluge was the complete destruction of the human race, all but Noah and his family. This it accomplished, and why need we raise any further inquiries; as, for example, whether the polar lands, where no man has ever trod, were submerged also? "All the high hills under the whole heaven" doubtless included all the high hills where man lived, and which, therefore, were known to man.

(B.) Another class of difficulties is historical, consisting in alleged inconsistencies and disagreements between different parts of the narrative. For the details of these, the reader must be referred to the commentaries. {230} One or two only can be noticed as specimens of the whole. It is said that the second account of the creation (Genesis 2:4-25) is inconsistent with the first; the order of creation in the first being animals, then man; in the second, man, then animals. But the answer is obvious. In the first account, the order of succession in the several parts of creation is one of the main features. It distinctly announces that, after God had finished the rest of his works, he made man in his own image. The second account, on the other hand, which is introductory to the narrative of man’s sin and expulsion from Eden, takes no notice of the order of creation in its several parts. In this, man is the central object, and other things are mentioned incidentally in their relation to man. The writer has no occasion to speak of trees good for food till a home is sought for Adam; nor of beasts and birds till a companion is needed for him. Then each of these things is mentioned in connection with him. No candid interpreter can infer from this that the second account means to give, as the veritable order of creation-man, the garden of Eden, beasts and birds! A difficulty has been alleged, also, in regard to Cain’s wife. But this grows simply out of the brevity of the sacred narrative. The children of Adam must have intermarried, brothers and sisters. The fact that no daughter is mentioned as born to Adam before Seth, is no evidence against the birth of daughters long before. In the fourth chapter no individuals are mentioned except for special reasons-Cain and Abel, with a genealogical list of Cain’s family to Lamech, because he was the head of one branch of the human race before the deluge. In the fifth chapter none are named but sons in the line of Noah, with the standing formula of "sons and daughters" born afterwards. We are not to infer from this that no sons or daughters were born before; otherwise we should exclude Cain and Abel themselves. At the time of the murder of Abel, the two brothers were adult men.

What was their age we cannot tell. It may have been a hundred years or more; for our first parents were created not infants, but in the maturity of their powers, and Adam was one hundred and thirty years old when the next son after Abel's murder was born. Genesis 4:25. At all events, the interval between Abel's birth and death must have been long, and we cannot reasonably suppose that during this period no daughters were born to Adam.

(C.) The chronology of the book of Genesis involves, as is well known, some difficult questions. In the genealogical tables contained in the fifth and eleventh chapters, the texts of the Masoretic Hebrew (which is followed in our version), Hebrew-Samaritan, and Septuagint, differ in a remarkable manner.

(1.) Antediluvian Genealogy. According to the Septuagint, no patriarch has a son before the age of one hundred years. It adds to the age of each of the five patriarchs that preceded Jared, and also to the age of Enoch, {231} one hundred years before the birth of his son, deducting the same from his life afterwards. To the age of Lamech it adds six years before the birth of Noah, deducting thirty years afterwards. In respect to the age of Methuselah when Lamech was born, there is a difference of twenty years between the Vatican and the Alexandrine manuscripts. The latter agrees with the Masoretic text: the former gives one hundred and sixty-seven instead of one hundred and eighty-seven. Thus the Septuagint makes the period from the creation to the deluge 2262 years (according to the Vatican manuscript 2242 years) against the 1656 of our Masoretic text. The Samaritan-Hebrew text agrees with the Masoretic for the first five patriarchs and for Enoch. From the age of Jared it deducts one hundred years; from that of Methuselah one hundred and twenty (one hundred according to the Vatican manuscript of the Septuagint); and from that of Lamech, one hundred and twenty-nine-three hundred and forty-nine years in all-before the birth of their respective sons. This places the deluge in the year of the world 1307.

(2.) Genealogy from Noah to Abraham. Chap. 11. Here the Samaritan-Hebrew and the Septuagint (which Josephus follows with some variations) give a much longer period than the Masoretic text. They both add to the age of each of the six patriarchs after Shem one hundred years before the birth of his son. To the age of Nahor the Samaritan-Hebrew adds fifty, and the Septuagint one hundred and fifty years. The latter also inserts after Arphaxad a Cainan who was one hundred and thirty years old at the birth of Salah. In respect to the variations in these two genealogical tables (chaps. 5 and 11) it is to be remarked: (1) that the authority of the Masoretic text is, on general grounds, higher than that of the Septuagint or Samaritan Pentateuch; (2) that in the present case there is reason to suspect systematic change in these two latter texts; strong external corroboration alone could warrant us in adopting the longer chronology of the Septuagint; (3) that any uncertainty which may rest on the details of numbers in the Pentateuch ought not to affect our confidence in the Mosaic record as a whole, for here, as it is well known, there is a peculiar liability to variations. With these brief remarks we must dismiss this subject. The reader will find the question of scriptural chronology discussed at large in the treatises devoted to the subject. For more compendious views, see in Alexander's Kitto and Smith's Dictionary of the Bible the articles entitled Chronology.

II.Exodus 7:1-25. The Hebrew name of this book is: Ve-elle shemoth, Now these [are] the names; or more briefly: Shemoth, names. The {232} word Exodus (Greek Exodos, whence the Latin Exodus) signifies going forth, departure, namely, of Israel from Egypt. With the book of Exodus

begins the history of Israel as a nation. It has perfect unity of plan and steady progress from beginning to end. The narrative of the golden calf is no exception; for this records in its true order an interruption of the divine legislation. The book consists of two parts essentially connected with each other. The contents of the first part (chaps. 1-18) are briefly the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and their journey to Sinai, as preparatory to their national covenant with God there. More particularly this part contains: (1) an account of the multiplication of the people in Egypt; their oppression by the Egyptians; the birth and education of Moses, his abortive attempt to interpose in behalf of his people, his flight to Midian, and his residence there forty years (chaps. 1, 2); (2) God's miraculous appearance to Moses at Horeb under the name JEHOVAH; his mission to Pharaoh for the release of Israel, in which Aaron his brother was associated with him; the execution of this mission, in the progress of which the Egyptians were visited with a succession of plagues, ending in the death of all the first-born of man and beast in Egypt; the final expulsion of the people, and in connection with this the establishment of the feast of the passover and the law respecting the first-born of man and beast (chaps. 3-13); (3) the journey of the Israelites to the Red sea under the guidance of a cloudy pillar; their passage through it, with the overthrow of Pharaoh's host; the miraculous supply of manna and of water; the fight with Amalek, and Jethro's visit to Moses. The second part contains the establishment of the Mosaic economy with its tabernacle and priesthood. At Sinai God enters into a national covenant with the people, grounded on the preceding Abrahamic covenant; promulgates in awful majesty the ten commandments, which he afterwards writes on two tables of stone, and adds a code of civil regulations. Chaps. 19-23. The covenant is then written and solemnly ratified by the blood of sacrifices. Chap. 24. After this follows a direction which {233} contains in itself the whole idea of the sanctuary: "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." Chap. 25:8. The remainder of the book is mainly occupied with the structure of the tabernacle and its furniture, and the establishment of the Levitical priesthood. Directions are given for the priestly garments, and the mode of inauguration is prescribed; but the inauguration itself belongs to the following book. The narrative is interrupted by the sin of the people in the matter of the golden calf, with the various incidents and precepts connected with it (chaps. 32-34), and a repetition of the law of the Sabbath is added. Chap. 31:12-17. The office, then, which the book of Exodus holds in the Pentateuch is definite and clear.

8. With regard to the time of the sojourn in Egypt, two opinions are held among biblical scholars. The words of God to Abraham: "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years," "but in the fourth generation they shall come hither again" (Genesis 15:13; Genesis 15:16); and also the statement of Moses: "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years" (Exodus 12:40), seem to imply that they spent four hundred and thirty years in Egypt (a round number being put in the former passage for the more exact specification of the latter). It has been thought, also, that the vast increase of the people in Egypt-to six hundred thousand men (Exodus 12:37), which shows that the whole number of souls was over two millions-required a sojourn of this length. On the other hand, the apostle Paul speaks of the law as given "four hundred and thirty years after" the promise to Abraham. Galatians 3:17. In this he follows the Jewish chronology, which is also that of the Septuagint and Samaritan Pentateuch, for they read in Exodus 12:40 : "who dwelt in Egypt and in the land of Canaan." The words, "in the land of Canaan," are undoubtedly an added gloss; but the question still remains whether they are not a correct gloss. The genealogy of Levi's family (Exodus 6:16-20) {234} decidedly favors the

interpretation, which divides the period of four hundred and thirty years between Egypt and the land of Canaan. To make this table consistent with a sojourn of four hundred and thirty years in Egypt, it would be necessary to assume, with some, that it is an epitome, not a full list, which does not seem probable.

Before we can draw any certain argument from the increase of the people in Egypt, we must know the basis of calculation. It certainly includes not only the seventy male members of Jacob's family, with their wives and children, but also the families of their male-servants (circumcised according to the law, Genesis 17:12-13, and therefore incorporated with the covenant people). From the notices contained in Genesis, we learn that the families of the patriarchs were very numerous. Genesis 14:14; Genesis 26:14; Genesis 32:10; Genesis 36:6-7. If Abraham was able to arm three hundred and eighteen "trained servants born in his own house," how large an aggregate may we reasonably assume for the servants connected with Jacob's family, now increased to seventy male souls? We must not think of Jacob going into Egypt as a humble personage. He was a rich and prosperous emir, with his children and grandchildren, and a great train of servants. With the special blessing of God upon his children and all connected with them, we need find no insuperable difficulty in their increase to the number mentioned at the exodus.

Provision was made in a miraculous way for the sustenance of the Israelites in the wilderness. The question has been raised: How were their flocks and herds provided for? In answer to this, the following remarks are in point: (1.) We are not to understand the word "wilderness" of an absolutely desolate region. It affords pasturage in patches. Robinson describes Wady Feiran, northwest of Sinai, as well watered, with gardens of fruit and palm trees; and he was assured by the Arabs that in rainy seasons grass springs up over the whole face of the desert. The whole northeastern part of the wilderness, where the Israelites seem to have dwelt much of the thirty-eight years, is capable of cultivation, and is still cultivated by the Arabs in patches. (2.) The Israelites undoubtedly marched not in a direct line, but from pasture to pasture, as the modern Arabs do, and spreading themselves out over the adjacent region. When Moses besought his father-in-law not to leave him, but to go with him that he might be to the people instead of eyes (Numb. 10:31), we may well suppose that he had in view Hobab's knowledge of the places where water and pasturage were to be found. (3.) There is decisive evidence that this region was once better watered than it is now, and more fruitful. The planks of acacia-wood, the shittim-wood, which were employed in the construction {235} of the tabernacle, were a cubit and a half in width; that is, in English measure, something more than two and a half feet. No acacia-trees of this size are now found in that region. The cutting away of the primitive forests seems to have been followed, as elsewhere, by a decrease in the amount of rain. But, however this may be, we know that, for some reason, this part of Arabia was once more fertile and populous. In its northeastern part are extensive ruins of former habitations, and enclosed fields. The same is true of the region around Beersheba and south of it. Here Robinson found ruins of former cities, as Eboda and Elusa. Of the latter place he says: "Once, as we judged upon the spot, this must have been a city of not less than twelve or fifteen thousand inhabitants. Now, it is a perfect field of ruins, a scene of unutterable desolation; across which the passing stranger can with difficulty find his way." Vol. 1, p. 197. And of Eboda, farther south: "The large church marks a numerous Christian population." "But the desert has resumed its rights; the intrusive hand of cultivation has been driven back; the race that dwelt here have perished; and their works now look abroad in loneliness and silence over

the mighty waste." Vol. 1, p. 194. Ritter, the most accomplished of modern geographers, affirms that from the present number of the thin and negligent population, we can draw no certain conclusion respecting the former condition of the country. Erdkunde, vol. 14, p. 927. Of the numerous objections urged by Colenso against the Pentateuch, and the book of Exodus in particular, many are imaginary, and vanish upon the fair interpretation of the passages in question. Others, again, rest on false assumptions in regard to facts. For the details, the reader is referred to the works written in reply.

III.Leviticus 9:1-24. The Hebrews call this book Vayyikra, and [God] called. Later Jewish designations are, the law of priests, and the law of offerings. The Latin name Leviticus (from the Greek Leuitikon, Levitical, pertaining to the Levites) indicates that its contents relate to the duties of the Levites, in which body are included all the priests. The book of Leviticus is immediately connected with that which precedes, and follows in the most natural order. The tabernacle having been reared up and its furniture arranged, the services pertaining to it are next ordained, and in connection with these, various regulations, most of which come within the sphere of the priestly office. Hence we have (1) the law for the various offerings, followed by an account of the {236} anointing of the tabernacle, and the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priestly office, with the death of Nadab and Abihu for offering strange fire before the Lord (chaps. 1-10); (2) precepts concerning clean and unclean beasts, and cleanness and uncleanness in men from whatever source, followed by directions for the annual hallowing of the sanctuary on the great day of atonement, and also in respect to the place where animals must be slain, and the disposition to be made of their blood (chaps. 11-17); (3) laws against sundry crimes, which admitted, in general, of no expiation, but must be visited with the penalty of the law (chaps. 18-20); (4) various ordinances pertaining to the purity of the priestly office, the character of the sacrifices, the yearly festivals, the arrangements for the sanctuary, etc., with the law for the sabbatical year and the year of jubilee (chaps. 22-26:2); (5) a wonderful prophetic chapter, announcing for all coming ages the blessings that should follow obedience, and the curses which disobedience should bring upon the people (chap. 26:3-46). There is added, as a sort of appendix, a chapter concerning vows and tithes. Chap. 27.

10. The priestly office, with its sacrifices, was the central part of the Mosaic economy, for it prefigured Christ our great High Priest, with his all-perfect sacrifice on Calvary for the sins of the world. On this great theme much remains to be said in another place. It is sufficient to remark here that the book of Leviticus gives the divine view of expiation. If the expiations of the Levitical law were typical, the types were true figures of the great Antitype, which is Jesus Christ, "the Lamb of God. which taketh away the sin of the world." No view of his death can be true which makes these types empty and unmeaning.

IV.Numbers 11:1-35. Bemidhbar, in the wilderness, is the Hebrew name of this book, taken from the fifth word in the original. It is also called from the first word Vayyedhabber, and [God] spake. The {237} English version, after the example of the Latin, translates the Greek name Arithmoi, numbers, a title derived from the numbering of the people at Sinai, with which the book opens, and which is repeated on the plains of Moab. Chap. 26. This book records the journeyings of the Israelites from Sinai to the borders of the promised land, and their sojourn in the wilderness of Arabia, with the various incidents that befell them, and the new ordinances that were from time to time added, as occasion required. It embraces a period of thirty-eight years, and its contents are

necessarily of a very miscellaneous character. The unity of the book is chronological, history and legislation alternating with each other in the order of time. A full enumeration of the numerous incidents which it records, and of the new ordinances from time to time enacted, is not necessary. In the history of these thirty-eight years we notice three salient points or epochs. The first is that of the departure from Sinai. Of the preparations for this, with the order of the march and whatever pertained to it, a full account is given. Then follow the incidents of the journey to the wilderness of Paran, with some additional laws. Chaps. 1-12. The second epoch is that of the rebellion of the people upon the report of the twelve spies whom Moses had sent to search out the land, for which sin the whole generation that came out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, was rejected and doomed to perish in the wilderness. Chaps. 13, 14. This was in the second year of the exodus. Of the events that followed to the thirty-eighth year of the exodus, we have only a brief notice. With the exception of the punishment of the Sabbath-breaker, Korah's rebellion and the history connected with it, and also a few laws (chaps. 15-19), this period is passed by in silence. The nation was under the divine rebuke, and could fulfil its part in the plan of God only by dying for its sins with an unrecorded history. The third epoch begins with the second arrival of Israel at Kadesh, and this is crowded with great events-the death of Miriam, the exclusion of Moses and Aaron from the promised land, with the death of the latter at Mount Hor, the {238} refusal of Edom to allow a passage through his territory, the wearisome journey of the people "to compass the land of Edom," with their sins and sufferings, the conquest of Arad, Sihon, and Og, and thus the arrival of the people at the plains of Moab opposite Jericho. Chaps. 20-22:1. Then follows the history of Balaam and his prophecies, the idolatry and punishment of the people, a second numbering of the people, the appointment of Joshua as the leader of the people, the conquest of the Midianites, the division of the region beyond Jordan to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and a review of the journeyings of the people. With all this are intermingled various additional ordinances.

V.Deuteronomy 12:1-32. The Jewish name of this book is Elle haddebharim, these are the words. The Greek name Deuteronomion, whence the Latin Deuteronomium and the English Deuteronomy, signifies second law, or repetition of the law, as it is also called by the later Jews. The book consists of discourses delivered by Moses to Israel in the plains of Moab over against Jericho, in the eleventh month of the fortieth year of the exodus. Deuteronomy 1:1; Deuteronomy 1:3. The peculiar character of this book and its relation to the preceding books have been already considered in the first part of the present work (Chap. 9, No. 10), to which the reader is referred. It is generally divided into three parts. The first is mainly a recapitulation of the past history of Israel under Moses, with appropriate warnings and exhortations, followed by a notice of the appointment of three cities of refuge on the east side of Jordan. Chaps. 1-4. The second discourse begins with a restatement of the law given on Sinai. Exhortations to hearty obedience follow, which are full of fatherly love and tenderness. Various precepts of the law are then added, with some modifications and additions, such as the altered circumstances of the people required. Chaps. 5-26. In the third part the blessings and the curses of the law are prominently set forth as motives to obedience. Chaps. 27-30. The remainder of the book is occupied {239} with Moses' charge to Joshua, his direction for depositing the law in the sanctuary by the side of the ark, his song written by divine direction, his blessing upon the twelve tribes, and the account of his death and burial on mount Nebo.

13. As the book of Genesis constitutes a suitable introduction to the Pentateuch, without which its very existence, as a part of the divine plan, would be unintelligible, so does the book of Deuteronomy bring it to a sublime close. From the goodness and faithfulness of God, from his special favor bestowed upon Israel, from the excellence of his service, from the glorious rewards of obedience and the terrible penalties of disobedience, it draws motives for a deep and evangelical obedience-an obedience of the spirit and not of the letter only. Thus it adds the corner-stone to the whole system of legislation, completing it on the side of the motives by which it challenges obedience, and investing it with radiant glory. The Pentateuch, then, is a whole. The first book is inseparable from it as an introduction; the last as a close. The three intermediate books contain the legislation itself, and in this each of them has its appropriate province.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin] [BibleAuthenticity]

20. The Historical Books

CHAPTER XX. THE HISTORICAL BOOKS.

1. In the Pentateuch we have the establishment of the Theocracy, with the preparatory and accompanying history pertaining to it. The province of the historical books is to unfold its practiced working, and to show how, under the divine superintendence and guidance, it accomplished the end for which it was given. They contain, therefore, primarily, a history of God's dealings with the covenant people under the economy which he had imposed upon them. They look at the course of human events on the divine rather than the human side, and in this respect they differ widely from all other historical writings. Human histories abound with the endless details of court intrigues, of alliances and wars, of material civilization and progress, and whatever else pertains to the welfare of men considered simply as the inhabitants of this world. But the historical books of the Old Testament, written by prophetical men illumined by the Holy Spirit, unfold with wonderful clearness the mighty movements of God's providence, by which the divine plan proposed in the Mosaic economy was steadily carried forward, alike through outward prosperity and adversity, towards the fulfilment of its high office. After a long series of bloody struggles, the Theocracy attained to its zenith of outward power and splendor under David and Solomon. From that time onward the power of the Israelitish people declined, till they were at last deprived of their national independence, and subjected to the yoke of foreign conquerors. But in both the growth of the national power under the Theocracy, and its decline, the presence of God and his supremacy, as well over the covenant people as over the surrounding nations, were gloriously manifested, and their training for the {241} future advent of the Messiah was steadily carried forward. Thus we have in these historical books a wonderful diversity of divine manifestations, which alike charm and instruct the pious mind.

2. It has already been shown (Chap. 15, No. 7) that the books of Kings and Chronicles contain only selections from a large mass of materials. The same is probably true of the books of Judges and Samuel. The sacred writers did not propose to give a detailed account of all the events belonging to the periods over which their histories extended, but only of those which were specially adapted to manifest God's presence and guidance in the affairs of the covenant people. The history of some persons is given very fully; of others with extreme brevity. But we may say, in general, that this divine history, extending over a period of a thousand years, is the most condensed in the world, as well as the most luminous with the divine glory. The student rises from the perusal of it with such clear views of God's presence and supremacy in the course of human affairs, as cannot be gained from all the ponderous tomes of secular history. Each book, moreover, presents some special phase of God's providential movements, and contains, therefore, its special lessons of instruction. With few exceptions, the authors of the historical books are unknown. We only know that they were prophetical men, who wrote under the illumination and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I.Joshua 3:1-17. This book records the conquest of the land of Canaan by the Israelites under Joshua, and its distribution by lot among the tribes that received their inheritance on the west side of the Jordan. It connects itself, therefore, immediately with the Pentateuch; for it shows how God fulfilled his promise to Abraham that he would give to his posterity the land of Canaan for an inheritance (Genesis 17:8), a promise often repeated afterwards, and kept constantly in view in the whole series of Mosaic legislation. The book naturally falls into two parts. {242} The first twelve chapters contain the history of the conquest itself, with the movements preparatory thereto. Joshua, who had been previously designated as the leader of the people (Numbers 27:15-23), receives a solemn charge to pass over the Jordan and take possession of the promised land; the people prepare themselves accordingly; two spies are sent out to take a survey of Jericho; the Israelites pass over the Jordan dry-shod, its waters having been miraculously divided; they encamp at Gilgal, and are there subjected to the rite of circumcision. Chaps. 1-5. Then follows an account of the overthrow of Jericho, the trespass of Achan with the calamity which it brought upon the people, the conquest of Ai, the ratification of the law at mount Ebal with the erection of the stones on which the law was written, the artifice of the Gibeonites by which they saved their lives, the overthrow of the combined kings of the Canaanites at Gibeon, and the conquest, first of the southern and afterwards of the northern kings of Canaan. Chaps. 6-12. The second part gives an account of the division of the land by lot among the several tribes. This work was begun as is described in chapters 13-17, and after an interruption through the dilatoriness of the people, for which Joshua rebuked them, was continued and completed at Shiloh. Chaps. 18, 19. Six cities of refuge were then appointed, three on each side of the Jordan; forty-eight cities were assigned by lot to the Levites; and the two and a half tribes that had received their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan (Numb., chap. 32) were sent home. Chaps. 20-22. The twenty-third chapter contains Joshua’s charge to the elders of Israel, and the twenty-fourth his final charge at Shechem to the assembled tribes, on which occasion there was a solemn renewal of the national covenant. The whole book is brought to a close by a brief notice of the death of Joshua and Eleazar, and the interment of the bones of Joseph in Shechem. This brief survey of the contents of the book reveals at once its unity, its orderly plan, and the place which it holds in the history of the Theocracy.

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4. The authorship of the book cannot be determined from the title alone, any more than that of the two books which bear the name of Samuel. Jewish tradition ascribes it to Joshua himself, except the last five verses. But it records some transactions which, according to the most obvious interpretation of them, occurred after Joshua’s death. Among these are the conquest of Hebron (chap. 15:16-19, compared with Judges 1:12-15), and especially the excursion of the Danites (chap. 19:47), which must be regarded as identical with that described in the eighteenth chapter of the book of Judges. Unless we assume that this notice of the Danites is an addition made by a later hand, we must suppose that the book was written by some unknown prophetical man after Joshua’s death. He may well have been one of the elders who overlived Joshua, since at the time of his writing Rahab was yet living among the Israelites. Chap. 6:25. The eighteenth chapter of the book of Judges, which records the invasion of the Danites, is evidently an appendix, introduced by the words: "In those days there was no king in Israel;" and that this invasion took place not long after the settlement of the people in Canaan, is manifest from the object proposed by it. Judges 18:1. At the time of the conquest, Rahab was a young woman, and may well have survived that

event forty years or more. The only apparent indication of a still later composition of the book is that found in the reference to the book of Jasher, chap. 10:13. From 2 Samuel 1:18, we learn (according to the most approved interpretation of the passage) that David's elegy on the death of Saul and Jonathan was written in the book of Jasher. But we are not warranted in affirming that this title was applied to a book of definitely determined contents. It may have been a collection of national songs, enlarged from age to age.

Though Joshua does not appear to have been the author of the book in its present form, we may well suppose that the writer employed, in part at least, materials that came from Joshua's pen. When the land was divided by lot among the several tribes, the boundaries of each inheritance, with the cities pertaining to it, must have been carefully described in writing by Joshua himself, or by persons acting under his direction. It is probable that these descriptions were copied by the author of the book of Joshua; and this is sufficient to account for any diversity of diction that may exist in this part of the book as compared with the purely historic {244} parts. Nothing in the style and diction of this book, or in that of the two following books of Judges and Ruth, indicates that they belong to a later age of Hebrew literature. Certain peculiarities of expression which occasionally appear in them may be naturally explained as provincialisms, or as belonging to the language of conversation and common life.

5. The book of Joshua bears every internal mark of authentícity and credibility. The main transaction which it records-the extirpation of the Canaanites by the immediate help of Jehovah, and the gift of their country to the Israelites-was contemplated from the very first by the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 13:14-15; Genesis 15:18-21; Genesis 17:8, etc.), and also by the entire body of the Mosaic laws. Why God chose to accomplish this by the sword of his covenant people, has been already sufficiently considered. Chap. 10, No. 7. The stupendous miracles recorded in the book of Joshua are in harmony with the entire plan of redemption, the great and decisive movements of which have been especially marked by signal manifestations of God's presence and power. The man who denies the credibility of this book on the ground of these miracles, must, for consistency's sake, go much farther, and deny altogether the supernatural manifestations of God recorded in the Bible, including the mission, miraculous works, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. In chap. 10:12-14 we read that, at the word of Joshua, the sun stood still and the moon stayed in the midst of heaven about a whole day, so that "there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man." Some have sought to explain the whole passage as a quotation from "the book of Jasher" expressed in the language of poetic hyperbole; and they have compared with it such poetic amplifications as those contained in Psalms 18:7-16; Hab., chap. 3, etc. But this interpretation is forced and unnatural; and besides this, there remains the analogous event of which we have a double record in 2 Kings 20:8-11; Isaiah 38:7-8, and which is expressly ascribed to divine power: "Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun-dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward." Here it is manifest that to human vision the sun, and with it the shadow, went backward ten degrees. How this was accomplished we need not attempt to determine. We are not shut up to the supposition that the earth was turned back on her axis {245} ten degrees, nor that the rays of the sun were miraculously deflected ten degrees (which would change his apparent position in the heavens ten degrees), nor to any other particular hypothesis. If God chose that the sun should to human vision go backward ten degrees, he could accomplish it by means inscrutable to us; and so

also if he chose that it should stand still in the midst of heaven about a whole day.

II. JUDGES AND Ruth 6. The book of Judges is so called because it is occupied with the history of the Israelites during the period when they were under the general administration of Judges. These men are not to be confounded with the ordinary judges under the Theocracy, of the appointment of which we have an account in Exodus, chap. 18. They were men specially raised up by God and endowed by him with extraordinary qualifications for their office, which was general and political rather than municipal. Many of them were military leaders, called to their work in times of national calamity. In times of peace they stood at the head of public affairs, although with regard to some of them it is generally thought that their jurisdiction extended to only a part of the Israelitish people. Thus Jephthah and the three succeeding judges seem to have exercised their office in northeastern Israel, while the scene of Samson's exploits was southwestern Israel, and he was, in the opinion of many, contemporary with Eli, who judged Israel at Shiloh. The condition of the nation during the period of the Judges is described as one in which "there was no king in Israel." Chap. 18:1; 19:1. There was no regularly organized central power which could give unity to the movements of the people. The tribes seem to have acted in a great measure independently of each other, as in the expedition of the Danites. Chap. 18. It was only on special occasions, like that of the sin and punishment of the Benjamites (chaps. 19-21), that there was a general concert among them. This state of affairs was not favorable to the development of the military power of the nation, but it was well suited to the high moral and religious ends which the Theocracy had in view; for it compelled the people to feel {246} their constant dependence on God's presence and help for defence against their enemies. Sin, and oppression by the surrounding nations; repentance, and deliverance by God's immediate interposition-this is the oft-repeated story of the book of Judges. All this was in accordance with the promises and threatenings of the Law, and it illustrated alike the perverseness of the nation and God's faithfulness in the fulfilment of his covenant. The incidents recorded in this book are of a peculiarly checkered character, and many of them are full of romantic interest. In the history of redemption, the book of Judges has a well-defined place. It unfolds to our view the operation of the Theocracy in the first stage of the nation's existence, and under its first outward form of government.

7. As it respects the arrangement of materials, the book of Judges opens with a two-fold introduction, giving, first, a brief notice of the wars carried on against the Canaanites by certain tribes after Joshua's death, of the failure of the people to effect a complete extirpation of the Canaanites, and of the reproof administered to them by an angel of the Lord (chap. 1-2:5); secondly, a survey of the course of events during the time of the judges, with especial reference to God's faithfulness in the fulfilment of his promises and threatenings. Chap. 2:6-3:6. Then follows the body of the work, giving an account of the seven servitudes to which the people were subjected for their sins, and of the judges raised up by God for their deliverance, with some incidental notices, as the history of Abimelech, (chap. 9) and the quarrel of the men of Ephraim with Jephthah. Chap. 12:1-6. The book closes with a two-fold appendix, recording, first, the conquest of Laish by the Danites, and in connection with this the story of Micah and his idolatrous establishment (chaps. 17, 18); secondly, the punishment of the Benjamites for espousing the cause of the wicked men of Gibeah (chaps. 19-21). These events are not to be conceived of as subsequent to those recorded in the body of the book, but as contemporaneous with them.

8. The remark: "In those days there was no king in Israel" {247} (chaps. 18:1; 19:1) plainly implies that the date of the book of Judges must be assigned to a period after the establishment of the kingdom. The statement, on the other hand, that the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites from Jerusalem, "but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day" (chap. 1:21), limits the time of its composition to the period before David's conquest of the city. 2 Samuel 5:6-9. The author of the book is unknown. Jewish tradition ascribes it to Samuel. It may well have been written during his life, and possibly under his supervision, though on this point we can affirm nothing positively. The writer must have availed himself of earlier written documents. See Chap. 15, No. 5.

9. The chronology of the book of Judges is a matter of debate among biblical scholars. Some contend for a longer period, in accordance with the reckoning of the apostle Paul, who says that after God had divided to the people the land of Canaan by lot, "he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet." Acts 13:20. Others seek to reduce the period so as to bring it into harmony with the statement in 1 Kings 6:1, that Solomon began to build the temple "in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt."

If we suppose that the oppression of the Israelites by the Philistines, described in the beginning of the first book of Samuel, is the same as the forty years' oppression mentioned in the book of Judges, and that the judgeship of Samson falls within the same period (Judges 15:20), it is easy to make out the four hundred and fifty years of the apostle's reckoning. From the beginning of the first servitude under Cushan-rishathaim to the close of the last under the Philistines, we have, reckoning the years of servitude and rest in succession, and allowing three years for the reign of Abimelech, three hundred and ninety years. For the remaining sixty years we have (1) the time from the division of the land by lot to the death of the elders who overlived Joshua; (2) the time from the close of the last servitude to the establishment of the kingdom; and possibly (3) a further period for Shamgar's judgeship, though it is more probable that this falls within the eighty years of rest after the oppression of the Moabites. Those {248} who adopt a shorter chronology, assume that the forty years' dominion of the Philistines was contemporaneous with the oppression of the northeastern tribes by the Ammonites and the period during which Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon judged Israel; their jurisdiction being, as they suppose, restricted to the northeastern part of the land. For both the longer and shorter chronology, there are several variously modified schemes, the details of which the student can find in works devoted to the subject of biblical chronology.

10. The incidents of the book of Ruth belong to the period of the Judges, so that it may be regarded as in some sort an appendix to the book of Judges, though probably not written by the same author. It contains a beautiful sketch of domestic life in the early period of the Theocracy, written with charming simplicity and graphic vividness. Yet it is not on this ground alone or chiefly that it has a place in the sacred canon. It records also the sublime faith of Ruth the Moabitess, which led her to forsake her own country and kindred to trust under the wings of the Lord God of Israel (ch. 2:12), and which was rewarded by her being made the ancestress of David and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the book connects itself immediately with "the house and lineage of David," and may be regarded as supplementary to the history of his family. It was evidently written after David was established on the throne. Further than this we have no certain knowledge

respecting its date; nor can its author be determined.

III. THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL.

11. The two books of Samuel constituted originally one work. The division was made by the Greek translators as a matter of convenience, so as to close the first book with the death of Saul, and begin the second with David's accession to the throne. This division was followed by the Vulgate, and was introduced by Daniel Bomberg into the printed Hebrew text. To the original whole work the name of Samuel was appropriately given; for he is not only the central personage in the history which it records to the establishment of the {249} kingdom, but it was also through him, as the acknowledged prophet of the Theocracy, that both Saul and David were designated and anointed for the kingly office. The Greek Septuagint designates these books from their contents, First and Second of the Kingdoms, and the Vulgate, First and Second of Kings.

12. In the history of the plan of redemption these two books have a well-defined province. They are occupied with the establishment, under God's direction and guidance, of the kingly form of government in the Theocracy. All the events recorded before the inauguration of Saul were preparatory to that event and explanatory of it. Since, moreover, Saul was afterwards rejected with his family on account of his disobedience, and David and his family were chosen in his stead, it was in the person of David that the kingdom was first fully established, and with the close of his reign the work accordingly ends. The period included in this history, though comparatively brief, was most eventful. Samuel, himself one of the greatest of the prophets, established a school of the prophets, and from his day onward the prophetical order assumed an importance and permanency in the Theocracy that was before unknown. See above, Ch. 15, No. 11. The change to the kingly form of government constituted a new era in the Hebrew commonwealth. Although the motives which led the people to desire a king were low and unworthy, being grounded in worldliness and unbelief, yet God, for the accomplishment of his own purposes, was pleased to grant their request. The adumbration in the Theocracy of the kingly office of the future Messiah, not less than of his priestly and prophetical office, was originally contemplated in its establishment; and now the full time for this had come. While David and his successors on the throne were true civil and military leaders in a secular and earthly sense, their headship over God's people also shadowed forth the higher headship of the long promised Redeemer, the great Antitype in whom all the types contained in the Mosaic economy find at once their explanation and their fulfilment. Under David the Hebrew commonwealth was rescued from the oppression {250} of the surrounding nations, and speedily attained to its zenith of outward power and splendor.

13. The contents of the books of Samuel naturally fall under three main divisions. The introductory part takes up the history of the commonwealth under Eli and continues it to the time when the people demanded of Samuel a king. 1 Sam. chaps. 1-7. This period properly belongs to that of the judges, but its history is given here because of its intimate connection with the events that follow. It describes the birth and education of Samuel; the disorders that prevailed under Eli's administration, for which God denounced upon his family severe judgments; the invasion of the land by the Philistines, with the capture and restoration of the ark; Samuel's administration, and the deliverance of the people under him from the oppression of the Philistines. The second part, extending through the remainder of the first book, opens with an account of the abuses which led the people to desire a king, and then gives an account of the selection, anointing, and inauguration

of Saul as king of Israel, with a notice of his exploit in delivering the people of Jabesh-gilead from the Ammonites. Chaps 8-12. It then gives an account of his first sin at Gilgal, for which Samuel threatened him with the loss of his kingdom, and of his victory over the Philistines, with a general summary of the events of his reign. Chaps. 13, 14. For his second sin in the matter of the Amalekites Saul is rejected, and David is anointed by Samuel as his successor; the Spirit of the Lord forsakes Saul, and an evil spirit from God troubles him; David becomes his minstrel, is in high favor with him, slays Goliath in the presence of the two armies of Israel and the Philistines, returns in triumph to the camp of Saul, marries Michal his daughter, but becomes an object of his jealousy and hatred because he has supplanted him in the affections of the people. Chaps. 15-18:9. The remainder of the first book is mainly occupied with an account of the persecutions to which David was subjected on the part of Saul, and of the wonderful way in which God delivered him. It closes with an account of {251} Saul's distress through the invasion of the Philistines, of his resort in trouble to a woman that had a familiar spirit, of the terrible message that he received at the lips of the risen Samuel, of the defeat of the armies of Israel by the Philistines, and of the death of Saul and his three sons on Mount Gilboa. The third part occupies the whole of the second book. It records the reign of David, first at Hebron over the tribe of Judah, with the accompanying war between the house of Saul and the house of David, and then, after Ishbosheth's death, over all Israel at Jerusalem. With the fidelity of truth the sacred historian describes not only David's many victories over the enemies of Israel, but also his grievous sin in the matter of Uriah, with the terrible chastisements that it brought upon him and his kingdom-Amnon's incest, the murder of Amnon by Absalom, Absalom's rebellion, pollution of his father's concubines, and death in battle. The closing years of David's reign were saddened also by David's sin in numbering the people, for which there fell in pestilence seventy thousand of his subjects.

14. For the evidence that the author of these books availed himself of the writings of the prophets contemporary with the events described, see above, Chap. 15, No. 6. In 1 Chronicles 29:29 we read: "Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer." If, as some think, our present books of Samuel were composed shortly after David's death, the author may well have been one of the last two of the above-named prophets; but there are some indications that he lived after the division of the Israelitish people into the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel. In 1 Samuel 27:6 we read that Achish gave Ziklag to David; "wheretofore," adds the sacred historian, "Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day." The only natural interpretation of these words is that the kings of Judah-not any particular king of Judah, but the kings of Judah as a line-are named in contrast with the kings of Israel. In {252} several other passages, where he is speaking of events that occurred before the separation of the two kingdoms, he puts Judah and Israel together. 1 Samuel 11:8; 1 Samuel 17:52; 1 Samuel 18:16; 2 Samuel 3:10; 2 Samuel 24:1. But this can, perhaps, be explained from the fact that during the seven years of David's reign at Hebron there was an actual separation of Judah from the other tribes. It is a remarkable fact that while the full term of David's reign is given (2 Samuel 5:4-5), which implies that the writer lived after its close, no notice is taken of his death. The reason of this omission cannot be known. As the first book of Kings opens with an account of David's last days and death, some have conjectured that it was designedly omitted from the books of Samuel as superfluous, when the historical books were arranged in the sacred canon.

IV. THE BOOKS OF KINGS.

15. These two books, like the two of Samuel, originally constituted a single work. The division was first made by the Greek translators, was followed by the Vulgate, and was finally admitted by Daniel Bomberg into the printed Hebrew text. The Greek version of the Seventy and the Latin version, having called the books of Samuel, the former, First and Second of the Kingdoms, the latter, First and Second of the Kings, designate these books as Third and Fourth of the Kingdoms or Kings. Each of the historical books presents the covenant people under a new aspect, and imparts new lessons of instruction. In the book of Joshua we see them taking triumphant possession of the promised land through the mighty assistance of Jehovah; the book of Judges describes the course of affairs in the Hebrew commonwealth before the existence of a central kingly government; in the books of Samuel we learn how such a central government was established, and how under the reign of David the nation was raised from the deep degradation of servitude to the summit of worldly power. But the Theocracy was only a preparatory, and therefore a temporary form of God's visible earthly kingdom. From the days of David and Solomon it began to decline in outward power and splendor, and it is with the history of this decline that the books of Kings are occupied. In the view which they present of the {253} divine plan they are in perfect harmony with the preceding books of Samuel; but in respect to the manner of execution they differ widely. The books of Samuel give the history of Samuel, Saul, and David, with great fulness of detail, and never refer the reader to other sources of information. The books of Kings, on the contrary, give professedly only certain portions of the history of the people under the successive kings, always adding, at the close of each monarch's reign after Solomon, that the rest of his acts may be found, for the kings of Judah, in "the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah;" and, for the kings of Israel, in "the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel." The Chronicles referred to are not our present books of Chronicles, as has been already shown, Chap. 15, No. 8, but a larger collection of writings, from which the authors both of the books of Kings and Chronicles drew materials, in part at least, for their respective works. The history contained in the books of Kings may be conveniently divided into three periods-(1) the reign of Solomon over all Israel; (2) the history of the coexisting kingdoms of Judah and Israel; (3) the history of the kingdom of Judah after the extinction of the kingdom of Israel.

16. The history of the first period opens with the reign of Solomon, which excelled that of David in outward magnificence, as it did that of every succeeding king. 1 Kings 3:13. The great event of his reign, constituting an epoch in the history of the Theocracy, was the erection of the temple on Mount Moriah, which took the place of the ancient tabernacle constructed by divine direction in the wilderness. Thus Solomon added to the public services of the sanctuary an outward splendor and dignity corresponding with the increased wealth and glory of the nation. But in the case of his kingdom, as often elsewhere, the zenith of magnificence came after the zenith of true power. Had his profuse expenditures ceased with the erection of the temple and his own house, it would have been well; but the maintenance of such a household as his, embracing "seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred {254} concubines," corrupted his religion and that of the nation, burdened the people with heavy taxes, and thus prepared the way for the division of his kingdom that followed immediately after his death, as recorded in 1 Kings 12:1-33.

17. With the division of Solomon's kingdom under his son Rehoboam into two hostile nations begins the second period of the history. This division was brought about by God's appointment as

a chastisement for Solomon's sins, and in it the national power received a blow from which it never recovered. The religious effect also was unspeakably calamitous so far as the kingdom of the ten tribes was concerned; for Jeroboam, the first king of Israel, established idolatry as a matter of state policy, thus corrupting the religion of his whole kingdom with a view to the establishment of his own power, a sin in which he was followed by every one of his successors. The sacred historian carries forward the history of these two kingdoms together with wonderful brevity and power. Sometimes, as in the days of Elijah and Elisha, the history of the ten tribes assumes the greater prominence, because it furnishes the fuller illustrations of God's presence and power; but as a general fact it is kept in subordination to that of Judah. It is a sad record of wicked dynasties, each established in blood and ending in blood, until the overthrow of the kingdom by the Assyrians about two hundred and fifty-four years after its establishment. Meanwhile there was in Judah an alternation of pious with idolatrous kings, and a corresponding struggle between the true religion and the idolatry of the surrounding nations, which the sacred writer also describes briefly but vividly.

18. It was during the reign of the good king Hezekiah that the extinction of the kingdom of Israel took place, and the third period of the history began. Hezekiah's efforts for the restoration of the true religion were vigorous and for the time successful. But after his death the nation relapsed again into idolatry and wickedness. The efforts of Josiah, the only pious monarch that occupied the throne after Hezekiah, could not avail to stay the progress of national degeneracy, and the kingdom {255} of Judah was, in its turn, overthrown by the Chaldeans, and the people carried captive to Babylon.

19. The chronology of certain parts of the history embraced in the books of Kings is perplexed and uncertain. But the beginning of the Babylonish captivity is generally placed B.C. 588, three hundred and eighty-seven years after the beginning of Rehoboam's reign, and one hundred and thirty-three years after the extinction of the kingdom of Israel. Reckoning in the forty years of Solomon's reign, we have for the period included in the books of Kings to the beginning of the captivity four hundred and twenty-seven years. To this must be added twenty-six more years for the thirty-seventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity (2 Kings 25:27), the last date given by the sacred historian. The author of the books of Kings is unknown. Jewish tradition ascribes them to Jeremiah, perhaps on the ground that the last chapter of Jeremiah is mostly a repetition of 2 Kings from chap. 24:18 to the end of the book. But Jeremiah and the author of these books may both have made use of common documents. We only know that the writer lived after the accession of Evil-merodach to the throne of Babylon (2 Kings 25:27), and during the full pressure of the Babylonish captivity, since he nowhere gives any intimation of its approaching close.

V. THE BOOKS OF CHRONICLES.

20. These books, which originally constituted a single work, are called by the Hebrews: Words of the Days; that is, History of the Events of the Times, or Chronicles, as they were first called by Jerome. The Greek name Paraleipomena, things omitted, has its ground in the false supposition that they were designed to be supplementary to the books of Kings, whereas they constitute an independent work having its own plan and end. The author of the books of Kings doubtless looked forward to the future restoration of his nation; but the time for that joyous event was yet distant, and he could have no immediate reference to the wants of the returning exiles. His aim {256} was

simply to set forth the course of events under the Theocracy from Solomon to the captivity as an illustration of God's faithfulness in the fulfilment of both his promises and his threatenings. But the author of the books of Chronicles wrote, as all agree, during the process of the restoration. In addition to the common aim of all the historical writers, he had a particular object in view, which was to furnish the restored captives with such information as would be especially interesting and important to them, engaged as they were in the reëstablishment of the commonwealth. Hence we may naturally explain the peculiarities of these books as compared with the books of Kings.

(1.) The writer gives particular attention to the matter of genealogy. The first nine chapters are occupied with genealogical tables interspersed with short historical notices, which the author took, for the most part at least, from documents that have long since perished. To the returning exiles the lineage of their ancestors must have been a matter of general interest. A knowledge of the descent of the families of the different tribes would greatly facilitate the people in regaining their former inheritances. To the priests and Levites, especially, it was of the highest importance that they should be able to show their lineage, since upon this depended their right to minister in holy things. Ezra 2:61-63.

(2.) The books of Chronicles are very full on all that pertains to the temple service. The writer devotes, for example, eight chapters to an account of David's preparations for the erection of the temple, and of his elaborate arrangements for all the different parts of the service pertaining to the sanctuary. 1 Chron. chaps. 22-29. He gives a particular description of the solemn covenant made by the people with Jehovah under Asa's direction, 2 Chronicles 15:1-15; of the reformatory labors and faith of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 19:1-11; 2 Chronicles 20:1-37; of Hezekiah, 2 Chron. chaps. 29-31; and he adds to the account of Josiah's efforts against the idolatrous practices of his day, a notice of his solemn observance of the passover, 2 Chronicles 35:1-19.

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(3.) He omits, on the other hand, the history of the kingdom of Israel, giving only a notice of its establishment, and of certain parts of its history which were connected with that of the kingdom of Judah. The apparent ground of this is, that the kingdom of the ten tribes furnished no example which could be available to the people in the work of reëstablishing the commonwealth. It is to be noticed, moreover, that he passes over in silence the adultery of David with its calamitous consequences, and the idolatry of Solomon. This is, perhaps, due to the brevity of the history before the division of the kingdom; for he does not spare the sins of the pious monarchs that followed. See 2 Chronicles 16:7-12; 2 Chronicles 19:2; 2 Chronicles 32:25; 2 Chronicles 32:31; 2 Chronicles 35:21-22.

21. In the Hebrew canon the books of Chronicles stand last in order. It is generally agreed that they were written, after the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, by Ezra, who had all the qualifications for such a work. Whatever use he may have made of the earlier books of Samuel and Kings, it is plain that these were not his chief sources, for he records many things not found in them. He and the author of the books of Kings had access to the same public records, and each of them made such selections from them as suited his purposes. Hence the matter contained in the two works agrees in part, and is partly different. See above, Chap. 15, Nos. 7, 8.

22. That there are some discrepancies between the books of Samuel and Kings and the books of Chronicles, arising from errors in transcribing, is generally admitted. These relate, however, mainly to dates, and do not affect the general integrity of the works. But most of the disagreements between the earlier and later histories are only apparent, arising from their brevity, and from the fact that their authors frequently select from the same reign different events, the one passing by in silence what the other records; or that, where they record the same events, various accompanying circumstances are omitted. An example of apparent error in transcription is 2 Samuel 24:13 compared with 1 Chronicles 21:12; the former passage specifying seven years of famine, the latter three years. For other examples see 2 Samuel 8:4 compared {258} with 1 Chronicles 18:4; 2 Samuel 23:8 with 1 Chronicles 11:11; 1 Kings 4:26 with 2 Chronicles 9:25. We are not to infer, however, that all cases of apparent disagreement involve error in one or the other of the records. When the events of a whole campaign, for example, are crowded into single sentences, it is not surprising that the different narratives should contain seeming discrepancies which a full knowledge of the details would enable us to reconcile. The separate discussion of the difficulties presented by the books of Chronicles, as compared with the earlier histories, belongs to the commentator. It is sufficient to remark here, that independent parallel histories always exhibit, with substantial agreement, minor diversities which it is sometimes not easy to harmonize. It has not pleased God that in this respect the sacred narratives of either the Old or the New Testament should constitute an exception to the general rule. The parallel narratives of our Lord’s life contain as many and as great diversities as those of the old Hebrew commonwealth. Though we may not always be able to show how these are to be brought into harmony, they constitute no valid objection to the authenticity of the histories in the one case any more than in the other.

VI. EZRA AND Nehemiah 23. In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which record the most important events connected with the restoration of the Hebrew commonwealth, we have unfolded to our view a new era in the history of the Theocracy. The contrast between the relation of the Israelitish people to the heathen world in the days of Joshua, and of Ezra and Nehemiah is as great as possible. Under Joshua the people marched, sword in hand, as invincible conquerors, to the possession of the promised land, while the hearts of their enemies melted before them. After the captivity they returned in weakness and fear, by the permission of their heathen rulers and under their patronage and protection. But in the latter case, not less than in the former, the Theocracy was steadily advancing under God’s guidance towards the accomplishment of its high end, which was the preparation of the Jewish people, and through them the world, for the advent of the promised Messiah. In the beginning of the Mosaic economy, and during the earlier part of its course, it was altogether appropriate that God should make stupendous supernatural manifestations of his infinite perfections and {259} of his supreme power over the nations of the world. Thus he revealed himself as the only living and true God in the sight of all men. But as the history of the covenant people went forward, there was a gradual return to the ordinary providential administration of the divine government. God’s miraculous interventions were never made for mere display. They always had in view a high religious end. As that end approached its accomplishment, they were more and more withdrawn, and soon after the captivity they ceased altogether until the final and perfect manifestation of God in Christ. From Malachi to Christ was the last stage of the Theocracy, when, in the language of the New Testament, it was waxing old and ready to vanish away. Hebrews 8:13. It was neither needful nor proper that its history should be dignified by such displays of God’s miraculous power as marked its earlier periods.

24. But, although the age of miracles ceased after the Babylonish captivity, the Theocracy went steadily forward in the accomplishment of its divine mission. In truth it was now that it secured for the first time, as a permanent result, the high end proposed by it from the beginning, that of rescuing a whole nation from idolatrous practices and making it steadfast in the worship of the true God, at least so far as the outward life is concerned. By the permanent subjection of the Jewish people to heathen rulers, their national pride was humbled, and they were placed in such a relation to heathenism as inclined them to abhor rather than imitate its rites. The fulfilment of the terrible threatenings contained in the law of Moses in the complete overthrow, first of the kingdom of Israel, and afterwards of that of Judah, and their long and bitter bondage in Babylon, administered to them severe but salutary lessons of instruction, under the influence of which they were, by God's blessing, finally reclaimed from idolatrous practices. In connection with the restoration, the synagogue service was established, in which the law and the prophets were regularly read and expounded to the people throughout the land. To this, {260} more than to any other human instrumentality, was due that steadfastness which the Jewish people ever afterwards manifested in the worship of the true God. Thus, while the outward glory of the Theocracy declined, it continued to accomplish the true spiritual end for which it was established.

25. The book of Ezra embraces a period of about seventy-nine years, from the accession of Cyrus to the throne of Persia to the close of Ezra's administration, or at least to the last transaction under it of which we have a record. The first six chapters give a brief sketch of the course of events among the restored captives before Ezra's arrival at Jerusalem, especially their activity in rebuilding the temple, the formidable opposition which they encountered from the neighboring people, and how that opposition was finally overcome. The last four chapters contain the history of Ezra's administration, the chief event of which was the putting away by the princes and people of the heathen wives whom they had married. That Ezra was the author of this book is generally acknowledged. The first three verses are a repetition, with some unessential variations, of the last two verses of Chronicles, of which he is also believed, on good grounds, to have been the author. In certain passages he speaks of himself in the third person; Ch. 7:1-26; ch. 10; but there is no reason to deny, on this ground, that he was their author. Jeremiah changes, in like manner, employing sometimes the first and sometimes the third person. Certain parts of this book, which are mainly occupied with public documents respecting the building of the temple and the orderly arrangement of its services, are written in the Chaldee language, namely: chaps. 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26. In respect to the Persian monarchs mentioned in this and the two following books, there is not an entire agreement among biblical scholars. The following table, formed in accordance with the views that seem to be best supported, will be useful to the reader. It contains, arranged in three parallel columns, first the names of the Persian kings in their order of succession, as given by profane historians; secondly, their scriptural names; thirdly, the dates of their accession to the throne, according to the received chronology.

{261} Cyrus, Cyrus, Ezra 1:1, etc., B.C. 536.

Cambyses, Ahasuerus, Ezra 4:6, " 529.

Smerdis,1 Artaxerxes, Ezra 4:7-23, " 522.

Darius Hystaspis, Darius, Ezra 4:24; Ezra 5:1-17; Ezra 6:1-15; Ezra 6:2 " 521.

Xerxes, Ahasuerus, Esther throughout,3 " 485.

Artaxerxes Longimanus, Artaxerxes, Ezra 7:1, etc.; Nehemiah 2:1, etc. " 464.

Footnote 1:(return) He was a usurper who reigned less than a year.

Footnote 2:(return) But in Nehemiah 12:22, Darius Nothus or Darius Codomanus must be referred to.

Footnote 3:(return)

Some suppose Darius, others Artaxerxes, to have been the Ahasuerus of Esther 26. The book of Nehemiah continues the history of the Jewish people after the restoration, beginning with the commission which Nehemiah received from Artaxerxes Longimanus, king of Persia, in the twentieth year of his reign (B.C. 446), to go to Jerusalem in the capacity of Tirshatha, or civil governor, for the purpose of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and setting in order the affairs of the commonwealth. The book naturally falls into three divisions. The first division contains the history of his labors in rebuilding the walls of the city and putting an end to the practice of usury, and of the violent opposition and intrigues of the surrounding people. Chaps. 1-7:4. To this is appended a genealogical list, which is the same for substance as that contained in the second chapter of Ezra. Ch. 7:5-73.

Upon a comparison of the two catalogues, we find various differences in respect to names and numbers. The differences of names may be explained from the fact that it was common for men to bear different titles, particularly if they were persons of distinction; as, for example, Daniel and Belteshazzar, Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar. It is not certain upon what principle the differences in numbers are to be explained. The sum total of both catalogues is the same, namely, 42,360; from which it is plain that the lists are in both cases partial, since neither of them amounts to this sum. We add the following suggestion from Grey’s Key as quoted by Scott: "The sum of the numbers, as separately detailed, will correspond, if to the 29,818 specified by Ezra, we add the 1,765 persons reckoned by Nehemiah which Ezra has omitted; and, on the other hand, to the 31,089 enumerated by Nehemiah, add the 494, which is an overplus in Ezra, not noticed by Nehemiah; both writers including in the sum total 10,777 of the mixed multitude, not particularized in the individual detail."

{262} In the second division we have an account of the solemn public reading of the law of Moses at the feast of tabernacles, and, in connection with this, of the renewal of the national covenant with Jehovah through the signature and seal of the princes, Levites, and priests, in their own behalf and that of the people. Chaps. 8-10. In this religious and ecclesiastical transaction, Ezra the priest was the leader; Nehemiah, as the Tirshatha, or civil governor, simply taking the lead of the princes in the act of sealing. The third division contains, along with some genealogical lists, an account of the measures taken by Nehemiah and the princes to increase the number of residents in Jerusalem, of the solemn dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, and of the rectification of various abuses which had crept in partly during Nehemiah’s absence at the court of Persia. Chaps. 11-13. The date of Nehemiah’s commission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem is important on account of its connection with the seventy prophetic weeks of Daniel, which are reckoned "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." Daniel 9:25. It cannot be considered as exactly ascertained, but may be placed somewhere from B.C. 454 to B.C. 446. See the

commentators on Daniel 9:24-27. How long Nehemiah's administration continued after his visit to the court of Persia, in the twelfth year of his rule, is not known.

27. The book, as its title testifies, was written by Nehemiah, not earlier than his return from the court of Persia (ch. 13:6; 5:14); how much later cannot be known. From the general character of style and diction which belongs to the second division (chaps. 8-10), as well as from the absence of Nehemiah's peculiar forms of speech, some have thought that Ezra, as the chief actor in the reading of the law and renewal of the national covenant, wrote the account of the transaction, and that Nehemiah incorporated it into his work. To this supposition there is no serious objection. We must remember, however, that arguments based on supposed differences of style cannot amount to much where the materials from which a conclusion is to be drawn are so scanty.

{263} The genealogical notice in ch. 12:10, 11, which gives the lineage of the high priests from Joshua to Jaddua, who is apparently the high priest described by Josephus as having met Alexander the Great on his march to Jerusalem, is thought by many to be an addition made after Nehemiah's death as a matter of public interest. See above, Chap. 15, No. 17. The same judgment is passed by some on 1 Chronicles 3:19-24. But the interpretation of this latter passage is very uncertain.

VII. Esther 28. This book, the author of which is unknown, records the wonderful manner in which the plot of Haman the Agagite to destroy the Jews was not only overthrown, but turned to their enlargement and honor. It is remarkable that the author refrains throughout from mentioning the name of God, although he manifestly designs to represent this deliverance as effected by his providence, and that too in answer to the fervent prayers of the Jews in connection with a fast of three days' continuance. He prefers, as it would seem, to let the facts speak for themselves. The book closes with an account of the establishment, under the auspices of Mordecai and Esther, of the feast of Purim, in commemoration of the deliverance which it records; and we are perhaps warranted in saying that the immediate occasion of writing the book was to show the historic origin of that festival-a festival mentioned in the second book of Maccabees, under the title of Mordecai's day (chap. 15:36), and observed, according to Josephus, by the Jews throughout the whole world. Antiq., 11, 6. 13.

29. Among the various opinions respecting the Ahasuerus of this book, the best sustained is that which identifies him with the celebrated Xerxes of profane history. With this agrees all that is said of the splendor and extent of his dominions, extending "from India even unto Ethiopia, over a hundred and seven and twenty provinces" (1:1), and of his passionate, capricious, and sensual character. To us, who are accustomed to a government of law, in which the rulers are restrained from the exercise of arbitrary power, and are kept under constant restraint by popular opinion, the incidents recorded in this book {264} seem very strange. But it gives a true and faithful portraiture of the course of affairs at the court of a Persian despot, where the monarch knows no law but his own arbitrary will, suddenly elevates his favorites to the highest places of power and trust, as suddenly consigns them to the hand of the executioner, and gives himself up to the unbridled indulgence of his passions. The history of Haman's sudden rise and fall is that of many an oriental courtier since his day. The Jews, we are told, "slew of their foes seventy and five thousand." This was a very great slaughter; but we must remember that it was distributed through all the provinces of the kingdom. Ch. 9:16. The permission which they had received was "in every city to gather

themselves together, and to stand for their life; to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey" (ch. 8:11); all which, except the last clause, seems to have been carried into execution. We are not required to vindicate the wisdom of this severe decree, or to deny that the Jews may have used to excess the terrible power thus conferred upon them. On the side of God’s providence, the vengeance that fell upon the Jews’ enemies was righteous; but on the side of the human instrumentalities employed by him, there may have been much imperfection, or even folly and wickedness. So it has ever been in the history of human affairs, and so it is at the present day.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin] [BibleAuthenticity]

21. Poetical Books (Including Ecclesiastes and Canticles)

CHAPTER XXI. THE POETICAL BOOKS (INCLUDING ALSO ECCLESIASTES AND CANTICLES).

1. The Hebrews reckon but three books as poetical, namely: Job, Psalms, and Proverbs, which are distinguished from the rest by a stricter rhythm-the rhythm not of feet, but of clauses (see below, No. 3)-and a peculiar system of accentuation. It is obvious to every reader that the poetry of the Old Testament, in the usual sense of the word, is not restricted to these three books. But they are called poetical in a special and technical sense. In any natural classification of the books of the Old Testament, those of Ecclesiastes and Canticles will fall into the division which contains the books of Job, Psalms, and Proverbs. The Hebrew system of accentuation is very subtle and complicated, and there is nothing corresponding to it in our western languages. These so-called accents are quite numerous, one of them resting, as a general rule, upon each word. Certain of them are peculiar to the poetical books, and are called poetical accents. They serve a threefold office. (1.) They guide the modulated flow of the voice in cantillation, thus serving, in a certain sense, as musical notes. Some think that this was their primary office. (2.) They indicate the logical relation to each other of the words and clauses, thus performing the office of marks of interpunction. (3.) They rest, with certain exceptions, on the tone syllable, and thus serve as accents in our restricted sense of the word. In the first division of the present chapter, the characteristics of Hebrew poetry will be briefly considered in respect to its spirit, its form, and its offices. Then will follow, in the second division, a notice of the contents of the several books.

{266} (A.) CHARACTERISTICS OF HEBREW POETRY.

2. As it respects the spirit of Hebrew poetry, we notice, first of all, its perfect harmony with the spirit of the Theocracy. It is, in truth, an outgrowth of the Theocracy in the souls of holy men educated under its influence and thoroughly imbued with its spirit. The God of Moses and Aaron is also the God of David, Asaph, and Solomon; of Hosea, Isaiah, and Habakkuk. In his boldest flights the Hebrew poet always remains loyal to the institutions of Moses, not in their letter alone, but much more in their spirit, of which he is the inspired interpreter. The same Jehovah who thundered from Sinai and spake to the people by Moses, speaks also by the sweet psalmist of Israel, by the wisdom of Solomon, and by the whole succession of the prophets. Hence the poetry of the Hebrews is radiant throughout with the pure monotheism of the Theocracy. It exhibits God in his infinite perfections, as the Creator and sovereign Ruler of the world, without a single taint of pantheism or polytheism, and that in an age when pantheism and polytheism were the reigning forms of religion without the pale of the covenant people.

Another distinguishing mark of Hebrew poetry is the vivid consciousness of God’s presence by which it is pervaded. In this respect it runs entirely parallel with Hebrew history. It has already been remarked (Ch. 20, No. 1) that Hebrew history differs widely from all other historical writings in its habit of looking at the course of human events from the Divine side, rather than the human; that while secular history is mainly occupied with the endless details of human combinations and

alliances, and the progress of material civilization, the historical books of the Old Testament unfold to us with wonderful clearness God’s presence and power as shaping the course of human events in the interest of his great plan of redemption. Take, for example, that small section of Hebrew history comprehended under the title, Affinity with Ahab. No Christian can read it without feelings of holy awe, for it is radiant throughout {267} with the presence of that righteous God who renders to every man according to his works, and visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation. In it the retributive justice of God shines forth, like the lightning, from one end of heaven to the other. Just so is Hebrew poetry also filled with the presence and glory of God. When the Hebrew bard sweeps his lyre, all nature gives signs of her Maker’s presence. The heavens rejoice before him, the earth is glad, the sea roars, the mountains and hills break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands. He looks on the earth, and it trembles; he touches the hills, and they smoke. Nor less conspicuous is his presence in providence and in the human soul. He is seen in awful majesty high above the tumult of the nations, directing their movements to the accomplishment of his own infinitely wise purposes; making the wrath of man to praise him, and restraining the remainder of it. Meanwhile his presence shines in the believer’s soul, like the sun in his strength, filling it with strength, light, and gladness. In a word, over the whole domain of Hebrew poesy, whether its theme be God or nature or human society or the human spirit, is heard continually the solemn cry of the seraphim: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."

Originality is another feature of Hebrew poetry. It cannot indeed be said that this quality belongs to all the Hebrew poets. With such divinely perfect models as the later writers had before them, models with which they had been familiar from childhood, it was natural that they should imitate them. The spirit of inspiration did not prevent this, for it was not necessary to the ends of revelation that it should be prevented. Set even among the later poets we have some striking examples of originality; and Hebrew poetry, taken as a whole, is original in the fullest sense of the word, borrowing nothing that we know of from any other nation. Not to anticipate the question of the age to which the book of Job belongs, and passing by some gems of poetry contained in the book of Genesis, {268} we may say that the oldest recorded song of certain date which the world possesses is that of the Israelites upon their deliverance at the Red sea. Exod., ch. 15. Next in order (to pass by the poetic effusions of Balaam, and some other fragments, Numb., chaps. 21-24) come the song which Moses wrote for the children of Israel just before his death (Deut., ch. 32), and (according to the title, the genuineness of which there is no valid reason for doubting) "the prayer of Moses the man of God," contained in the ninetieth psalm. In the period of the judges we have only the song of Deborah and Barak. The perfect originality of all these primitive songs is acknowledged by all. It constitutes indeed one of their chief charms. With "the sweet psalmist of Israel" began the era of lyric song; with Solomon that of didactic, and with Hosea, Joel, Isaiah, and their contemporaries, that of prophetic poetry. The poets to whom, under the illumination of the Holy Ghost, these different forms of Hebrew poetry owe their origin, are all distinguished for their originality. So is also the book of Job, that great didactic song so perfectly unique in its character. The wonderful freshness and simplicity of thought in Hebrew poetry is inseparably connected with its originality. A thought is fresh when it bursts forth directly from the inner fountain of the soul just as it was conceived there. But the moment the man pauses to remould it and shape it to some artificial standard of propriety, it loses its originality and its freshness together. It is no longer the living, glowing conception as it existed in his bosom, but rather what he thinks it ought to have

been. In the process of working it over he has killed, if not its life, at least its power. But the Hebrew poet opens, so to speak, the floodgates of his heart, and pours forth the stream of his thoughts and emotions just as they have sprung into being there. Because he is under the sanctifying and illuminating influence of the divine Spirit, they are high and holy thoughts. Because they come forth in their primitive form, they are natural and fresh; and for this reason the lapse of ages does not diminish their power over the human spirit.

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Intimately connected also with the originality of Hebrew poetry is its charming variety. The Hebrew poets are exceedingly unlike each other in native character, in training, in surrounding circumstances, and in the nature of the work laid upon them by the Spirit of inspiration. And as they all write in a natural and appropriate way, it follows that their writings must exhibit great diversities. No two writers can well be more unlike each other than Isaiah and the author of the book of Job. With Isaiah the central object of thought is always Zion, in whose interest he sees God governing the world, and whose future glory is revealed to him in prophetic vision. But Zion is not an individual. She is a divine organization which God has destined to universal victory, and around which revolve, under his almighty guidance, the great movements of the heathen nations. The prophet, accordingly, has to do not so much with particular persons, as with the destiny of society, which is involved in that of Zion. He describes her present conflicts and her future triumphs in his own peculiar and gorgeous imagery. But the problem before the author of the book of Job is God's providence towards individuals, as viewed from the position of the Old Testament before the fuller revelations of the New. He is occupied with the destiny of particular persons, rather than of nations or of human society at large. To the solution of the question of God's justice towards individual man he directs all his energy, and he discusses this great theme in a manner as effective as it is original. His imagery is as forcible as that of Isaiah, but how different, and how powerfully adapted to his end! A few passages from each of these great poets, set side by side, will exhibit the contrast between them in a striking manner.

{270} JOB. ISAIAH THE PROSPERITY OF THE RIGHTEOUS. THE PROSPERITY OF ZION.

He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and in war from the power of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue: neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth. For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee. And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace; and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin. Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season. Ch. 5:19-26. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders, but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be A little one shall become a thousand,

and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time. Ch. 60:18-22.

JOB. ISAIAH. THE OVERTHROW OF THE WICKED. THE OVERTHROW OF ZION'S ENEMIES.

He shall flee from the iron weapon, and the bow of steel shall strike him through. It is drawn, and cometh out of the body; yea, the glittering sword cometh out of his gall: terrors are upon him. All darkness shall be hid in his secret places: a fire not blown shall consume him; it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle. The heaven shall reveal his iniquity; and the earth shall rise up against him. The increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath. Ch. 20:24-28. For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy. Ch. 26:5, 6. For I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob. Ch. 49:25, 26

If now we open the book of Psalms, we find ourselves in a new world of poetry, as different from that of Isaiah as it is from that of the book of Job. David was anointed by God to {271} be the head and leader of Israel. As such he had a perpetual outward conflict with powerful, crafty, and malicious foes, who sought his life and his kingdom. This brought to him a perpetual inward conflict with doubts and fears. Under the pressure of this double conflict he penned those wonderful psalms, which are the embodiment of his whole religious life. And since heart answers to heart, as face to face in water, they are the embodiment of religious life in all ages. The songs of David and his illustrious collaborators, Asaph and the sons of Korah, are emphatically the poetry of religious experience. As such they can never grow old. They are as fresh to-day as when they were written. God has given them to his church as a rich treasury for "the service of song in the house of the Lord," in the family, and in the closet. If we turn from the book of Psalms to the book of Proverbs, we have still another type of poetry, unlike any one of the forms hitherto considered. It is the poetry of reflection on the course of human life, as seen in the light of God's law and God's providence. It is, therefore, didactic in the highest sense of the word-the poetry of practical life. The maxims of heavenly wisdom embodied in the book of Proverbs will make all who study them, believe them, and obey them, prosperous in this life and happy in the life to come. This contrast between the great Hebrew poets might be carried through the whole galaxy, but the above hints must suffice.

Diversity of themes often coincides with difference in the character of the poets. Where the theme is the same, each writer will still pursue his own peculiar method. If that theme be the vengeance of God on the wicked, the style will naturally be rugged and abrupt. Yet the ruggedness and abruptness of David will not be that of Hosea or Nahum. But where both the theme and the character of the poet differ, there the diversity of style becomes very striking. To illustrate this, take the two following passages:

{272} DAVID. NAHUM.

GOD'S FAVOR TO THE RIGHTEOUS. GOD'S VENGEANCE ON THE WICKED. The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the

still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Psalms 23:1-6. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him. But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies. Nahum 1:5-8. The passage from Nahum is like a pent-up mountain stream leaping from precipice to precipice. The psalm is like the same stream escaped to the plain, and winding its way gently and placidly through green meadows and shady groves vocal with the songs of birds. This subject might be pursued to an indefinite extent. Suffice it to say that Hebrew poetry has the charm of endless variety, always with graceful adaptation to the nature of the theme. The oriental imagery in which Hebrew poetry abounds imparts to it a peculiar and striking costume. Palestine was, in an emphatic sense, the Hebrew poet's world. It was the land given by God to his fathers for an everlasting possession; about which all his warm affections clustered; with whose peculiar scenery and climate, employments and associations, all his thoughts and feelings had been blended from childhood. It followed of necessity that these must all wear an oriental costume. As soon as he opens his mouth there comes forth a stream of eastern imagery, very natural and appropriate to {273} him, but much of it very strange to us of these western regions. To understand the extent of this characteristic one has only to peruse the Song of Solomon. The bride is black but comely as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. She is a dove in the clefts of the rock; her hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from Mount Gilead; her teeth are like a flock of sheep which come from the washing; her lips are like a thread of scarlet; her temples are like a piece of a pomegranate; her stature is like a palm tree, and her breasts like clusters of grapes-all thoroughly oriental. So also the bridegroom is like a roe or a young hart leaping upon the mountains; his eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters; his cheeks are as a bed of spices; his lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, and his countenance as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. So also if we open the book of Isaiah, we find the Messiah described as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land"-a figure which could not well occur to an Englishman or an American, but was perfectly natural in the mouth of a Hebrew familiar with the terrible sun of the Asiatic deserts, where neither tree nor cloud offers a shelter to the thirsty and fainting traveller. Precisely here lies much of the obscurity of which the expounders of Hebrew poetry complain. True, there are other difficulties of a formidable character. The theme is often vast, stretching into the distant and dimly-revealed future; the language rugged with abrupt transitions, the historic allusions obscure, and the meaning of the terms employed doubtful. But aside from all these considerations the western scholar encounters a perpetual difficulty in the fact that he is not of oriental birth, and can enter but imperfectly into the spirit and force of oriental imagery. What costs him days of laborious investigation would open itself like a flash of lightning to his apprehension-all except that which remains dark from the nature of the prophetic themes-could he but have that perfect apprehension of the language, the historic allusions, the imagery employed, and the modes of thought, which was possessed by the contemporaries of the Hebrew

poet.

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It remains that we notice in the last place what may be called the theocratic imagery of the Hebrew poets; that is, imagery borrowed from the institutions of the Mosaic law. The intense loyalty of the Hebrew poets to the Mosaic law has already been noticed. They were its divinely-appointed expositors and defenders, and their whole religious life was moulded by it. No wonder, then, that their writings abound with allusions to its rites and usages. The sweet psalmist of Israel will abide in God’s tabernacle for ever, and trust in the covert of his wings, the literal tabernacle on Zion representing God’s spiritual presence here and his beatific presence hereafter (Psalms 61:4 and elsewhere); he will have his prayer set forth before God as incense, and the lifting up of his hands as the evening sacrifice (Psalms 141:2); he will be purged with hyssop that he may be clean, and washed that he may be whiter than snow (Psalms 51:7); he will offer to God the sacrifice of a broken spirit (Psalms 51:17); the people promise to render to God the calves of their lips (Hosea 14:2); the vengeance of God upon Edom is described as "a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea," in which the Lord’s sword shall be filled with the blood of lambs and goats and the fat of the kidneys of rams (Isaiah 34:6); with allusions to the Levitical sprinklings God promises that he will sprinkle upon his penitent and restored people clean water that they may be clean (Ezekiel 36:25); and with allusion to the sacrificial flocks assembled at Jerusalem on the occasion of her great festivals, that he will increase them with men like a flock-"as the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men" (Ezekiel 36:37-38). How full the book of Psalms is of allusions to the solemn songs of the sanctuary with their accompaniment of psaltery and harp, trumpet and cornet, every reader understands. This subject might be expanded indefinitely, but the above hints must suffice.

3. We come now to the form of Hebrew poetry. This is distinguished from the classic poetry of Greece and Rome, as {275}

22. The Greater Prophets

CHAPTER XXII. THE GREATER PROPHETS.

1. We have already seen (Chap. 15, Nos. 11 and 12) that from Moses to Samuel the appearances of prophets were infrequent; that with Samuel and the prophetical school established by him there began a new era, in which the prophets were recognized as a distinct order of men in the Theocracy; and that the age of written prophecy did not begin till about the reign of Uzziah, some three centuries after Samuel. The Jewish division of the latter prophets-prophets in the more restricted sense of the word-into the greater, including Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, chronologically arranged; and the less, or twelve Minor Prophets, arranged also, in all probability, according to their view of their order in time, has also been explained. Chap. 13, No. 4. Respecting the nature of prophecy and the principles upon which it is to be interpreted, much remains to be said in another place. In the present connection, a brief account will be given of the place which the prophets held in the Theocracy, followed by a notice, in this and the following chapter, of the separate books of prophecy belonging to the Hebrew canon, according to the order in our English version, Daniel being reckoned with the greater prophets, Lamentations considered as an appendix to Jeremiah, and the minor prophets arranged by themselves.

2. The office of the prophets under the Theocracy, which we first notice, was that of bold reprovers. They came to rulers and people with an immediate commission from God to rebuke them for their sins; and as the contents of their messages were received from God himself, they exposed the hypocrisy and wickedness of their times in the pure sunlight of truth, denouncing upon great and small alike the awful judgments of Jehovah if they persisted in their impenitence. If we except the {295} preaching of Christ and his apostles, the history of the world furnishes no such bright examples of faithful dealing with men’s consciences. They never spare kings and princes from fear of their power and patronage. They never go round about men’s sins, but declare them directly and faithfully. With what majesty of severity did Samuel reprove Saul, and Nathan David, and Elijah Ahab, and Elisha Jehoram, and Jehu Jehoshaphat! And if we open the books of Hebrew prophecy which have come down to us from distant ages and from a very different civil and social order, we find them not in the least antiquated, but fresh as yesterday, instinct with life and power. They are a mirror of terrible brightness in which we may see reflected our pride, self-sufficiency, vain ostentation, and worldliness; our avarice, fraud, overreaching artifices, breaches of trust, bribery, oppression of the weak, and corrupt combinations for the amassing of filthy lucre; our ambition, slander, falsehood, intrigues, hypocrisy, and vain pretensions; our luxury, prodigality, sensuality, and intemperance; our profaneness, Sabbath-breaking, neglect of God’s ordinances and contempt of his written word-a mirror too in which we can see in the background dark clouds of judgment, big with awful thunder, such as have already come forth upon our land from the inexhaustible storehouse of divine justice, and are ready to come forth again, but over which hangs the rainbow of mercy for all that will repent and humble themselves before God.

3. We may next consider the office of the Hebrew prophets as expounders of the Mosaic law-the Mosaic law in its substance, as distinguished from its outward form. They never undervalued the letter of the law, since that too was of divine appointment; but they taught men that true obedience must rise above the letter to its spirit. When Saul excused himself to Samuel for disobeying God's command on the ground that the people had spared the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to the Lord, the prophet indignantly answered: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better {296} than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." 1 Samuel 15:22. "Bring no more vain oblations," says God to the Jews whose hands were full of oppression and blood; "incense is an abomination unto me: the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them." And his direction is: "Wash you, make you clean: put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." Isaiah 1:13-17. "I hate," says God to the covenant people through Amos, "I despise your feast-days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt-offerings and your meat-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." Amos 5:21-24. "Wherewith," says Micah, "shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah 6:6-8. Under the Old Testament, outward forms of divine service were required, and they are necessary, to a certain extent, under the New also. But if any man puts his trust for salvation in these, to the neglect of inward faith, love, and obedience, he stands condemned at the bar of Moses and the prophets, not less than at the bar of Christ and his apostles, Under the Mosaic economy, both the rites of divine service and the succession of the priesthood were definitively prescribed by God himself, and therefore to all of binding {297} authority. But the man who placed his religion in these outward observances, to the neglect of his heart and life, was to God an object of abhorrence, and the severest judgments were denounced against him. It cannot be, then, that under the gospel any system of outward forms, however right and proper in itself, can bring salvation to the soul, where inward faith, love, and obedience are wanting.

4. The last and highest office of the prophets was to direct men's thoughts to the end of the Mosaic economy, which was the salvation of the world through the promised Messiah. The Spirit of Christ that spoke through them, "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." 1 Peter 1:11. It does not appear that they understood the divine purpose to abolish the Mosaic economy, and with it "the middle wall of partition" between Jews and Gentiles-that great mystery, the revelation of which was reserved for the days of the apostles; but they did have glorious visions of the latter days, when the law should go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, to all nations; when the whole world should submit itself to Jehovah under the administration of the Messiah; and the earth should be "filled with the knowledge of the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea." Their glowing descriptions of the future enlargement and glory

of Zion have been the stay and solace of God’s people in all succeeding ages. The student of the Bible should not fail to notice that these bright visions of the future were vouchsafed to the Hebrew prophets, and through them to the church universal, not when the Theocracy was in the zenith of its outward power and splendor, as in the days of David and Solomon, but in the time of its decline and humiliation. The hopes so ardently cherished by the covenant people of a return of the outward glory of Solomon’s reign were destined to utter and final disappointment. It was not to feed their national pride, but to prepare the way for Christ’s advent, that God established the Theocracy. Now that its outward glory was departing, it was suitable that the hopes of the pious should be turned from the {298} darkness of the present to the brightness of "the last days" that awaited Zion in the distant future. When Isaiah began his prophecies, the kingdom of Israel was tottering to its fall, and before he had finished them it had suffered an utter overthrow. The invasion of Judah by the allied kings of Israel and Syria, in the reign of Ahaz, and by Sennacherib king of Assyria, in the reign of Hezekiah, furnished an occasion for predicting not only the present deliverance of God’s people, but also the future triumph of Zion over all her enemies, and the extension of her dominion over all the earth. In his present interpositions in behalf of Zion, God mirrored forth his purpose to give her a final and universal victory. And so it was with all the other prophets. With their backs towards the gloom and distraction of the present, and their faces steadfastly turned towards the glory of the latter days, they uttered words of promise and comfort that can have their fulfilment only in Christ’s kingdom, which is the true heir to all the promises made to the ancient Zion. Out of Christ these promises are vain and delusory. In Christ their fulfilment has been begun, and shall be completed in the appointed time. Out of Christ no amount of learning will enable a man to understand the Hebrew prophets; for the veil is on his face, which can be done away only in Christ. What if more than eighteen centuries have elapsed since our Lord’s advent, and the domain of his kingdom is yet very limited? In the divine reckoning, "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." If it took four of these days to prepare the world for Christ’s advent, can we not allow two days and more for the complete establishment of his kingdom?

We add a notice of each separate book of the Greater prophets.

I.Isaiah 5:1-30. According to the Hebrew arrangement already noticed (No. 1, above), the book of Isaiah, as the first of those belonging {299} to the greater prophets, stands at the head of the whole collection of prophetical books; although Hosea, Amos, and Jonah, and in all probability Joel also, entered upon their prophetical office before him. Micah was contemporary with him. Of the private history of Isaiah we know almost nothing, except that he was the son of Amoz (chap. 1:1), and that he was married and had sons (chap. 8:1-4). The Jewish tradition is that he was sawn asunder under the reign of Manasseh, to which it has been supposed that there is a reference in the epistle to the Hebrews (chap. 11:37); but all such traditions are uncertain. Isaiah prophesied "in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." Chap. 1:1. If, with many, we suppose him to have entered upon his office in the last year of Uzziah, we have sixty-two years to the close of Hezekiah’s reign. He certainly exercised the prophetical office to the fifteenth year of Hezekiah’s reign, and possibly through the remaining fourteen years. As the superscription is silent respecting any prophecies uttered in Manasseh’s reign, we are not warranted to extend the period of his activity beyond that of Hezekiah, although he may have survived him, and have perished in the way indicated by the Jewish tradition.

6. The book of Isaiah naturally falls into two great divisions. The first, after an introductory chapter, contains a great variety of prophetic messages, delivered on special occasions. Chaps. 2-39. The second division, comprising the remaining twenty-seven chapters, seems to have had no special occasion, but to have been written after the overthrow of Sennacherib's army, probably in the old age of the prophet, for the comfort and encouragement of God's people in all coming ages. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God"-this is its great theme as expressed in the introductory verse. Of the various plans for classifying the contents of the first part, all that rest upon the rationalistic view that the book is a collection of writings belonging to different authors and ages are false and groundless. Among evangelical men, who hold the unity of the book and its authorship by Isaiah, there have been {300} various schemes of classification. It has been proposed by Drechsler and others to arrange all of Isaiah's prophecies around two great central events in the history of his times; namely, the invasion of Judah in the reign of Ahaz by the allied forces of Israel and Syria (chap. 7), and in Hezekiah's reign by Sennacherib, king of Assyria (chaps. 36, 37). That these were the two great crises of Isaiah's age, and that many of his prophecies had reference to them directly or indirectly, cannot be denied; but to affirm that all his prophecies, extending over a period of from forty-eight to sixty-two years, were connected with those two events, either directly or by way of anticipation beforehand and natural sequence afterwards, is more than can be established by any probable arguments. We must be careful not to thrust upon the prophet a systematic arrangement beyond any that ever existed in his own consciousness. The following brief analysis will be sufficient for the general reader. The title prefixed to the first chapter refers certainly to the first part, and probably to the whole book. The contents of the first chapter are well suited to constitute a general introduction to the book, and there is much ground for the opinion that the prophet prefixed them, as such an introduction, to the whole collection of prophecies. The four chapters that follow were evidently written during a period of great worldly prosperity. They contain visions against Judah and Jerusalem of a threatening character, but interspersed with glorious promises to the true Israel. The sixth chapter records a vision which the prophet had of Jehovah in the temple, with the awful message to the people which he received from His lips. Many regard this as the prophet's inauguration to his office, and consequently as the first of his prophecies in order of time. The four preceding chapters will then naturally fall into the reign of Jotham. There is no decisive ground, however, for understanding the words, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (verse 8,) as containing the original call of Isaiah to the prophetical office. They may have reference to the {301} special message which he immediately receives; a message of the most weighty import, and often quoted in the New Testament. The confession of Isaiah, moreover, that he is "a man of unclean lips," may be very naturally referred to his previous exercise of the prophetic office. According to this view, the preceding four chapters belong to the latter part of Uzziah's reign. The series of prophecies that follows (chaps. 7-12) is connected with the invasion of Judah by the allied kings of Israel and Syria. In this emergency Ahaz, instead of seeking help from Jehovah, had hired the Assyrians to defend him against the confederate forces. The prophet predicts the overrunning of the land by these same Assyrians in whom the Jews had reposed their confidence; and afterwards the overthrow of the Assyrians themselves, and the universal establishment of the Messiah's kingdom, who is foretold under the name of Immanuel. The series closes with the millennial song of Zion.

Next we have a series of prophecies relating mainly to the heathen world (chaps. 13-23), through all of which the prophet keeps prominently in view the great truth that the nation which will not

acknowledge Jehovah and minister to the welfare of his people must perish. He begins with Babylon, and passes in order to Philistia, Moab, Syria (with which as a confederate nation Ephraim is joined), Ethiopia and Egypt (first separately and then conjointly), Babylon again under the enigmatical name of "the desert of the sea," Edom, and Arabia. Next follows a prophecy against "the valley of vision," that is, Jerusalem, to which is appended one against Shebna. The prophet then passes to Tyre, and so he brings this series to a close. The four chapters that follow (24-27) are general in their character. They exhibit Jehovah as the avenger and deliverer of his people, who abases the proud and destroys sinners as well within the pale of Zion as without in the heathen world, while he exalts his true worshippers to honor and salvation. The next series of prophecies (chaps. 28-35) was apparently delivered in view of the approaching invasion of the Assyrians, {302} by which the destruction of the kingdom of Israel was completed, and Judah was overrun and desolated; but which ended in the overthrow of the invading army, and the deliverance of Hezekiah and his kingdom. The prophet denounces, first upon Ephraim and then upon Judah and Jerusalem, God’s heavy judgments for their iniquities, especially for the sin of making Egypt instead of Jehovah their confidence; foretells the utter and perpetual desolation of Edom, which here represents all the powers that array themselves in hostility against God’s people; and describes in glowing language the glory and peace of Zion under the future reign of the Messiah.

Next follows the history of Sennacherib’s invasion and overthrow; of Hezekiah’s sickness and miraculous recovery, and of his sin in connection with the mission of Merodach-baladan’s servants. Chaps. 36-39. In the second part of Isaiah, which includes the last twenty-seven chapters, the prophet is occupied with the future redemption and glory of Zion. In the clear light of inspiration, and in accordance with the explicit prophecy that has just been quoted, he takes his stand in the future of Babylon’s supremacy, and of the captivity of Zion and the dispersion of her children; and he comforts the true Israel by the promise of restoration and elevation to a greater than the former glory, when all nations shall submit themselves to Jehovah, and shall minister to the peace and welfare of Zion. If we divide these twenty-seven chapters into three equal sections of nine chapters each, the first and second close with the words: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (chaps. 48:22; 57:21); while the third ends with a more extended, threatening against the wicked (chap. 66:24). The prominent characteristics of these three sections are thus given by Keil:

"The first of these sections (chaps. Matthew-48) portrays the relation of Israel to the heathen nations; and from the redemption of Israel effected through Cyrus, the servant of God, it unfolds the certain victory of the Theocracy over the gods and powers of the heathen world. The second section (chaps. 49-57) {303} exhibits Israel as the seat of salvation for the world. This it does by carrying out the thought that, just as Cyrus is to redeem Israel from the Babylonish captivity, so must the true servant of Jehovah, by his vicarious suffering and death, make expiation for sin, raise the covenant people to true glory, and make them, through the establishment of ’the sure mercies of David’ (55:3), the centre of salvation for the whole world. Finally in the third section (chaps. 58-66), after an exhortation in which the sins of the people are acknowledged and rebuked (chaps. 58, 59), the prophet foretells, in a series of majestic images, how the Theocracy shall be glorified when it shall become, in connection with the creation of a new heaven and a new earth, the perfected kingdom of God." Introduction to the Old Testament, § 65. This view of the

glorification of the Theocracy in the latter days is preëminently just, provided only that we do not understand the Theocracy in a gross literal sense. It is the true kingdom of God, once embodied in the old Theocracy, but now existing under the freer forms of Christianity, that is heir to all this glory.

7. As Isaiah holds the first place among the Hebrew prophets in the canon, in the extent of his writings, and in the fulness of his prophecies concerning the Messiah and his kingdom, so has he been first also in receiving the assaults of those who deny the supernatural character of revelation. Since the last quarter of the last century persistent attempts have been made to show that the whole of the second part (chaps. Matthew-66) and various sections of the first part, particularly all those that relate to the overthrow of Babylon, belong not to Isaiah, but to an unknown prophet who lived about the close of the exile. In support of this view many arguments have been adduced; but the real argument which lies at the foundation of the whole is the belief that no such insight into the future is possible as that which this part of the book manifests, upon the supposition that Isaiah was himself the author of it. The denial of the genuineness of the chapters in question began and has always gone hand in hand with the denial of the reality {304} of prophetic inspiration. In the view of rationalists prophecy is no revelation of the future through the illumination of the Holy Spirit. It is only anticipation and shrewd conjecture of the future from the course of the present. The possibility of prophecy, therefore, is limited by the possibility of human foresight. Reasoning from this false position, the critic first assumes that Isaiah cannot have been the author of the last part of the book which bears his name, and then proceeds to find arguments against its genuineness. To meet him we must plant our feet firmly on the great historic truth that God has made to men a supernatural revelation, of which prophecy in the proper sense of the word-the revelation of the future by his Spirit-constitutes an important part. We do indeed find that in the matter of prophecy, as in all other parts of God’s operations, the great law is: "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." The way for the fuller revelations is prepared by previous intimations of a more general character. Precisely so was it in the present case. Moses himself had more than once predicted the captivity of the covenant people and the desolation of their land as the punishment of their foreseen apostacy from God’s service, and also the preservation of a remnant and its restoration upon repentance. Lev., chap. 26; Deut., chaps. 28-32. When Solomon had dedicated the temple, and his kingdom was at the zenith of its glory, he received from the mouth of God himself the solemn warning: "If ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them; then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a by-word among all people." 1 Kings 9:6-7. When the prophet wrote, these awful threatenings had been fulfilled upon the kingdom of the ten tribes, and he had been commissioned to announce their approaching fulfilment upon Judah also, and that in the form of a captivity {305} in Babylon: "Behold, the days come, that all that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons which shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon" (39:6, 7). Micah also had foretold, in express terms, both the Babylonish captivity, and the subsequent delivery of God’s people (4:10). We see, then, what a full preparation had been made for the revelations vouchsafed to Isaiah in the chapters now under consideration. They relate not to something new and unheard

of, but to a captivity which he had himself foretold in accordance with the threatenings of God by former prophets. Under the illumination of the Holy Spirit he is carried into the future of Zion. In prophetic vision he sees her land wasted, her temple burned, and her children groaning in captivity. As the nearest interposition of God in her behalf, he foretells her liberation by Cyrus, the anointed of the Lord, and her restoration to the promised land. But this is only the earnest and pledge of a higher redemption through the Messiah, the true servant of Jehovah, under whom she shall be glorified with a perpetual salvation, and her dominion extended over all the earth. To limit the prophet's vision to the deliverance from Babylon would be to make him a messenger of glad tidings which mocked the hopes of the covenant people; for this deliverance did not fulfil the just expectations which his lofty promises awakened in the bosoms of the pious remnant of Israel. No; it is in Christ's redemption alone, of which that of Cyrus was only a shadow, that Zion receives in full measure the glorious promises which shine forth in this part of Isaiah.

If now we consider the form of these promises, we find that they bear throughout the stamp of true prophecy, as distinguished from history. They have neither the dress of prose history, with its dates and circumstantial details, such as we find in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, nor of historic poetry, like the song of Deborah and Barak; like the seventy-eighth {306} hundred and fifth, and hundred and sixth psalms. They are expressed in a series of poetic images, in which, with the exception of the name of Cyrus, all is general; images, moreover, drawn for the most part, not from the great events connected with the conquests of Cyrus, but from the earlier history of Israel. Let any one read, for example, the forty-sixth and forty-seventh chapters of Isaiah, and ask himself whether a writer who lived in Cyrus' day could have described the fall of Babylon without specific allusions to the agencies by which it was brought to pass. As to the historic references which some find to the march of the Jewish caravans of returning captives through the desert that lay between Babylon and Palestine, whoever reads the passages in question without a previously formed conclusion, must be satisfied that they are poetic descriptions of the redemption and restoration of God's people borrowed mainly from the primitive journey of Israel from Egypt to Canaan through the wilderness of Arabia. God, as then, goes before his people, opening for them in their extremity "rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys;" making "the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." Even Cyrus is mentioned not as the king of Persia, but as a man raised up from the east to execute God's vengeance on the oppressors of his people.

According to Ctesias and Plutarch, the name Cyrus signifies sun. Strabo says that his name, before ascending the throne of Persia, was Agradales. Some are of opinion that the word Cyrus (Heb. Koresh) was an appellation common to the kings of Persia. We do not need, however, the help of this hypothesis. God himself explains the ground on which he is mentioned by name: "For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, have I even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me" (45:4). According to Josephus (Antiq. 11. 1, 2), Cyrus was moved to issue his decree for the liberation of the Jews by a knowledge of the prophecies of Isaiah in which he is mentioned by name. With this agree the terms of the edict: "The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah." Ezra 1:2, compared with Isaiah 44:28. If this view be correct, the mention of Cyrus by name was a part of God's plan for the restoration of the covenant people.

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It is not true, as has been asserted, that the prophet follows Cyrus in the details of his conquests. On the contrary, his notices of him are few and general. As to the sins of the people which he rebukes, they may be all naturally referred to the times of Isaiah, while some of them, as the neglect of the established sacrifices and oblations (43:23, 24), and the offering of sacrifices in connection with an impure heart and life (66:3), presuppose the existence of the temple and altar at Jerusalem, where alone sacrifices could be lawfully offered. The sin of seeking heathen alliances (57:9) points also unmistakably to the same period. Although the prophet is carried forward in vision to the future of the covenant people, he does not wholly forget the men of his own generation, but occasionally administers to them severe rebukes, thus mingling the present with the future, after the manner of all the prophets. The other arguments which have been urged against the genuineness of this part of Isaiah are only of secondary importance, and can readily be answered. It is said that the style is more diffuse and flowing than in the first part. The answer is that this agrees well with both the altered circumstances of the prophet and the altered character of his theme. Most of his earlier prophecies were delivered under the pressure and excitement of public life, when he went before rulers and people charged with specific messages from Jehovah, and these, too, mostly of a denunciatory character. But the part now under consideration was written in the serenity of retirement, with the general purpose of comforting God’s people by a view of the future glory in reserve for them. It is entirely natural, then, that the style of the first part should be more concise and abrupt, that of the latter more diffuse and flowing; even if we do not make allowance for the influence of age. But notwithstanding this difference between the two parts, both have the same general costume, and the same peculiar expressions and turns of thought, by which they are sufficiently marked as the productions of the same pen. It should be added that the Hebrew of this second part of Isaiah is in general as pure as that of the first part. The few Chaldaisms which it exhibits may be explained as belonging to the poetic diction. Such Chaldaisms exist, moreover, in the earlier books. "Some words, as seganim (princes, 41:25), may be explained by the intercourse {308} of the Jews with the Assyrians in the days of Isaiah." Davidson’s Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 857.

8. It has been shown that the arguments against the genuineness of this part of Isaiah (and by parity of reason against certain sections of the first part) have their ground in the denial of prophetic inspiration, and cannot endure the test of sober criticism. The evidence, then, for the genuineness of these chapters remains in its full force, and it is of the most weighty character. If we look to external testimony, there is the undeniable fact that, as far back as we can trace the history of the book of Isaiah, they have constituted an integral part of it. They are recognized as such by Josephus (Antiq. 11. 1, 2); by Jesus the son of Sirach, in the book called Ecclesiasticus (48:24, 25); and always in the New Testament when quotations are made from them- Matthew 3:3; Matthew 8:17; Matthew 12:17-21; Luke 3:4; Luke 4:17-19; John 1:23; John 12:38-41, where a quotation from the last part of Isaiah is joined with one from the first part; Acts 8:28-33; Romans 10:16; Romans 10:20-21. That they were appended by fraud and forgery no one pretends to affirm. The character of this part of the book, not less than the character of those who had the Jewish canon in custody, is a sufficient protection against such a supposition. That they should have been appended through ignorance is inconceivable. How can the name of so great a prophet have remained unknown? According to the hypothesis in question, he lived about the close of the Babylonish captivity. He was contemporary, therefore, with Daniel; with Zerubbabel also, Jeshua, and the other chiefs of the restoration. Did no one of these know who was the man that prophesied

so abundantly of the work which they had so much at heart? And did his name indeed escape the knowledge of the learned scribe Ezra? And if they did not know his name, why did they append his writings to those of the true Isaiah, thus tacitly ascribing to him their authorship? Why did they not leave them without a name, as they did the books of Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles? That these chapters have always constituted a part of the book of {309} Isaiah, and been acknowledged as such, is a fact which admits of but one explanation; that, namely, of their genuineness. The Great Unknown, as he is called, is no other than Isaiah himself, whom the principles of certain critics do not allow them to acknowledge as Isaiah. The internal evidence for the genuineness of these chapters has already been partly considered in an incidental way. It is found in the purity of the Hebrew, which belongs to the age of Isaiah, not of Cyrus; in the undeniable allusions to the temple sacrifices and oblations as then existing (43:23, 24), and to the sin of seeking heathen alliances (57:9); and especially in the fact that a writer living near the close of the exile must have referred in a more particular and historic way to the great events connected with Cyrus' conquests. It may be added that there are in the later prophets some clear allusions to this part of Isaiah. Jeremiah, who undeniably made use of prophecies contained in the first part of Isaiah, was acquainted with the second part also. Compare Jeremiah 10:3-4, with Isaiah 40:19-20 :19-20; Isaiah 41:7; Isaiah 41:7; Jeremiah 31:35, with Isaiah 51:15, where a whole clause is repeated from Isaiah, which agrees in the Hebrew to every letter; Jeremiah 50:2, with Isaiah 46:1-2. Compare also Zephaniah 2:15, with Isaiah 47:8; Nahum 1:15, with Isaiah 52:7.

9. The arguments urged against the genuineness of certain sections of the first part of Isaiah are for substance the same as these that have now been examined, and need not a separate consideration. We come on solid grounds to the conclusion that Isaiah was the author of the whole collection of prophecies which bear his name, and that the arrangement of these prophecies in their present form also proceeded from him.

II. JEREMIAH AND THE BOOK OF Lamentations 10. In passing from Isaiah to Jeremiah, the contrast is as great as it can well be; and yet it is a contrast necessary to the completeness of divine revelation, which employs men of all characters and temperaments, and living in every variety of outward circumstances. Isaiah, like the apostle John, seems {310} to have lived above his personal relations in the sphere of divine truth. He never alludes to his private history, except where the nature of a given narrative requires it. It is not probable that he was subjected to such an ordeal of persecution as that through which Jeremiah passed. However this may be, we gain almost no knowledge of his private life from the book of his prophecies. But Jeremiah, like the apostle Paul, unfolds to us very fully the history of his inward and outward life. With his peculiarly tender and sensitive mind it could not have been otherwise. If he had not woven into his prophecies his own inner and outer life, he would not have written naturally, and therefore truthfully. Through this interweaving of biography with revelation, God has given in the case of Jeremiah, as in that of the great apostle to the Gentiles, a rich storehouse of truth for the instruction and comfort of his persecuted and suffering servants in all ages. With the simplicity of truth, the prophet informs us how the men of Anathoth, his native place, conspired to take away his life (11:18-23; 12:6); how Pashur, the son of Immer, smote him and put him in the stocks (20:1-6); how in the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign he was accused before the princes by the priests and false prophets as a man worthy of death, but acquitted by them (chap. 26); how afterwards he and Baruch were hidden by Jehovah (chap 36); how under Zedekiah he was

repeatedly imprisoned (chaps. 32:2; 33:1), and thrust into dungeons (chaps. 37, 38); how upon the conquest of the city by the Chaldeans he was released from his fetters and honorably treated (chs. 39:11-14; Matthew:1-4); and how afterwards he was forced to go into Egypt with the fugitive Jews (chaps. 42, 43). In connection with this external history, we have a vivid portraiture of his inward conflicts. Most deeply does he sympathize with his countrymen in the calamities which their sins have brought upon them; yet he is rewarded only with curses, because he faithfully forewarns them of the judgments of heaven which are fast approaching, and which can be averted only by hearty repentance and reformation. "Woe is me, my mother," {311} he cries out in his anguish, "that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me" (15:10); and like Job he loses all composure under the pressure of his sorrows, and bitterly curses the day of his birth (20:14-18). Again we see him in the hands of his persecutors serenely committing himself to God, and calmly warning them against the guilt of shedding his blood (26:12-15). In such alternations of impatience and faith we have a true portraiture of the struggle of grace against the weakness of nature; and it is this which gives it especial value as a part of revelation, which never exhibits good men in a fictitious light, but always in the sober livery of truth.

11. Jeremiah was of priestly descent (1:1); but that Hilkiah, his father, was identical with the high priest who found in the temple the book of the law (2 Kings 22:8), rests upon mere conjecture. Anathoth, his native place, was in the land of Benjamin, about four miles north of Jerusalem. He was called to the prophetical office in his youth, and exercised it in his native land from the thirteenth year of Josiah to the close of Zedekiah’s reign, through a period of about forty-one years (chap. 1:3); and afterwards in Egypt, whither he was carried by the rebellious remnant of the people (chaps. 43, 44). His first appearance, therefore, was about one hundred and thirty-one years after that of Isaiah, if we reckon from the last year of Uzziah, and some seventy or more after the close of Isaiah’s prophecies. During all this time the religious and moral condition of the Jewish nation had been steadily changing for the worse under such kings as Manasseh and Amon; nor could the zealous efforts of Josiah avail to check the swelling tide of idolatry and profligacy. Sent by Jehovah in such a degenerate age to rebuke the wicked rulers and people for their sins, and to forewarn them of God’s impending judgments, he was necessarily subjected to much persecution. Isaiah had administered stern rebukes to Ahaz and his people, but he had encouraged {312} them with the hope of successful resistance to the Assyrian power. But from the Chaldeans, who had succeeded the Assyrians as the ruling monarchy of the world, Jeremiah could promise no deliverance. In the name of the Lord he counselled submission, solemnly assuring the kings and princes of Judah that their reliance on Egyptian help would end in shame and disappointment (37:5-10). This brought upon him a load of calumny, insult, and persecution, which he keenly felt, but bore with fortitude, never swerving from the path of strict fidelity towards God. The prophecies of Jeremiah do not contain so many animating visions of the distant future as are found in Isaiah. He is more occupied with the sins of his own age, and the heavy judgments of God that impend over his countrymen. His mission is emphatically to unfold the connection between national profligacy and national ruin. This he does with a masterly hand, holding up to the world, in the character and fate, of his countrymen, a mirror for all time, in which wicked nations may see themselves and the ruin which awaits them. The whole compass of profane history does not contain so much clear instruction on this point as is crowded into the few pages of "the weeping prophet." If the book of God’s revelation could not have been complete without the

ecstatic visions of Isaiah, so neither could it have spared Jeremiah's vivid delineation of a profligate nation plunging itself into remediless ruin by its iniquities. At times, however, we find in Jeremiah also joyous anticipations of the good reserved for God's people in the latter days. He predicted not only the Babylonish captivity, but its termination at the end of seventy years, and the perpetual overthrow of Babylon and the Chaldean power (25:12-14; 29:10-14). See also chapters 30-33, where he describes, after the manner of Isaiah, the glory of the latter days. In Jeremiah we have an illustrious example of one whose reputation after death became as high and lasting, as the reproach which he endured before death was deep and protracted. The men of his generation could not appreciate his worth. His messages they treated with scorn, and him with contumely. Through a long life of faithful labor it was his lot to {313} endure reproach and calumny. But neither their unbelief, nor the burning of the roll of his prophecies by Jehoiakim could hinder the fulfilment of his words. When the captivity had come, as he had predicted, and especially when God's promise through him that it should end after seventy years had been fulfilled, he was honored as among the greatest of the prophets, and from that day onward his name became as ointment poured forth. The history of Jeremiah is also peculiarly encouraging to God's faithful servants who labor on for years amid difficulties and discouragements, and see no fruits of their toils. When he died it seemed as if all his solemn messages had been wasted upon that ungodly generation. But they were not lost to the Jews who lived to witness the fulfilment of his predictions in their captivity. In connection with the labors of Ezekiel and Daniel they contributed greatly to bring about that change for the better which took place during the exile. Through them, moreover, God provided a treasury of instruction and comfort for his people in all coming ages. How forcible a comment are his life and labors upon the apostolic declaration made many centuries afterwards: "Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

12. Of the prophecies of Jeremiah some are without date, and where the date is given the chronological order is not always observed. In the fourth year of Jehoiakim the prophet, by God's direction, dictated to Baruch, and he wrote in a roll of a book all the prophecies which God had communicated to him from the days of Josiah to that time (36:1-4). When the king had destroyed this roll, he was directed to prepare another containing the same prophecies, and "there were added besides unto them many like words" (36:27-32). Whatever use may have been made of this manuscript in the compilation of our present book, it is plain that it has not come down to us in its original form as a constituent part of Jeremiah's prophecies; since in these, as we now have them, there is an intermingling of messages before and after the fourth year of Jehoiakim. We cannot tell the origin of the present order, nor is it a matter of importance, so far as the instructions to be derived from Jeremiah's writings are concerned. Following the Hebrew order (see below) we have the following general divisions:

(1.) Prophecies addressed to Judah, with which are connected {314} many notices of Jeremiah's personal history, and at the close of which stands a message to Baruch. Chaps. 1-45.

(2.) Prophecies against foreign nations.

(3.) An appendix taken almost verbatim from 2 Kings 24:18-20 and chap. 25, and which seems to have been added by some later writer, as Ezra (chap. 52.)

It is not necessary to consider particularly the attempt made to disprove the genuineness of certain parts of Jeremiah's prophecies, since they all rest, not on critical grounds, but on the false principle

that has been already considered-the denial of the reality of prophetic inspiration. Men who deny that Isaiah could foresee the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, must deny also that Jeremiah could limit the duration of that captivity to seventy years. But with those who believe that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," such arguments cannot have weight. It is well known that Jeremiah, particularly in his prophecies against foreign nations, made use of earlier prophecies, as those of Isaiah and Obadiah. Compare Isa. chaps. 15, 16 with Jer. chap. 48; Obadiah with Jeremiah 49:7-17. The Alexandrine version differs unaccountably from the Hebrew text in its arrangement of the prophecies of Jeremiah. Those against foreign nations come after chap. 25:13, and also follow a very different order. Besides this, the Alexandrine exhibits a number of variations larger and smaller from the Hebrew text. The explanation of these differences in arrangement and in the text is a matter of uncertain conjecture.

13. The book of Lamentations is designated in Hebrew by the opening word Echa, how. The unanimous voice of antiquity ascribes it to Jeremiah, and with this tradition agree its internal character and style. It was written in view of the desolation of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, by an eye-witness of all the unutterable miseries connected with that catastrophe. While it laments, in strains of the deepest anguish, the desolation of Jerusalem with the slaughter and captivity of its inhabitants, and heaps together images of horror, it ascribes righteousness to God, and acknowledges the manifold {315} sins of the rulers and people as the cause of the overwhelming calamities that had come upon them. We see throughout the feelings of a tender-hearted and compassionate man, of a sincere patriot, and of a devout worshipper of Jehovah beautifully blended together. Sad as is the picture, it is to us who contemplate it in the light of history, not without its lessons of comfort as well as of warning. It teaches us that in the midnight of Zion’s adversity her covenant God is with her, and that she has an indestructible life. The prerogative which the Roman bard applied to his country: "Plunge her in the deep, she comes out the stronger"-this high prerogative belongs to the true spiritual Jerusalem, which no fire can destroy, nor floods overwhelm. The structure of this book is peculiar. Its five chapters constitute five poetical compositions, each complete in itself so far as outward form is concerned, but the whole inwardly bound together as parts of one great theme. The first and second chapters consist each of twenty-two verses, arranged in the order of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet; that is, the first verse beginning with the first letter, the second with the second, and so on. Each of the verses, moreover, contains as a rule three clauses. The third chapter contains sixty-six short verses of one clause each, the first three beginning with the first letter of the alphabet, the next three with the second, and so throughout. In this central chapter, therefore, the alphabetic structure reaches its culmination. The fourth chapter is like the first and second, with the exception that the verses generally consist of two clauses each. The fifth chapter contains twenty-two short verses of one clause each, like those of the third, but not arranged alphabetically. The more artificial structure of the third chapter marks it at once as peculiar. In this the prophet, as the representative of the pious part of the nation, bewails the calamities that have come upon himself and his country, expresses his firm confidence in God and his purpose to wait for deliverance in patient submission to his will, exhorts his countrymen to repentance, and offers up his fervent prayer to God that he would remember {316} his suffering people and punish their persecutors. The fifth chapter is a complaint of Zion in prayer to God in view of the terrible calamities that have come upon her. The other three chapters (the first, second, and fourth) are occupied mainly with a description of these calamities.

III.Ezekiel 15:1-8. Ezekiel was especially the prophet of the captivity. Daniel, his contemporary, received in Babylon glorious revelations respecting the future history of God’s kingdom; but he was a statesman, exercising the prophetical office, like David, only in an incidental way. Ezekiel, on the contrary, was expressly called and consecrated, like his predecessors Isaiah and Jeremiah, to the prophetical office. Like Isaiah, he has given us but few particulars concerning his personal history. He was the son of Buzi, and of priestly descent (1:3); belonged to that company of captives of the better class of the people who had been carried away with Jehoiachin by the king of Babylon when he made Zedekiah king in his stead (2 Kings 24:8-16); and lived with other captives at Tell-abib on the Chebar (perhaps the ancient Chaboras, a branch of the Euphrates), where he had a house and was married (1:1-3; 3:15; 8:1; 24:15-18). That he was held in high honor by his fellow-captives, as a true prophet of God, is manifest from the manner in which they assembled at his house to inquire of the Lord through him (8:1; 14:1; 20:1). Of his personal standing and reputation, as well as of the character of his hearers, we have an interesting notice in chap. 33:30-32, where instead of "talking against thee" (verse 30) we may better render, as in the margin of our English version, "talking of thee:" "Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people are still talking of thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show {317} much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." Ezekiel was called to the prophetical office "in the fifth year of king Jehoiachin’s captivity" (1:2), from which date he constantly reckons. Jeremiah’s activity as a prophet continued not only through the eleven years of Zedekiah’s reign, but for a considerable period afterwards; so that the two prophets were for some time contemporary, the one prophesying in Jerusalem and afterwards in Egypt, the other among the captives in Mesopotamia. The latest date which the prophecies of Ezekiel furnish is the twenty-seventh year of Jehoiachin’s captivity, about twenty-two years from the time when he was called to his office. How much longer he prophesied we have no means of determining. The date with which the book of Ezekiel opens is "the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month," which was also "the fifth year of king Jehoiachin’s captivity" (verse 2), or five hundred and ninety-five years before Christ. Reckoning back from this date thirty years, we come to the eighteenth year of Josiah, when he repaired the temple, and solemnly renewed the worship of God; and also to the first year of Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, who made Babylon independent of the Assyrian monarchy, and thus established a new era. Some have assumed the former of these two eras as that from which the prophet reckons; but the latter is more probable. Writing, as he does, under the Chaldean monarchy, it is natural that he should give, at the outset, a date by which the chronology of the whole series of his prophecies may be determined in reference to Chaldean history. Elsewhere he dates from Jehoiachin’s captivity.

16. It is not worth while to raise any questions concerning the purity of Ezekiel’s Hebrew, as compared with that of the earlier writers. The Holy Spirit is not concerned about the classic style of a prophet. He selects men whose natural qualities, providential training, and sanctified hearts fit them for the work assigned to them; and under his inspiration they speak and write in the dialect to which they and their hearers {318} are accustomed. Ezekiel’s style is marked by Chaldaisms, as

might have been expected from the circumstances in which he wrote. At the same time it is as forcible as it is peculiar, a style every way adapted to the work laid upon him. He was sent to "a rebellious nation;" to "impudent children and stiff-hearted," with the charge: "Be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house" (2:3, 4, 6). How well he fulfilled his mission his prophecies show, in which there is a wonderful fire and vehemence, joined with a wonderful variety of representation and imagery. Proverbs, parables, riddles, symbolic actions, vivid portraitures of human wickedness, terrible denunciations of God's approaching judgments, and glorious visions of future peace and prosperity in reserve for the true Israel-these are all familiar to him, and are set forth often with an exuberant fulness of imagery. When summoned by God to judge "the bloody city" of Jerusalem, ripe for the judgments of heaven, he heaps one upon another the black crimes of which she is guilty (22:6-12). The repetitions so remarkably characteristic of his style are those of energy, not of weakness. They are the repetitions of a battering-ram that gives blow upon blow till the wall crumbles before it. The same may be said of his amplifications, as in chaps. 1, 16, 23, 27, etc. He had a remarkable adaptation to his office; and his influence must have been very great in bringing about the reformation of the nation which took place during the captivity.

17. Ezekiel abounds in allegoric and symbolic representations. These give to many of his prophecies a dark and mysterious character, and make them difficult of interpretation. Jerome long ago called the book "an ocean and labyrinth of the mysteries of God." Nevertheless, the common reader finds in him much that is plain of apprehension, and full of weighty instruction. Reserving the general subject of the interpretation of prophecy for another place, we add here a few words {319} respecting the nature of allegories and symbols, and the principles upon which they are to be interpreted. An allegory is a narrative of a real event expressed in figurative language; that is, where one historic transaction is described under the image of another. Thus in chap. 17:1-10, the two great eagles are Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh; the highest branch of the cedar is Jehoiachin; the cropping off and carrying away of this branch is his removal by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon, etc. So also the extended descriptions of Jerusalem in chap. 16, and of Jerusalem and Samaria in chap. 23, under the figure of lewd women. For other beautiful examples of allegory see Judges 9:8-15; Isaiah 5:1-6; Psalms 80:1-19; Mark 12:1-9. In scriptural usage parables are not always distinguished from allegories. But properly speaking parables are narratives of supposed incidents-at least of incidents the reality of which is of no consequence-for the purpose of illustrating important truths; while allegories are figurative descriptions of actual events. A symbol represents some great truth or event of the future under the form of an action, or some material structure or arrangement. Prophetic symbols take the form of actions, and are of two kinds:

First, actual, where the prophet himself performs some action before the eyes of his countrymen; as in chap. 24:18, where Ezekiel, in obedience to God's command, refrains from all expressions of grief at the death of his wife; and chap, 37:16, 17, where he joins together two sticks to represent the reunion of the ten tribes with Judah and Benjamin. See also Jeremiah 27:2 compared with 28:10.

Secondly, ideal; that is, seen only in vision; like Ezekiel's prophecy upon the dry bones, chap. 37:1-10, and his measurements of the New Jerusalem with its temple, porches, etc. Chaps. Matthew-48.

It is often difficult to determine to which of these two classes a given symbol belongs. Did Jeremiah, for example, actually {320} go to Euphrates to bury the linen girdle there, or only in prophetic ecstacy? Jeremiah 13:1-11. Did Ezekiel perform the acts recorded in chap. 4 in reality or in vision? The answer to such questions is not of great importance, since either way the meaning of the symbols and the instructions which they furnish are the same.

18. If we divide the book of Ezekiel into two equal parts of twenty-four chapters each, the first part contains prophecies delivered before the overthrow of Jerusalem. These are arranged in chronological order. After an introductory chapter describing the vision of the glory of God which the prophet had when called to his office, there follows, in the form of visions, allegories, symbolic actions, and direct addresses, a series of vivid descriptions of the sins of Jerusalem and the judgments of heaven that are about to fall upon her. With these are interspersed denunciations of the false prophets that flatter the people in their sins, and fervent addresses to his fellow-captives remarkable for their plainness and evangelical spirit. The second part opens with a series of prophecies against seven foreign nations, in which the order of time is not observed-first, short prophecies against the four neighboring nations, Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia (chap. 25); secondly, a series of prophecies against Tyre, to which is appended a short prophecy against Sidon (chaps. 26-28); thirdly, a like series of prophecies against Egypt (chaps. 29-32). These prophecies were fulfilled through the same Chaldean power that executed God’s righteous vengeance on the covenant people. As the number seven is made out by separating Sidon from Tyre to which it properly belonged, it is rightly held to be a symbolic number, as in the book of Revelation and elsewhere, seven being the well-known symbol of completeness. With the announcement of the fall of Jerusalem (33:21) the thunders of God’s wrath that had so long rolled over her die away; and the series of prophecies that follows is mainly occupied, like the last part of Isaiah, with predictions of the future glory of Zion, in connection with God’s awful judgments upon the wicked within {321} and without her borders. Of these the last nine chapters contain a description of the vision which God vouchsafed to the prophet of a new Jerusalem, with its temple, priests and altars, rising out of the ruins of the former, of larger extent and in a more glorious form. He sees the land of Canaan also divided out to the returning captives by lot, as it was in the days of Joshua, but upon an entirely different plan. The general plan of the temple is after the model of Solomon’s; yet this vision is not to be understood as a mere prophecy of the rebuilding of Solomon’s temple with the city in which it stood, and of the repossession of the land after the Babylonish captivity. Several particulars in the description make it plain that it was not intended to be literally understood. See chaps. 42:15-20; 45:1-8; 47:1-12; and the whole of chap. 48. It is rather a symbolical representation of the coming deliverance and enlargement of the true spiritual Zion, which is God’s church, the same in all ages. The resettlement of the land of Canaan, and the rebuilding of the temple and city after the captivity, were a part indeed, but only a very small part of the "good things to come" which the vision shadowed forth. Its fulfilment belongs to the entire history of the church from Ezekiel’s day onward, and it will be completed only in her final triumph over the kingdom of Satan, and her establishment in permanent peace and holiness. As the time had not yet come for the old covenant to pass away, Ezekiel, who was himself a priest under the law of Moses, saw the future enlargement of God’s kingdom under the forms of this covenant. The New Jerusalem which God revealed to him had its temple, priests, altar, and sacrifices. All these were shadows of Christ’s perfect priesthood, of the spiritual temple of which he is the chief corner-stone, and of the spiritual priesthood of his people. 1 Peter 2:5-9. The literal priesthood,

altar, and sacrifices are for ever done away in Christ's one perfect offering for the sins of the world on Calvary. Heb. chaps. 9, 10. In interpreting the vision before us we should not curiously {322} inquire after the meaning of every particular chamber and pillar and door, but rather look to the general meaning of the whole. The angel measures, and the prophet records all the parts of the building. This signifies, in general, that God's care extends to all parts of his spiritual temple, and that he will see that they are in due time made perfect. The New Jerusalem described by the apostle John has much in common with this. It is, in truth, a vision of the same spiritual city, "whose builder and maker is God." But it differs from Ezekiel's vision in two respects. First, it belongs apparently to the glorified state of the church after the resurrection; secondly, it has nothing Jewish in it, neither temple nor altar. These shadows have for ever passed away.

IV. DANIEL.

19. The book of Daniel is assigned in the Hebrew canon to the third division, called Hagiographa. For the supposed grounds of this, see above, Chap. 13, No. 4. Daniel, like Jeremiah, has interwoven into his writings so many biographical notices of himself, that we gather from them a pretty full history of his life. He belonged to the royal family of Judah, being one of the number "of the king's seed and of the princes," whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried captive to Babylon in an invasion not recorded in the books of Kings or Chronicles (1:1-3). Thus was fulfilled the prophecy recorded in Isaiah 39:7. But God graciously turned this into a rich blessing to the Hebrew nation; for Daniel, having been educated with his three companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, "in the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans," and having "understanding in all visions and dreams," a remarkable proof of which he gave by relating to Nebuchadnezzar the dream which had gone from him, with its interpretation, was made "ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon," and at his request his three companions were also set over the affairs of the province of Babylon (chaps. 1, 2). He continued in high {323} honor at the court of Babylon as a wise and incorruptible statesman, and a prophet who had the gift of interpreting dreams, till the overthrow of the Chaldean empire by the Medes and Persians. By Darius the Mede he was treated with like honor (perhaps in connection with his interpretation of Belshazzar's dream, chap. 5), being made chief of the three presidents whom he set over his whole realm, and a plot formed to destroy him was frustrated through God's miraculous interposition and turned to the increase of his honor and influence; so that he continued to prosper "in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (chap. 6). He lived, therefore, to see the release of his countrymen from their long captivity, though it does not appear that he himself returned to his native land. Probably he continued in the service of the Persian court to the day of his death.

20. The first chapter is introductory to the whole book, giving an account of the selection and education of Daniel and his three companions by direction of the king of Babylon. The prophecies that follow naturally fall into two series. The first, occupying chaps. 2-7, is written in Chaldee from the middle of the fourth verse of chap. 2. It unfolds the relation which God's kingdom holds to the heathen powers as seen (1,) in a twofold vision of the four great monarchies of the world, in the form first of an image consisting of four parts, and then of four great beasts rising up out of the sea, the last monarchy being succeeded by the kingdom of the God of heaven, which shall never be destroyed (chaps. 2, 7); (2,) in the protection and deliverance of God's faithful servants from the persecution of heathen kings and princes (chaps. 3, 6); (3,) in the humbling of heathen monarchs

for their pride, idolatry, and profanation of the sacred vessels belonging to the sanctuary (chaps. 4, 5). Thus we see that the first three of these six chapters (2-7) correspond to the last three taken in an inverse order-the second to the seventh, the third to the sixth, and the fourth to the fifth. The second series, consisting of the remaining five chapters, is written in Hebrew. This also exhibits the conflict between God's {324} kingdom and the heathen world, taking up the second and third monarchies under the images of a ram and a he-goat. Chap. 8. There follow some special details relating to the nearer future, with some very remarkable revelations respecting the time of the Messiah's advent, the destruction of the holy city by the Romans, the last great conflict between the kingdom of God and its enemies, and the final resurrection. The intimate connection between the book of Daniel and the Revelation of John must strike every reader of the holy Scriptures. They mutually interpret each other, and together constitute one grand system of prophecy extending down to the end of the world. Both also contain predictions, the exact interpretation of which is extremely difficult, perhaps impossible, till the mystery of God shall be finished.

21. That they who deny the reality of miracles and prophecy should receive the book of Daniel as genuine and authentic is impossible. To review the history of the assaults made by them upon it, or of the volumes written in reply, is foreign to the plan of the present work. A brief summary only will be given of the grounds on which its claim to a place in the canon of the Old Testament is vindicated.

(1.) The unity of the book of Daniel is now conceded. "The two leading divisions are so related that the one implies the existence of the other. Both have the same characteristics of manner and style, though a considerable portion of the book is in Chaldee, and the remainder in Hebrew." Davidson after Keil and others, Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 916. This being admitted, the book as a whole claims Daniel for its author; for in it he often speaks in the first person, and in the last chapter the book is manifestly ascribed to him (12:4, 9).

(2.) The uniform tradition of the Jews ascribed the book to Daniel. It was on this ground that they received it into the canon of the Old Testament. The objection that they did not class Daniel with the prophets, but with the Hagiographa (see above, Chap. 13, No. 4) is of no account. Had the {325} book belonged, as the objectors claim, to the Maccabean age, it would not have found a place in the Hagiographa any more than in the prophets. The first book of Maccabees, which contains authentic history, was never received into the Hebrew canon, because, as the Jews rightly judged, it was written after the withdrawal of the spirit of prophecy. Much less would they have received, under the illustrious name of Daniel, a book written as late as the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, more than three centuries and a half after Daniel. That they should have done this through ignorance is inconceivable; that they could have done it through fraud is a supposition not to be admitted for a moment, for it is contrary to all that we know of their conscientious care with regard to the sacred text.

It may be added that the book of Baruch, which cannot be placed later than the Maccabean age, and is perhaps earlier, makes abundant use of the book of Daniel; and that the author of the first book of Maccabees had this book in the Alexandrine version, as is plain from the peculiar expressions employed by him in chap. 1:54-"they built the abomination of desolation upon the altar." Compare Daniel 9:27 of the Alexandrine version.

(3.) Josephus relates, Antiq. 11. 8. 5, among the other particulars of the visit which Alexander the Great made to Jerusalem, that the high priest Jaddus (Jaddua) showed him the book of Daniel "in which he signified that a certain one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians;" and that this, in connection with other extraordinary circumstances narrated by Josephus, had the effect of assuaging the king's wrath which had been excited against the Jewish high priest and people by their refusal to render him assistance against Darius, and of disposing him to bestow upon them great favors. Respecting the authenticity of this narrative there has been much discussion; but there is no ground for denying its substantial truth. It bears the stamp of reality, and it accounts, moreover, for the extraordinary privileges conferred upon the Jews by Alexander, which otherwise remain inexplicable.

(4.) Christ himself recognizes Daniel as a true prophet. He {326} refers to the future fulfilment of one of his prophecies as a most important sign for his disciples: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand), then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." Matthew 24:15-16; Mark 13:14. De Wette says indeed: "In the nature of the case Christ neither would nor could be a critical authority." That our Lord did not assume to be a critical authority in the ordinary sense of the term is evident; for in this very case he referred to the Alexandrine version, without pausing to notice its variation from the Hebrew. But our Lord knew whether the book of Daniel is a collection of real prophecies, or a spurious work composed several centuries after Daniel, imposing upon the world in Daniel's name pretended prophecies written after the events. Far be it from any one who believes in the reality of Christ's supernatural mission thus to make him set the seal of his divine authority to the work of an impostor. Hebrews 11:33-34 also refers undeniably to Daniel, chaps. 6 and 3.

(5.) The language of the book agrees with the age of Daniel. The writer employs both Hebrew and Chaldee, thus indicating that he lives during the period of transition from the former to the latter language. His Chaldee, moreover, like that of Ezra, contains Hebrew forms such as do not occur in the earliest of the Targums. His Hebrew, on the other hand, agrees in its general character with that of Ezekiel and Ezra. Though the Hebrew survived as the language of the learned for some time after the captivity, we cannot suppose that so late as the age of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees a Jewish author could have employed either such Hebrew as Daniel uses, or such Chaldee.

(6.) The author manifests intimate acquaintance with the historical relations, manners, and customs belonging to Daniel's time. Under this head writers have specified the custom of giving new names to those taken into the king's service (1:7); the threat that the houses of the magi should be made {327} a dunghill (2:5); the different forms of capital punishment in use among the Chaldeans and Medo-Persians; the dress of Daniel's companions (3:21); the presence of women at the royal banquet (5:2), etc. See Davidson's Introduction, p. 920, who sums up the argument thus: "It is improbable that an author in the Maccabean times should have been so uniformly accurate in his narrative, without having been in Babylon itself."

22. The objections urged against the book of Daniel are not of a nature to overthrow the mass of evidence in its favor. They may be considered under the following heads:

(1.) Various chronological and historical difficulties. It is said that Jewish history knows no expedition of Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiakim. The answer is that an expedition which apparently fell about this time is mentioned in 2 Kings 24:1. The actual capture of the city, however, seems not to have taken place before the fourth year of Jehoiakim; for Jeremiah, in a prophecy dated in this fourth year, speaks in terms which imply that the threatened blow had not yet fallen. Jeremiah 25:9. Perhaps Daniel, chap. 1:1, dates from the beginning of the expedition, so that it fell partly in the third and partly in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. It was in connection with this expedition of Nebuchadnezzar that he overthrew the army of Pharaoh-necho at Carchemish on the Euphrates; for that event also took place in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. Jeremiah 46:2.

We learn from Berosus, as quoted by Josephus (Antiq. 10. 11. 1), that when Nebuchadnezzar was engaged in this expedition, and had already conquered the Egyptians, he received tidings that the throne of Babylon was made vacant by the death of his father. Upon this he hastened with his light troops across the desert to Babylon, leaving the body of his army to return by the ordinary route.

It is said again that the dates given in Jeremiah 25:1 and Daniel, 2:1 cannot be reconciled with each other. In the former of these the first year of Nebuchadnezzar is the fourth of Jehoiakim, in which year, or at all events in the preceding year, {328} Daniel with his three companions was taken captive. Yet after they have been transported to Babylon and received an education there extending through three years (Daniel 1:5), we find Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream in the second year of his reign. To this it can be answered in part that in the second book of Kings and in Jeremiah the years of Nebuchadnezzar are obviously reckoned from the time when he was placed by his father, who was now old and infirm, at the head of his army, the title of king being applied to him by way of anticipation. 2 Kings 24:12; 2 Kings 25:8; Jeremiah 25:1. In the book of Daniel, on the contrary, his years are reckoned from his actual accession to the throne. But even then it is necessary to assume a considerable delay between his return from his Egyptian expedition and his formal investiture with the kingdom. The grounds of such a delay we can only conjecture. It may have been connected with the settlement of the affairs of the realm, which he found, Berosus tells us, administered by the Chaldeans, the kingdom being kept for him by the chief man among them; or the statement of Berosus may be wanting in fulness and accuracy. An argument from our ignorance cannot be urged against the authenticity of Daniel any more than in its favor. As to the acknowledged difficulties connected with the identification of Belshazzar and Darius the Median (chap. 5), it is sufficient to say that the notices which we have of the Chaldean monarchy after Nebuchadnezzar are so fragmentary and contradictory that no valid argument can be drawn from such difficulties against the authenticity of the book of Daniel. An old opinion identifies Belshazzar with Nabonnedus, who was either a son of Nebuchadnezzar or a grandson-called his son, Daniel 5:22, in the sense of his descendant. But Rawlinson (as quoted in Smith's Bible Dictionary) informs us that from inscriptions deciphered by him it appears that the eldest son of Nabonnedus was called Bel-shar-ezer=Belshazzar. He thinks that as joint king with his father he may have been governor of Babylon, when the city was taken by the Medes and Persians, and have perished in the assault, while, in accordance with the statements of Berosus, Nabonnedus himself survived. Upon either of the above suppositions, {329} Darius the Median will be Cyaxares II., son of Astyages and uncle to Cyrus, who succeeded to the title of king-"took the kingdom" (Daniel 5:31 and chap. 6)-though the conquest of Babylon was due to Cyrus himself,

who not long afterwards ascended the throne of the united kingdoms of Media and Persia. Another view makes Belshazzar the same as Evil-merodach, son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar, and identifies Darius the Median with Astyages. It is not necessary to decide which, if either of these two views, is correct.

(2.) An argument has been drawn from the fact that Jesus, the son of Sirach, does not mention the name of Daniel in the catalogue of his worthies (chap. 49). Such negative arguments are at best weak, and this loses all its force from the circumstance that he omits others, as Ezra and Mordecai (the twelve minor prophets also, since chap. 49:10 is regarded as spurious).

(3.) The alleged linguistic difficulties have been reduced, so far as the date of the book is concerned, to three or four Greek names of musical instruments; all of which-the instruments and their names-may naturally enough have been brought from Greece, the home of musical art, in the way of ordinary commercial intercourse. We are not called upon to defend the classic purity of Daniel's style. A Hebrew and educated at the court of Babylon, it was natural that his Chaldee should be colored with Hebrew forms, and his Hebrew with Chaldaisms. The argument from the general style of the book is in favor of its genuineness, not against it.

(4.) The commendations bestowed upon Daniel are thought to be inconsistent with his being the author of the book. Some, who admit its authenticity and its right to a place in the sacred canon, have been led by this consideration to adopt the opinion that Daniel, though essentially the author of the book, did not himself put it into its present form, but that some one of his countrymen put together his prophecies, prefixing to them introductory notices respecting the author. So far as the canonical authority of the book is concerned there are no serious objections to this hypothesis; but we may well ask whether undue weight is not given to the objection under {330} consideration. Throughout the whole book these commendatory notices are underlaid by the idea that Daniel's wisdom is not his own, but is given him by God, and for purposes connected with the welfare of the covenant people. By revealing to his servant secrets beyond the ken of all the wise men of Babylon, he manifests at once his own infinite perfections and the vanity of the Chaldean gods; and this Daniel records to the glory of the God of Israel.

(5.) The real objection to the book lies, as already intimated, in the supernatural character of its contents-in the remarkable miracles and prophecies which it records. The miracles of this book are of a very imposing character, especially adapted to strike the minds of the beholders with awe and wonder. But so are those also recorded in the beginning of the book of Exodus. In both cases they were alike fitted to make upon the minds of the heathen, in whose presence they were performed, the impression of God's power to save and deliver in all possible circumstances. The prophecies are mostly in the form of dreams and visions; and they are in wonderful harmony with Daniel's position as a minister of state at the court of Babylon, and also with the relation of Judaism to the heathen world. In the providence of God, the history of his covenant people, and through them of the visible kingdom of heaven, had become inseparably connected with that of the great monarchies of the world. How appropriate, then, that God should reveal, in its grand outlines, the course of these monarchies to the final and complete establishment of the kingdom of heaven (2:44, 45; 7:26, 27). In all this we find nothing against the general analogy of prophecy, but every thing in strict conformity with it. In the seventh chapter there appears, for the first time, an interpreting angel communicating to the prophet, in connected discourse, the meaning of the

vision which he has just seen. So also in the eighth chapter and onward. Such a mode of revelation is peculiarly adapted to the communication of details, and in the eleventh chapter these are given to an unparalleled extent. But this constitutes no {331} ground for denying the reality of the prophecy. Though the spirit of prophecy does not, as a general rule, give future events in their succession, this is sometimes done. So it is in God's announcement to Abraham of the bondage of his posterity (Genesis 15:13-16); and also in our Lord's prophecy of the overthrow of Jerusalem (Matt., chap. 24). In this respect it does not become us to prescribe rules for the wisdom of God.

We need not pursue this subject any farther. No one of the above difficulties, nor all combined, can outweigh the evidence we have for the genuineness and authenticity of the book of Daniel. On the contrary, the hypothesis that it belongs to so late an age as that of the Maccabees is beset with difficulties inconceivably greater. It has for its foundation not sober criticism, but the denial of the supernatural.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin] [BibleAuthenticity]

23. Twelve Minor Prophets

CHAPTER XXIII. THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS.

1. By the Jewish arrangement, which places together the twelve minor prophets in a single volume, the chronological order of the prophets as a whole is broken up. The three greater prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, stand in the true order of time. Daniel began to prophesy before Ezekiel, but continued, many years after him. The Jewish arrangement of the twelve minor prophets is in a sense chronological; that is, they put the earlier prophets at the beginning, and the later at the end of the collection. It does not appear, however, that they intended to follow the order of time with exactness. If they did, then in the judgment of many they committed errors. The particulars must be discussed as the books come up separately for consideration. In regard to the first six, the arrangement of the Septuagint differs from the Masoretic, which is followed in our version, as follows:

MASORETIC TEXT. SEPTUAGINT VERSION.

1. Hosea. 1. Hosea 2:1-23. Joel. 2. Amos 3:1-15. Amos. 3. Micah 4:1-13. Obadiah. 4. Joel 5. Jonah. 5. Obadiah 1:6. Micah. 6. Jonah 2:1-10. This precious collection contains the earliest as well as the latest writings of the Hebrew prophets, except such as are embodied in the historical books; for Hosea, Joel, and Amos, at least, are older than Isaiah, and the three prophets of the restoration are younger than Ezekiel and Daniel. The minor prophets exhibit a great diversity of manner and style-the rugged and sententious, the full and flowing, the oratorical, and the simple and unadorned. In them are passages attaining to {333} the sublimity of Isaiah, to the tenderness and pathos of Jeremiah, and to the vehemence of Ezekiel. Nowhere do we find sin rebuked with more awful severity, the true meaning of the law more clearly expounded, or the future glory of Zion more confidently predicted. That some of these writings are obscure and of difficult interpretation cannot be denied. This arises partly from the character of the style, as in the case of Hosea and others; partly from the nature of the themes discussed, as in Zechariah; partly from our ignorance of the times and circumstances of the writers. Nevertheless the prayerful student will find in them a rich treasury of divine truth, which will abundantly reward the labor bestowed upon it.

I.Hosea 3:1-5. The prophecies of Hosea were addressed immediately to the kingdom of the ten tribes, yet so that he did not overlook Judah; for he considered the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel as constituting together the covenant people of God. Of his personal history we know nothing except that he was the son of Beeri, for the transactions of the first three chapters may be best understood as symbolic acts seen only in vision. See above, Chap. 22, No. 17. For any thing that appears to the contrary, he was of Israelitish descent. As it is generally agreed that Isaiah began to prophesy in the last year of Uzziah’s reign, or but a few years before his death, while Hosea prophesied in the reign of Jeroboam II., the great-grandson of Jehu (2 Kings 14:23), who died about twenty-six years before Uzziah, it follows that Hosea, though partly contemporary with Isaiah, was called to the prophetical work at an earlier period. If we suppose him to have commenced prophesying two years before the death of Jeroboam, and then add the twenty-six

remaining years of Uzziah's reign, the sixteen of Jotham, the sixteen of Ahaz, and two of the first years of Hezekiah, we shall have a period of sixty-two years. To Israel this was a calamitous period, embracing four usurpations and murders of the reigning sovereigns, and three invasions of the Assyrians. {334} See the history in 2 Kings 15:8-31; 2 Kings 17:1-6. In the last of these Hosea, king of Israel, became tributary to Shalmaneser, king of Assyria; but he proved unfaithful to his master, and sought the alliance of So, king of Egypt. 2 Kings 17:4. For this the Assyrian king besieged him in Samaria, and after a siege of three years, took him with the city, and put an end to the kingdom of Israel in the fifth year of Hezekiah, king of Judah. Hosea seems to have closed his writings when Hoshea was seeking the help of Egypt, while he had at the same time a covenant with Assyria (12:1), consequently somewhere early in Hezekiah's reign.

4. Hosea's style is very concise and sententious, and his diction impresses even the casual reader as original and peculiar. A remarkable feature of his book is the constancy with which he sets forth the relation of Israel to Jehovah under the figure of the marriage-covenant; thus making unfaithfulness to God, and especially idolatry and idolatrous alliances, to be spiritual adultery and whoredom. This fact affords a key to the interpretation of the first three chapters, where the nature of the transactions requires that we understand them not as historic events, but as prophetic symbols occurring only in vision. The remaining eleven chapters contain perhaps a summary of the prophet's discourses to the people, written by himself near the close of his ministry. The prophecies of Hosea are repeatedly referred to in the New Testament as a part of the oracles of God. Matthew 2:15; Matthew 9:13; Matthew 12:7; Romans 9:25-26; and an allusion in 1 Corinthians 15:55. The prophet brings his book to a close with a delightful and refreshing view of the future prosperity and peace of the true Israel, chap. 14.

II. Joel 5. The prophecies of Joel, the son of Pethuel, give no specifications of place or time. But all the internal indications of the book point to Judea-probably Jerusalem, with its temple, altar, priesthood, and solemn assemblies-as the sphere of his labors, and to the date as among the earliest of those belonging {335} to written prophecy. The coincidences between Joel and Amos cannot well be regarded as accidental. Compare Joel 3:16 with Amos 1:2; Joel 3:18 with Amos 9:13; and notice the striking similarity in the close of the two prophecies. If we may assume that one of these prophets borrowed expressions from the other, the priority will naturally be given to Joel, from whose closing address (3:16) Amos takes the opening words of his prophecies. He must then be placed as early, at least, as the reign of Uzziah, and perhaps earlier. From the fact that Joel does not mention as among the enemies of Judah the Syrians who invaded Judah in the reign of Joash, the grandfather of Uzziah, some have placed him as early as the reign of Joash before this Syrian invasion. There is no ground for placing him after Uzziah; for his writings contain no allusion to the Assyrian power, which became so formidable soon after Uzziah's time.

6. The writings of Joel bear the full impress of culture in a prophetic school. His Hebrew is of the purest kind; his style is easy, flowing, elegant, and adorned with magnificent imagery; and for vividness and power of description he is not surpassed by any of the prophets. The immediate occasion of his prophecies is a double plague of drought and locusts, which has already invaded the land, and whose desolating progress he describes in poetic strains of matchless elegance and power. He summons the people of all classes to repentance, and promises, upon this condition, not only the restoration of the land to its former fruitfulness, but also the outpouring of God's Spirit upon all flesh, the triumph of the covenant people over all their foes, and an era of universal

holiness and peace. In this respect he is a model for all the prophets that come after him. They all with one accord look forward beyond the calamities of the present time, and the heavier impending calamities which they are commissioned to foretell in the near future, to the glory of the latter days, when Zion shall be made triumphant over all her foes, and the whole earth shall be given her for her inheritance. The apostle Peter, in his address on the day {336} of Pentecost, quotes a remarkable prophecy of Joel (2:28-32, compared with Acts 2:16-21). The opinion of some commentators, that under the figure of locusts are represented simply hostile armies, must be regarded as forced and unnatural. More probable is the opinion of Henderson and others, that the prophet uses an actual invasion of the land by locusts as the type of a more formidable invasion of foreign foes. But there does not seem to be any valid reason for departing from the simple interpretation above given.

III.Amos 7:1-17. Amos prophesied "concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake" (1:1). The time of this earthquake, which is simply mentioned by Zechariah (14:5) as occurring in Uzziah's reign, cannot be determined. We only know that Amos must have prophesied somewhere during the last part of the reign of Jeroboam II., when he was contemporary with Uzziah. Amos was thus contemporary with Hosea, and was a considerable number of years earlier than Isaiah, who began to prophesy near the close of Uzziah's long reign of fifty-two years. The very specific date "two years before the earthquake" indicates that his whole mission to Israel was executed within a single year, perhaps within a few months. It seems to have been after his return to Judah, when at least two years had elapsed, that he collected his prophecies and put them into their present form.

Amos describes himself as one of "the herdmen of Tekoa," a small town southeast of Bethlehem on the border of the wilderness of Judah. 2 Chronicles 20:20. It belonged to Judah, whence we infer that Amos was himself a Jew, a supposition which agrees well with the advice of Amaziah: "O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there" (7:12). He speaks of himself as "no prophet, neither a prophet's son" (7:14); which means that he had not been trained up for the prophetical office in any school of the prophets, as were "the sons of the prophets." 1 Kings {337} 20:35; 2 Kings 2:3, etc. God took him from following the herd, and gave him a commission to prophesy to His people Israel, an office which he executed at Bethel, where one of the golden calves erected by Jeroboam the son of Nebat was worshipped (7:10-17 compared with 1 Kings 12:29). In entire harmony with this historical notice is the character of his prophecies. His style has not the flowing fulness of Joel, but charms the reader by its freshness and simplicity. His writings abound in images taken from rural scenes and employments, some of which are very unique and striking in their character. See chaps. 2:13; 3:12; 5:19; 6:12; 9:2, 3, 9. He opens his prophecies by a solemn annunciation of the approaching judgments of heaven upon the nations bordering on Israel, specifying in each case the sin which has provoked God's wrath. The storm passes, without pausing in its course, over Syria, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah, till at last it reaches Israel. Here it rests, gathers blackness, and thunders long and loud. The reign of Jeroboam II was one of much outward prosperity. 2 Kings 14:25-28. The vices which Amos rebukes are those which belong to such a period-avarice, violence, oppression of the poor, perversion of justice, luxury, lewdness-all these joined with the idolatrous worship established by Jeroboam the son of Nebat. For such multiplied transgressions God will cause the sun to go down at noon, and darken the earth in the clear day. Their feasts shall be turned into mourning, their

songs into lamentation, and they shall go into captivity beyond Damascus. But while all the sinners among God's people thus perish by the sword, he will remember his true Israel for good. He will rear up again the fallen tabernacle of David, bring again the captivity of his people of Israel, and plant them for ever in their own land in peace and prosperity. Thus do the visions of Amos, like those of Hosea and Joel, close with a cheering view of the future glory of Zion. Amos is twice quoted in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 7:42-43; Acts 15:16-17).

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IV.Obadiah 1:8. The short prophecy of Obadiah is directed against Edom. The Edomites were conspicuous for their hatred of the covenant people. See Ezekiel 25:12; Ezekiel 35:5-15; Joel 3:19; Amos 1:11, and the parallel prophecy of Jeremiah 49:7-22. Accordingly they stand here, in respect to both their guilt and punishment, as the representatives of Zion's enemies in all ages. In like manner the promised victory of God's people over them shadows forth the universal triumph of the kingdom of heaven which is reserved for "the last days."

Concerning the date of Obadiah's prophecy expositors are not agreed. The whole question turns upon the interpretation of verses 11-14. That these contain an historic allusion to the exultation of the Edomites over the capture and plunder of Jerusalem cannot well be doubted. If this was the final capture of the city by the Chaldeans, then Obadiah's place will be after the beginning of the Babylonish captivity. But since no mention is made of the burning of Jerusalem, some suppose that the prophet refers to an earlier capture, as that by the Philistines and Arabians under Jehoram. 2 Chronicles 21:16-17. In favor of this view is urged the fact that Jeremiah, who was in the habit of using the writings of the earlier prophets, has much in common with Obadiah. That Jeremiah borrowed the language of Obadiah is far more probable than that both prophets availed themselves of an older document, as some have conjectured. Since, however, Jerusalem was taken more than once by the Chaldeans before its final overthrow (2 Kings chap. 24; Daniel 1:1), Obadiah may have referred to one of these earlier captures, and yet have written before Jeremiah penned his prophecy against Edom.

V. Jonah 9. We learn from 2 Kings 14:25 that Jonah, the son of Amittai, was of Gath-hepher, which is undoubtedly the same as Gittah-hepher, a town of the tribe of Zebulun in the northern part of Palestine (Joshua 19:13); and that he predicted the {339} successes of Jeroboam II. According to the general analogy of Scripture, prophecies like this, relating to one particular event, are not separated by any great space of time from their fulfilment. He belongs, therefore, in all probability, to the days of Jeroboam II, when Amos also flourished. There is no valid reason for assigning him, as some do, to an earlier date.

10. The story of the book of Jonah is too simple to need any analysis. His act in fleeing from God's presence, when commissioned to go to Nineveh with a threatening message, is very extraordinary; but such is the inconsistency and folly of human passion. The conduct of the mariners when overtaken by a tempest is not wonderful: it is in harmony with all that we know of ancient habits of thinking and acting. But what befell Jonah, when cast into the sea, is more than wonderful: it is miraculous. That there exist in the Mediterranean fish capable of swallowing a man entire is a well-attested fact. The original Hebrew mentions only, "a great fish." The Alexandrine version, and after that the New Testament, use the word whale apparently in the sense of any great sea monster. But whatever the fish may have been, his preservation alive in its body for the

space of three days, and his subsequent ejection upon the dry land, can be accounted for only by reference to the immediate power of God, with whom nothing is impossible. The effect of his preaching upon the Ninevites was remarkable; but much more so was his grief at its success, whereby God was moved to spare the city. The common opinion is that he feared for his reputation as a true prophet; but a deeper ground of his anger may have been that he rightly understood the design of his mission to the Ninevites to be that through repentance they might be saved from impending destruction; while he regarded them as the enemies of God's people, and unworthy of his mercy. However this may be, Jonah's mission to the Ninevites foreshadowed God's purposes of mercy towards the heathen world, and that too at a very suitable time, when the history of the covenant people, and {340} through them of God's visible earthly kingdom, was about passing into lasting connection with that of the great monarchies of the earth.

11. The authorship of the book of Jonah is not expressly given; but may be most naturally referred to the prophet himself. The few alleged Chaldaisims found in it may be explained as belonging to the provincial dialect of the prophet; since we have but an imperfect knowledge of the variations which the living Hebrew language admitted in this respect. In Matthew 12:39-41; Luke 11:29-32 the Saviour refers in explicit terms to events recorded in this book as being true history; nor can the historic character of the narrative as a whole be denied except on the ground that all records of the supernatural are unhistoric.

VI. Micah 12. Micah is called the Morasthite, probably because he was a native of Moresheth-gath, a small town of Judea, which, according to Eusebius and Jerome, lay in a southwesterly direction from Jerusalem, not far from Eleutheropolis on the plain, near the border of the Philistine territory. With this agrees the connection in which it is named (1:13-15); for Lachish, Mareshah, and Adullam also lay in that direction. He prophesied "in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." His prophetic activity began, therefore, soon after that of Isaiah, and he was contemporary with him, as well as with Hosea and Amos. His prophecies related to Samaria, the capital city of the kingdom of Israel, and to Jerusalem (1:1). We find accordingly denunciations against Samaria intermingled with his prophecies concerning Judah and Jerusalem. The people, moreover, are spoken of under the name of Jacob and Israel where, sometimes at least, as in chap. 3:9, Judah must be included. It is generally thought that the book of Micah contains only a summary of his prophecies, prepared perhaps in the days of Hezekiah. But this is not certain; for the reference in Jeremiah 26:18 obviously relates only to the particular prophecy quoted there.

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13. The book is commonly distributed into three sections: chaps. 1 and 2; chaps. 3, 4, and 5; and chaps. 6 and 7. Each of these opens with a summons to hear God's message, and then proceeds with expostulations and threatenings, which are succeeded by glorious promises. The second of these sections, which is the largest and contains the most extended promises, is addressed more particularly to the rulers of the people. The style of Micah is bold, vehement, and abrupt. His sudden transitions sometimes make his writings difficult of interpretation. He abounds in striking images, taken to a great extent, like those of Amos, from pastoral and rural life. Micah has one remarkable prophecy common to him with Isaiah. Chap. 4:1-3 compared with Isaiah 2:2-4. From the connection of the context the passage in Micah is generally thought to be the original. Besides this there is a general agreement between the two prophets in their representations; and

especially in the manner in which they perpetually mingle stern rebukes and threatenings with glorious promises relating to the Messiah and his kingdom. The remarkable prophecy concerning the Messiah's birth (chap. 5:2) is quoted with some variations in Matthew 2:5-6, and referred to in John 7:42. The Saviour's words, as recorded in Matthew 10:35-36; Mark 13:12; Luke 12:53 contain an obvious reference to Micah 7:6.

VII. Nahum 14. Nahum is called "the Elkoshite," probably from Elkosh, a village of Galilee, which Jerome (Introduction to Nahum) mentions as pointed out to him by his guide. The tradition which assigns for the place of his birth and residence the modern Alkush, an Assyrian village on the east side of the Tigris, a few miles above the site of the ancient Nineveh, rests on no good foundation. The prophecy of Nahum is directed against Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire. When the prophet wrote, this city was still in the height of its power (chap. 1:12; 2:8); oppressing the nations and purposing the conquest of Judah (chap. 1:9, 11; 3:1, 4). From chap. 1:12, 13 it appears {342} that the Assyrians had already afflicted Judah, and laid their yoke upon her. All these particulars point to the reign of Hezekiah as the probable date of the book.

15. The first chapter opens with a description of God's awful majesty and power, which nothing created can withstand. These attributes shall be directed to the utter and perpetual overthrow of Nineveh and the salvation of God's afflicted people. The second chapter begins a sublime description of the process of this destruction by the invasion of foreign armies. The third continues the account of the desolation of Nineveh by her foes. For her innumerable sins she shall be brought to shame before the nations of the earth, and made like populous No, that is, No-amon, the celebrated metropolis of upper Egypt, also called Thebes, whose children were dashed in pieces and her great men laid in chains. The present condition of Nineveh, a mass of uninhabitable ruins, is a solemn comment upon the closing words of the prophecy; "There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the report of thee shall clap their hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?"

VIII. Habakkuk 16. Respecting Habakkuk's personal history we have no information. The apocryphal notices of him are unworthy of credence. From the fifth and sixth verses of the first chapter it is evident that he prophesied not long before that series of invasions by the Chaldeans which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the people; that is, somewhere between 640 and 610 years before Christ, so that he was contemporary with Jeremiah and Zephaniah. The theme of his prophecy is, first, the overthrow of Judea by the Chaldeans, and then the overthrow in turn of the Chaldean monarchy, each power in turn for its sins. In the first chapter he predicts in a dramatic form-that of expostulation with God on the part of the prophet, and God's answer-the approaching desolation of the land by the Chaldean armies, whose resistless power he {343} describes in bold and striking imagery. In the second chapter the prophet appears standing on his watch to see what answer Jehovah will give to the expostulation with which the preceding chapter closes. He receives a comforting message, but one that will try the faith of God's people by its delay. Verse 3. It is an announcement of the overthrow of the Chaldean oppressor, carried out in a series of bold and vivid descriptions in which woe upon woe is pronounced against him for his rapine, covetousness, iniquitous oppression, and idolatry. The third chapter is a lyric ode in which the prophet, in view of both the judgments that God is about to execute on his countrymen through the Chaldeans (chap. 1), and the promised deliverance from them at a future period (chap. 2), supplicates and celebrates the future interposition of Jehovah for

the redemption of his people in language borrowed from their past history. Thus this sublime song is both a prayer for the renewal of God’s wondrous works in the days of old and a prophecy of such a renewal. The apostle Paul quotes the words of Habakkuk: "The just shall live by his faith" (2:4), and applies them to all believers (Romans 1:17). The language of chap. 1:5 implies that the desolation of the land by the Chaldeans would be a surprising event, which could not have been the case after the victory of Nebuchadnezzar over the Egyptians and his capture of Jerusalem in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, B.C. 606. It was also to be in the day of that generation-"in your days." Consequently we cannot date the prophecy earlier than B.C. 640, probably not before B.C. 630. The dedication of Habakkuk’s ode (3:19) "to the chief musician"-the Hebrew word is the same that so often occurs in the titles of the Psalms-implies that this ode was to be used in the solemn worship of God. The added words, "on my stringed instruments," are most naturally understood of those under his charge as a leader in the service of song in the sanctuary. Hence we infer with probability that Habakkuk was a Levite.

IX. Zephaniah 17. Zephaniah prophesied in the reign of Josiah (1:1), apparently while his work of reformation was in progress and {344} not yet completed (1:4-6, 8, 9); that is, somewhere between his twelfth and his eighteenth year (2 Chronicles 34:3-13). In the first chapter he predicts the utter desolation of Judah, and with it the destruction of all the patrons of idolatry and the rich and presumptuous sinners in Jerusalem. In the second chapter he exhorts the covenant people to repentance in view of the judgments that are coming upon them (verses 1-3), threatens the surrounding nations-Philistia, Moab, and Ammon-with desolation (verses 4-11), and denounces the judgments of God upon the Ethiopians and Assyrians (verses 12-15). In the third chapter, after a severe rebuke of Jerusalem for her incorrigible rebellion against God (verses 1-7), he foretells in glowing language the future purification and enlargement of Zion, and the destruction of all her enemies (verses 8-20). The style of Zephaniah is clear and flowing, having a general resemblance to that of Jeremiah. He has frequent allusions to the earlier prophets. Chap. 1:7 compared with Isaiah 34:6; chap. 2:13-15 compared with Isaiah 13:21-22; Isaiah 34:13-15; chap. 1:14, 15 with Joel 2:1-2; chap. 1:13 with Amos 5:11, etc. The genealogy of Zephaniah is given through Cushi, Gedaliah, and Amariah to Hezekiah; for in the original Hebrew the words Hizkiah and Hezekiah are the same. As it is not usual that the descent of prophets should be given with such particularity, it has been assumed, with some probability, that this Hezekiah was the king of that name; though in this case we should have expected the addition "king of Judah." The "chemarim," verse 4, are the idol-priests; that is, priests devoted to idol worship. In 2 Kings 33:5, where the writer is speaking of the reformation under Josiah, the word is translated "idolatrous priests;" in Hosea 10:5 simply "priests," which is its meaning in the Syriac language. Some have maintained that the invasion of Judah to which Zephaniah refers was that of the Scythians described by Herodotus, 1. 105; but this is very improbable. From the fact that "the king’s children" are included in the threatened visitation-in the Hebrew, "I will visit upon the princes and the king’s children" (1:8)-some have inferred that they must have been already grown and addicted to idolatrous practices; consequently that Zephaniah wrote later than the eighteenth year of Josiah. But, as Keil and others have remarked, the mention of the king’s children may have been added simply to indicate the universality of the approaching {345} visitation; not to say that the prophetic vision of Zephaniah may have anticipated the sin and punishment of these king’s children-Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim.

X. Haggai 18. Haggai is the first of the three prophets after the captivity, who are commonly called Prophets of the Restoration. His four short messages to the people were all delivered in the space of three months, and they all had reference to the rebuilding of the temple. By the slanderous representations of the Jews' enemies this work had been interrupted, as we learn from the fourth chapter of Ezra. Meanwhile the Jews, having yielded to the spirit of unbelief, had lost their zeal for God's cause and grown cold and indifferent. For this the prophets Haggai and Zechariah were sent to reprove them, while at the same time they encouraged them to resume the work, a mission which they successfully accomplished. Ezra 5:1-2.

19. The first message is dated "in the second year of Darius the king"-Darius Hystaspes, who ascended the throne of Persia B.C. 521-"in the sixth month, in the first day of the month." Chap. 1:1. In this message the prophet sharply reproves the people for their indifference to the cause of God's house and their selfish devotion to their own private interests, which have brought upon them the divine rebuke. Chap. 1:2-11. The effect of his words in exciting both rulers and people to renew the work upon the temple is added. Chap. 1:12-15. The second message "in the one and twentieth day" of the same month is throughout of an encouraging character. The elders who had seen the first house in its glory, were despondent in view of the comparative meanness of the new edifice. Jehovah promises them that "the Desire of all nations" shall come, that he will fill this house with glory, so that "the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former" (2:1-9). This promise was fulfilled in a material way in the second temple as renewed by Herod the Great. But the real reference is to its spiritual glory. It was honored by the presence of the Son of God, who is the brightness of the Father's {346} glory. In the third message, "in the four and twentieth day of the ninth month," the prophet in a sort of parable, rebukes the people for their heartless formality, which, like the touch of a dead body, defiles all their offerings and services, yet promises them God's blessing upon their repentance. Chap. 2:10-19. The last message, which was delivered on the same day, is wholly occupied with the future. Amid commotions and overturnings God will destroy the power of the heathen nations, and make Zerubbabel as a signet. The reference is to a seal-ring, and the promise is that God will preserve Zerubbabel from all the assaults of the wicked. Zerubbabel was one of the Messiah's ancestors (Matthew 1:12; Luke 3:27), and since the prophecy reached far beyond his day, the promise made to him extends to all faithful rulers whom God sets over his church but can have its perfect fulfilment only in the Messiah himself, of whom Zerubbabel was a type.

XI. Zechariah 20. Zechariah, the second and greatest prophet of the Restoration, calls himself the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo (1:1). But in Ezra the name of the father is omitted, perhaps as being less known, and he is called simply the son of Iddo (chaps. 5:1; 6:14), the word son being used in the general sense of descendant. There is no reason to doubt the identity of this Iddo with the priest of that name who went up from Babylon with Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Nehemiah 12:4); so that Zechariah, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, was of priestly descent. He began to prophesy two months after Haggai (chap. 1:1 compared with Haggai 1:1), and the two prophets were contemporary, at least for a short time.

21. The book of Zechariah may be naturally divided, according to its contents, into three parts. The first six chapters constitute the first of these parts. After a short introductory message (1:1-6) there follows a very remarkable series of visions relating to the reëstablishment of the Jews in their own land, and the future dispensations of God towards them; the whole being closed by a symbolic

prophecy of Christ as both priest and king upon the throne of David. To the second part {347} belong the prophecies contained in the seventh and eighth chapters. The occasion of the first of these was a question proposed to the prophet concerning the observance of a certain fast. He first rebukes the people for their formality, and then proceeds to encourage them in the way of duty, adding glorious promises respecting the future prosperity of Judah and Jerusalem. The remaining six chapters, constituting the third part, appear to have been written at a later time. They all relate to the future destinies of the covenant people, and, through them, of the visible kingdom of God on earth. But the first three of these chapters are mainly occupied with the nearer future, yet with glimpses at the final consummation in the latter days. They are generally understood to predict the conquests of Alexander the Great (9:1-8), the conflict of the Jews with their enemies in the Maccabean age (9:13-16), the advent of Christ (9:9), the corrupt and rapacious character of the Jewish rulers at that era, their rejection of Christ, and the consequent rejection of the nation by God (chap. 11). They also contain a prediction of the final reunion and restoration of "the house of Judah" and "the house of Joseph" (ch. 10). The remaining three chapters are occupied with the great and decisive conflict of the last days, which is to usher in the era of millennial glory.

22. The prophecies of Zechariah, containing as they do a portraiture of the destiny of God’s people to the end of time, and comprehending so many mighty events which yet await their fulfilment, present to the interpreter many difficulties, some of which have hitherto been found insoluble, and will probably remain unsolved till the mystery of God contained in them shall have been fulfilled. One thing, however, they clearly reveal to us: that the future triumph of God’s kingdom is certain, and that all the great movements in the history of the nations, however unpropitious they may seem at the time, are parts of the mighty plan of divine providence which shall end in making the kingdoms of this world the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

{348} In Matthew 27:9-10, there is a quotation for substance of the words of Zechariah 11:13, but they are ascribed to "Jeremiah the prophet." Of this discrepancy various explanations have been proposed. Some have suspected an early error in the manuscript of Matthew’s gospel; but of this there is no satisfactory proof. Others have thought that the part of our present book of Zechariah which contains the prophecy in question actually belongs to Jeremiah; but upon this hypothesis it remains a mystery how it should have been attached to the writings of Zechariah.

Upon the ground of diversity of style and other alleged internal marks, it has been maintained by some biblical scholars that the whole of the last part of Zechariah belongs to an earlier age; but the validity of this conclusion is denied by others. To give even a summary of the opposing arguments would exceed the limits of the present work. The internal proofs being very nearly balanced against each other, the fact that these chapters have always been connected with the writings of Zechariah ought to be allowed a decisive influence in favor of their genuineness.

XII. Malachi 23. In Hebrew Malachi signifies my messenger, being the very word employed in chap. 3:1. Hence some have supposed that this is not the prophet’s name, but a description of his office. Such a supposition, however, is contrary to scriptural usage, which in every other case prefixes to each of the prophetical books the author’s proper name. Malachi has not given the date of his prophecies, but it can be determined with a good degree of certainty from their contents. The people had been reinstated in the land, the temple rebuilt, and its regular services reëstablished. Yet they were in a depressed condition, dispirited, and disposed to complain of the severity of

God’s dealings towards them. Their ardently cherished expectation of seeing the Theocracy restored to its former glory was not realized. Instead of driving their enemies before them sword in hand, as in the days of Joshua, or reigning triumphantly over them in peace, as in the days of Solomon, they found themselves a handful of weak colonists under the dominion of foreigners, and returning to the land of their fathers solely by their permission. All this was extremely humiliating to their worldly pride, and a bitter disappointment of their worldly hopes. Hence they had fallen into a desponding and {349} complaining state of mind. While rendering to God a service that was not cheerful but grudging, complaining of its wearisomeness, withholding the tithes required by the law of Moses, and offering in sacrifice the lame and the blind, they yet complained that he did not notice and requite these heartless services, and talked as if he favored the proud and wicked. "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and walked mournfully before him? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered" (3:14, 15). To these sins they had added that of putting away their Hebrew wives, that they might marry foreign women (2:10-16). All these circumstances point to the administration of Nehemiah, probably the latter part of it; for after his visit to Babylon in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 13:6), he found upon his return, and has described in the last chapter of his book precisely the same state of affairs. Malachi is thus the last of all the prophets.

24. He opens his prophecies by reminding the people of God’s great and distinguishing love towards them and their fathers, which they were so slow to acknowledge. He then reproves them sharply for the sins above referred to, and forewarns them that the Lord, of whose delay they complain, will suddenly come to his temple to sit in judgment there-an advent which they will not be able to endure; for it will consume the wicked root and branch, while it brings salvation to the righteous (3:1-5; 4:1-3). In view of the fact that the revelations of the Old Testament are now closing, he admonishes the people to remember the law of Moses, and closes with a promise of the mission of "Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (4:5, 6). This promise, with that contained in chap. 3:1, is repeatedly referred to in the New Testament, and applied to the coming of John the Baptist as our Lord’s forerunner. The opening words of the prophecy, chap. 1:2, are quoted by the apostle Paul (Romans 9:13).

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin] [BibleAuthenticity]

23b. Apocryphal Books of Old Testament

APPENDIX. THE APOCRYPHAL BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

1. The Greek word Apocrypha, hidden, that is, hidden or secret books, was early applied by the fathers of the Christian church to anonymous or spurious books that falsely laid claim to be a part of the inspired word. By some, as Jerome, the term was extended to all the books incorporated by the Alexandrine Jews, in their Greek version, into the proper canon of the Old Testament, a few of which books, though not inspired, are undoubtedly genuine. Another designation of the books in question was ecclesiastical, books to be read in the churches for edification, but not as possessing authority in matters of faith. But at the era of the Reformation, when these books were separated by the Protestant churches from the true canon, and placed by themselves between the books of the Old and the New Testament, Jerome's old epithet Apocrypha, or the Apocryphal books, was applied to the entire collection.

How the term Apocrypha, hidden, became associated with the idea of spurious or anonymous is doubtful. According to Augustine, it was because the origin of these books was not clear to the church fathers. A later conjecture, expressed by the translators of the English Bible, is "because they were wont to be read not openly and in common, but as it were in secret and apart." Still more probable is the opinion that they were so called from their close relation to the secret books containing the mysteries-secret doctrines-of certain heretical sects.

2. The date of several of the apocryphal books is very uncertain; but none of them can well be placed as early as the beginning of the third century before Christ. Though some of them were originally written in Hebrew or Aramean, they have been preserved to us only in Greek or other versions. None of them were ever admitted into the Hebrew canon. The ground of their rejection is well stated by Josephus (Against Apion 1, 8), namely, that from the time of Artaxerxes, Xerxes' son (Artaxerxes Longimanus, under whom Ezra led forth his colony, Ezra 7:1; Ezra 7:8), "the exact succession of the prophets" was wanting. The Alexandrine Jews, however, who were very loose in their ideas of the canon, incorporated them into their version of the Hebrew Scriptures. How far the mass of the people distinguished between their authority and that of the books belonging to the Hebrew canon is a question not easily determined. But {351} Josephus, as we have seen, clearly recognized their true character. Philo also, as those who have examined the matter inform us, though acquainted with these books, never cites any one of them as of divine authority. The judgment of these two men doubtless represents that of all the better informed among the Alexandrine Jews, as it does that of the Saviour and his apostles, who never quote them as a part of the inspired word.

3. During the first three centuries of the Christian era very few of the church fathers had any knowledge of Hebrew. The churches received the Scriptures of the Old Testament through the medium of the Alexandrine Greek version, which contained the apocryphal books. It is not surprising, therefore, that the distinction between these and the canonical books was not clearly maintained, and that we find in the writings of the church fathers quotations from them even under

the name of "divine scripture." But Jerome, who translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew, understood perfectly the distinction between the canonical and the apocryphal books. The canon which he has given agrees with that of the Palestine Jews. He says (Prologus Galeatus) of the apocryphal books Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Judith, Tobit, and Maccabees, that the church reads these "for the edification of the people, not for authority in establishing church doctrines." The same distinction is made by Rufinus, the contemporary and antagonist of Jerome. The language of Augustine was more wavering and uncertain. At the Council of Hippo, A.D. 393, at which he was present, the "ecclesiastical books," as the apocryphal books are called, were included in the catalogue of sacred books; and from that day to the time of the Reformation the extent of the Old Testament canon was regarded as an open question. But the Romish Council of Trent included the apocryphal books in the canon of the Old Testament, with the exception of Esdras and the prayer of Manasseh, pronouncing an anathema on all who should hold a contrary opinion. The Protestant churches, on the other hand, unanimously adhered to the Hebrew canon, separating from this the apocryphal books as useful for reading, but of no authority in matters of faith.

4. Although the Protestant churches rightly reject the apocryphal books as not belonging to the inspired word, the knowledge of their contents is nevertheless a matter of deep interest to the biblical scholar. The first book of Maccabees is in the main authentic, and it covers an important crisis of Jewish history. All of the apocryphal books, moreover, throw much light on the progress of Jewish thought, especially in the two directions of Grecian culture and a rigid adherence to the forms of the Mosaic law. Keil divides the apocryphal books into historical, didactic, and prophetic, but with the remark that this division cannot be rigidly carried out. In the following brief notice of the several books the arrangement of the English Bible is followed.

{352} I. THE TWO BOOKS OF ESDRAS.

5. The first two in order of the apocryphal books in the English version bear the title of Esdras, that is, Ezra. The Greek Bible has only the first, which stands sometimes before our canonical book of Ezra, and sometimes after Nehemiah. In the former case it is called the first book of Esdras, that is, Ezra; in the latter the third, Nehemiah being reckoned as the continuation of Ezra, and called the second book of Ezra. It gives the history of the temple and its service from Josiah to Ezra-its restoration by Josiah, destruction by the Chaldees, rebuilding and reëstablishment through Zerubbabel and Ezra. Its original and central part is a legend from an unknown source respecting a trial of wisdom between Zerubbabel and two other young men, made in the presence of Darius, king of Persia, which resulted in Zerubbabel’s favor, and so pleased the king that he issued letters for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and conferred many other favors on the Jews. Chaps. 3, 4. The preceding and following parts are made up of extracts from 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, in which the compiler has made a free use of his biblical sources, at one time abridging the narrative, at another making explanatory additions, and again transposing the order of events contrary to historical truth. Some, as Keil, think that the writer made use of the Alexandrine version; others, that he drew from the original Hebrew. His design was to exhibit the liberality of Cyrus and Darius towards the Jews as a pattern for the heathen rulers of Judea in his own day. (Keil.) Neither the author nor the date of the book is known, but it cannot be placed earlier than the second century before Christ.

6. The second book of Esdras (called also the fourth, when the first is reckoned as the third) is extant in a Latin, an Arabic, and an Ethiopic version. The Greek original has not thus far been found. The Arabic and Ethiopic are thought to represent the primitive text more correctly than the Latin: as they want the two introductory and closing chapters of the latter, which are generally admitted to be spurious additions by a later hand; and contain, on the contrary, a long passage after chap. 7:35, which is not found in the Latin, and is thought to be genuine.

7. If we reject the first two and last two chapters of the Latin version, which do not belong to the original work, the remainder of the book has entire unity from beginning to end. It consists of a series of pretended visions vouchsafed to Ezra through the angel Uriel in the thirtieth year after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldees, while he mourned over the desolate and distressed condition of the covenant people with fasting and prayer. Of these visions, the first six, which are preparatory to the last, pertain mainly to the method of God’s dealing with men, the end of the present age, the introduction of the coming age, and the glorification {353} of Zion, with the heavy judgments of God that shall accompany these events. Many of these revelations are made through the medium of symbols. In the seventh and last revelation, a voice addresses Ezra out of a bush, as it did Moses of old. Upon his complaining that the law has been burnt, he is directed to take five ready scribes, with a promise that the holy writings which are lost shall be restored to his people. The next day the voice calls to him again, commanding him to open his mouth and drink the cup which is offered to him, "full as it were with water, but the color of it was like fire." Upon this he is filled with the spirit of inspiration, and dictates to his five scribes in forty days 204 books (according to some 94). Of these the last 70 are secret, to be delivered only "to such as be wise among the people." The rest are to be published openly, that the worthy and unworthy may read them. The historic truth underlying this fabulous revelation seems to be the revision of the canon of the Old Testament by Ezra and his associates. Chap. 15, No. 17. It is agreed that this book is the production of a Jew, but the date of its composition is a disputed point. Some assign it to the first century after Christ; others to the century preceding our Lord’s advent, but with interpolations that manifestly belong to the Christian era.

II. TOBIT.

8. The book of Tobit contains a narrative of the piety, misfortunes, and final prosperity of Tobit, an Israelite of the tribe of Naphtali, who was among the captives brought to Assyria by Enemessar (Shalmaneser) king of Assyria. With Enemessar he was in favor, became his purveyor, and was able to deposit ten talents of silver with Gabael at Rages, a city of Media. But Sennacherib, the successor of Enemessar, persecuted him, especially for his pious care in burying the bodies of his Jewish brethren whom that king had slain, and he was obliged to flee with his wife Anna and his son Tobias, leaving all his goods as plunder to the Assyrian king. Under Sarchedonus (Esarhaddon) he returned again to his home, but soon a new misfortune overtook him. As he lay one night by the wall of his courtyard, being unclean from the burial of a Jew whom his son had found strangled in the market-place, "the sparrows muted warm dung" into his eyes, which deprived him of sight. Wishing now to send his son Tobias for the ten talents of silver deposited with Gabael at Rages in Media, he directs him to seek a guide for the way; when the angel Raphael offers himself under the name of Azarias the son of Ananias the great, one of Tobit’s brethren. As the angel and Tobias journey together, they come one evening to the river Tigris. As the young man goes down to the river to bathe, a fish assaults him; but by the angel’s direction he

seizes him, drags him on shore, and takes for future use his heart, liver, and gall. On their way to Rages they come to Ecbatane, a city of Media, where resides {354} Raguel, the cousin of Tobias, whose only daughter, Sara, has lost seven husbands on the night of their marriage, through the power of Asmodeus, an evil spirit. Tobias being her nearest surviving kinsman, marries her according to the law of Moses. By the angel's direction, upon entering the marriage-chamber, he lays the heart and liver of the fish upon embers. The evil spirit, at the smell of the smoke, flees away into the utmost parts of Egypt, where the angel binds him. The angel goes to Rages and brings the ten talents and Gabael himself to the wedding feast; the wedded pair return in safety to Tobit with the silver, and also the half of Raguel's goods, which Sara receives as her wedding portion. Finally Tobias, by the angel's direction, anoints his father's eyes with the gall of the fish; whereupon he recovers his sight, and lives in honor and prosperity to a good old age. Such is a brief outline of the story, which is told in an interesting and attractive style. How much historic truth lies at its foundation, it is impossible to determine. The introduction of the angelic guide may well be regarded as a mythical embellishment.

9. The book of Tobit is extant in various texts-Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Hebrew, the Hebrew forms being all translations from the Greek or Latin. These texts differ in minor details, but have all sprung directly or indirectly from one original, which was probably Hebrew or Aramaic, though some maintain that it was Greek. The book is thoroughly Jewish in its spirit. The date of its composition is uncertain. The common opinion of biblical scholars is that it was composed about 250-200 B.C. In its general scope the book has a resemblance to that of Job. A good man encounters suffering in the way of piety, but is finally delivered, lives in prosperity, and dies in a good old age. The portraiture which it gives of domestic piety is very pleasing, and affords an instructive insight into the spirit of the age in which it was written. It gives great prominence to deeds of charity; but the alms on which it insists so earnestly flow from inward faith and love. In this respect they are distinguished from the dead works of the late Scribes and Pharisees.

III. JUDITH.

10. This book relates the exploit of Judith, a Jewish widow distinguished alike for beauty, courage, and devotion to her country. When Holofernes, one of Nebuchadnezzar's generals, was besieging Bethulia, a city of Judea, she went over to his camp with her maid in the character of a deserter, promised to guide him to Jerusalem, and by her flattery and artful representations so insinuated herself into his favor that he entertained her with high honor. At last, being left alone with him at night in his tent, she beheaded him with his own falchion as he lay asleep and intoxicated, and going forth gave his head to her maid, who put it in her bag, and they two passed the guards in safety under the pretext of going {355} out for prayer, as had been their nightly custom. The head of Holofernes was suspended from the wall of the city, and when the warriors within sallied forth, the besieging army fled in consternation. Judith receives as a reward all the stuff of Holofernes, lives at Bethulia as a widow in high honor, and dies at the age of one hundred and five.

11. The historical and geographical contradictions of this book are too many and grave to allow the supposition that it contains an authentic narrative of facts. It was manifestly written after the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity and the rebuilding of the city and temple (chaps. 4:3; 5:18, 19), when the nation was governed, not by a king, but by a high priest and Sanhedrim. Chap. 4:6, 8; 15:8. Yet it makes Nebuchadnezzar, who reigned in Babylon long before, king in Nineveh in

the eighth year of his reign, whereas his father had destroyed Nineveh. The attempts that have been made to reconcile these and other inconsistencies with true history are forced and unnatural. Whatever historical truth may lie at the basis of the story, it is so interwoven with fiction that the two elements cannot be separated from each other. It was probably written by a Palestinian Jew in Hebrew or Aramaic somewhere about the second century before Christ. The design of the book is to excite the people to faith and courage in their severe conflicts with foreign persecutors; but its morality is of a very questionable character. Judith, its heroine, while she adheres with great punctiliousness to the Mosaic ritual, does not scruple to employ hypocrisy and falsehood that she may prepare the way for assassination, being evidently persuaded that in the service of the covenant people the end sanctifies the means.

IV. ADDITIONS TO THE BOOK OF Esther 12. These are printed by themselves in our English version, and entitled: "The rest of the chapters of the Book of Esther, which are found neither in the Hebrew, nor in the Chaldee;" but in the Septuagint and old Latin they are dispersed through the canonical book so as to form with it a consistent whole. They profess to supply deficiencies in the canonical Esther-a dream of Mordecai with its interpretation; an account of the conspiracy of the two eunuchs to destroy Ahasuerus; a pretended copy of the king’s edict for the destruction of the Jews; the prayer of Mordecai and of Esther in view of this edict; various details of Esther’s visit to the king; and the pretended edict of Artaxerxes (Ahasuerus) revoking the former edict, and giving the Jews liberty to destroy all who should assault them-into which the name of God, which nowhere appears in the genuine book of Esther, is abundantly introduced. The origin of these legends is unknown.

{356} V. THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON.

13. The author of this book personages Solomon, and speaks in his name, Solomon being to the ancient Jews the representative of all wisdom. Keil gives the summary of its contents in three divisions, as follows; (1.) "The book begins with a forcible exhortation to the rulers of the earth to strive after wisdom as the fountain of righteousness and the guide to immortality and happiness. With this it connects a warning against the folly of unbelieving men who rebel against the law, oppress the righteous, and thus bring upon themselves just punishment, distraction, and everlasting shame. Chaps. 1-6. (2.) After the example of King Solomon, who is introduced as speaking, the way to obtain wisdom is next pointed out, and she is described in her nature as the spirit that formed and sustains the world, and is the author of all that is good, true, and great. Chaps. 7-9. (3.) Then follows a long historical discourse (interrupted in chaps. 13-15 by a copious discussion concerning the origin and nature of idolatry), in which the blessed effects of wisdom and the fear of God, and the unhappy consequences that come from the folly of idolatry are illustrated by the opposite fortunes of the righteous and the wicked of past ages, especially of the people of God as contrasted with the idolatrous Canaanites and Egyptians." The different parts of the book constitute a well connected whole.

14. The book was originally composed in Greek by an Alexandrine Jew, who is generally placed by biblical scholars somewhere in the second century before Christ. Though possessing no canonical authority, it is very interesting and valuable for the view which it gives of the progress of Jewish thought in both religion and philosophy. This writer is the first who expressly identifies the serpent that deceived Eve with the devil: "Through envy of the devil came death into the world."

Chap. 2:24. He teaches also the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and of a future judgment. In a passage of great beauty he personifies Wisdom, after the example of the book of Proverbs, as the worker of all things, and the teacher and guide, of men. "She is the breath of the power of God, and a pure efflux from the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled can find entrance into her. For she is the effulgence of the everlasting light, and the unspotted mirror of the divine might, and the image of his goodness. And being but one she can do all things; and remaining in herself [unchanged] she makes all things new. From age to age entering into holy souls, she makes them friends of God and prophets." Chap. 7:25-27. But along with this true development of doctrine on the basis of the Old Testament he holds the unscriptural doctrine of the preëxistence of souls (chap. 8:20), whether borrowed from the Platonists, or taken from some other source. Some have thought that he also holds matter to be eternal. {357} But when he speaks of God's almighty hand as having "created the world out of formless matter" (chap. 11:17), he may have reference simply to the chaotic state described in Genesis 1:2.

Jerome left the Latin translation of this book unrevised. The text, therefore, of our Latin Bibles is that of the "Old Latin" version, as it existed before his day.

VI. ECCLESIASTICUS.

15. The Greek title of this book is, The Wisdom of Jesus the son of Sirach, or more briefly: The Wisdom of Sirach. The Latin title, Ecclesiasticus, that is, Ecclesiastical book, designates it as a book that was read for edification in the churches, though not included in the Hebrew canon. We give, mainly from Keil, the summary of its contents: This copious book is rich in its contents, embracing the whole domain of practical wisdom, and, what is inseparable from this, the fear of God. These virtues it describes, commends, and inculcates according to their origin and nature, their characteristics and results, and their realization in life, in a rich collection of proverbs, with rules and counsels for the regulation of life in all its manifold relations. The whole is after the manner of the Proverbs of Solomon, only with much greater particularity of details, extending to all the spheres of religious, civil, and domestic life, and giving rules of conduct for the regulation of the same. This collection of wise maxims, moral precepts, and rules of life constitutes a united whole, in which the particular proverbs, counsels, and warnings are strung together in accordance with an association of ideas that is often quite loose. Interwoven with these are a number of connected discussions and prayers. The author closes his instructions with two extended discourses, in the former of which he celebrates the works of God in creation (chaps. 42:15-43:33); in the latter, the praises of the famous men of Scripture from Enoch to Simon the high priest, the son of Onias (chaps. 44-50). He then adds in the final chapter a thanksgiving and prayer (chap. 51). This book, like that of Wisdom, is of great value for the insight which it gives into the theology and ethics of the Jews at the time of its composition.

16. It is undoubtedly genuine, having been written in Hebrew by the man whose name it bears, and translated into Greek in Egypt by his grandson, as stated in the prologue. But the age of the translator, and consequently of the author, is a matter of dispute. The last of the worthies described by him is "Simon, the son of Onias, the high priest." There were two high priests of this name, both sons of Onias, but the author's eulogy is applicable only to the former, who flourished about 310-290 B.C. It is a natural inference that Jesus, the son of Sirach, wrote not many years afterwards. The translator, again, speaks of himself as coming into Egypt "in the eight and thirtieth

year, when Euergetes {358} was king." Does he mean the eight and thirtieth year of his own life, or of Euergetes' reign? If the latter, then of the two kings that bore the surname Euergetes the latter only (B.C. 170-117) can be understood, since the former reigned only twenty-five years. If the former, as is most probable, then we naturally understand Euergetes I., who reigned B.C. 217-222, during which period the translation must have been executed. The Greek text, as exhibited in manuscripts, is in a very corrupt and confused state, with many variations and transpositions. The Latin text is that of the "Old Latin," which Jerome left, as he did that of the book of Wisdom, without revision.

VII. BARUCH AND THE EPISTLE OFJeremiah 17:1-27. This is the only apocryphal book which assumes the character of prophecy. It is formed after the model of Jeremiah, and ascribed to Baruch his friend. But its spuriousness is generally admitted. Besides historical inaccuracies, such as are not conceivable in the case of Baruch, the fact that its author employed the Septuagint translation of Jeremiah and Daniel mark it as of a later date. Keil assigns it to about the middle of the second century B.C. The book professes to be a letter written by Baruch in the name of the captive Jews in Babylon to their brethren at Jerusalem, and consists of two well-marked divisions, the first of which, extending to chap. 3:8, is, in the opinion of some, a translation from an original Hebrew document. This part contains, after an introductory notice, a confession of sin with prayer for deliverance. The second part begins with an address to the covenant people, in which they are rebuked for neglecting the teachings of divine wisdom, and encouraged with the hope of returning prosperity when they shall obey her voice. Chaps. 3:9-4:8. Zion is then introduced lamenting over the desolations which God has brought upon her and her children (chap. 4:9-4:29), and afterwards comforting them with the hope of certain deliverance and enlargement (chaps. 4:30-5:9). It is generally agreed that the second part was originally written in Greek, and some think that the same is true of the first part also.

18. There is another Epistle of Baruch preserved to us in the Syriac, which is inserted in the London and Paris Polyglotts. It is addressed to the nine and a half tribes, and "made up of commonplaces of warning, encouragement, and exhortation." Smith's Bib. Dict., Art. Baruch.

19. There is a spurious Epistle of Jeremiah which appears in the Vulgate and our English version as the sixth chapter of Baruch. It is entitled: "Copy of an epistle which Jeremiah sent to those who were to be led captives into Babylon by the king of the Babylonians to make announcement to them, as it was commanded him by God." It purports to be a {359} warning to these captives against the idolatrous practices which they shall witness in Babylon, and is made up of a long discourse on the impotence of the idols which the heathen worship, written in a rhetorical style, in imitation of Jeremiah 10:1-16. Its author is supposed to have been a Hellenistic Jew who lived towards the end of the Maccabean period.

VIII. ADDITIONS TO THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

20. The Greek version of the book of Daniel, besides many departures from the Hebrew and Chaldee original, contains three large additions. The first of these is: The Prayer of Azarias, and the Song of the Three Children in the Fiery Furnace, which is appended to the third chapter. The second is: The History of Susanna, who is exhibited as a pattern of chastity, and was delivered from the machinations of her enemies through the wisdom of Daniel. This is placed sometimes before the first chapter of Daniel, and sometimes after chapter 12. The third addition is: The Story

of Bel and the Dragon, which stands at the end of the book, and is falsely ascribed in the Septuagint to the prophet Habakkuk. Its design is to show the folly of idolatry. According to Keil, these three pieces were composed in Egypt towards the end of the third, or the beginning of the second century before Christ.

IX. THE PRAYER OF MANASSES.

21. A genuine prayer of Manasseh, king of Judah, existed at the time when the books of Chronicles were composed. 2 Chronicles 33:18-19. But the existing prayer of the Apocrypha, though upon the whole beautiful and appropriate, cannot claim to be a true representative of that prayer. "The author," says Keil, "was a pious Jew who lived at all events before Christ, though his age cannot be more accurately determined."

X. THE BOOKS OF THE MACCABEES.

22. These are five in number. The first two passed from the Greek into the early Latin versions, and thence into the Vulgate and the English versions, and were received as canonical by the Council of Trent. Two others are found in some manuscripts of the Septuagint. The fifth exists only in Arabic. "If the historic order were observed, the so-called third book would come first, the fourth would be an appendix to the second, which would retain its place, and the first would come last; but it will be more convenient to examine the books in the order in which they are found in the MSS., which was probably decided by some vague tradition of their relative antiquity." Smith's Bible Dict., Art. Maccabees. The name Maccabees is applied to the family and posterity of the illustrious Jewish priest Mattathias, who maintained a long and successful struggle {360} with the Syrian kings, and finally succeeded in establishing for a period the independence of the Jews. The origin of the term has been variously explained; but the most common account of it is, that it comes from a Hebrew word signifying hammer, so that the adjective Maccabee (Greek [Greek: Makkabaios]) will denote Hammerer. According to Josephus (Antiq. 12, 6, 1) Mattathias was descended from one Asmonaeus: Hence the family of the Maccabees are also called Asmoneans.

23. The first book of the Maccabees. This is one of the most important of all the apocryphal books. It contains a narrative of the long and bloody struggle of the Jews, under their Maccabean leaders, for the preservation of their religion, and the deliverance of the nation from the yoke of their Syrian oppressors. The history bears the internal marks of authenticity and credibility, being distinguished by simplicity and candor. It is only when speaking of foreign nations that the writer falls into some inaccuracies. These do not detract from his trustworthiness in relating the affairs of his own nation through a period of forty years of the most eventful character (B.C. 175-135). The book is pervaded throughout by the Jewish spirit, and must have been written by a Palestinian Jew. Its date is uncertain, but may probably be placed somewhere during the government of the high priest John Hyrcanus (B.C. 135-106). According to the testimony of Origen, the book was originally written in Hebrew. With this agrees its internal character; for the Greek version of it contains many Hebraisms, as well as difficulties which are readily accounted for upon the supposition of a Hebrew original.

21. The second book of Maccabees. This book opens with two letters purporting to have been written by the Jews of Palestine to their brethren in Egypt, in which the former invite the latter to join with them in the celebration of "the feast of tabernacles in the month Caslen," that is, the feast

of dedication established to commemorate the purification of the temple after its pollution by Antiochus Epiphanes. To the latter of these is appended an epitome of the five books of Jason of Cyrene, containing the history of the Maccabean struggle, beginning with Heliodorus' attempt to plunder the temple, about B.C. 180, and ending with the victory of Judas Maccabeus over Nicanor, B.C. 161. Both of the letters are regarded as spurious. The second of them abounds in marvellous legends-how, upon the destruction of the first temple, the sacred fire of the altar was hid in a hollow pit without water; how, at the close of the captivity, it was found in the form of thick water, which being by the command of Nehemiah sprinkled on the wood of the altar and the sacrifices, there was kindled, when the sun shone upon it, a great fire, so that all men marvelled; how Jeremiah, at God's command, carried the tabernacle, the ark, and the altar of incense to the mountain "which Moses ascended and saw the heritage of God," that is, mount Nebo (Deuteronomy 34:1), and hid them there in a {361} hollow cave, where they are to remain until the time that God shall gather his people together again, and be gracious to them. The epitome of Jason's history begins some five years earlier than the history contained in the first book, and covers a period of about nineteen years; so that it is partly anterior to that history, partly supplementary, and partly parallel. Alexander's Kitto, Art. Maccabees. The two books are entirely independent in their sources of information; and although the second cannot lay claim to the same degree of trustworthiness as the first, yet the general judgment of biblical scholars is that it is, in its main facts, authentic. But these are set forth with embellishments and exaggerations, in which the author manifests his love for the marvellous. Where the history of the two books is parallel, it agrees in its general outlines, but the details are almost always different, and sometimes they present irreconcilable discrepancies. In its religious aspect this book is very interesting. In the account of the martyrdom of a mother and her seven sons for their refusal to eat swine's flesh (chap. 7) the doctrine of the resurrection is plainly announced: "It is a thing to be desired," says the fourth son to the king Antiochus, "that one being put to death by men should wait for the hope of God that he shall be again raised up by him; but for thee there is no resurrection unto life" (v. 14). Where Jason composed his work cannot be determined. He cannot have lived long after the events which he describes, else he would have taken notice of the important events that followed. The author of the epitome contained in this book is believed to have been a Hellenistic Jew living in Palestine, who probably wrote in the first century before Christ.

25. The third book of Maccabees. This book does not belong to the Maccabean age, but to the earlier time of Ptolemy Philopator (B.C. 221-204). Its title seems to have come simply from the similarity of its contents. It relates in a pompous and oratorical style how Ptolemy Philopator, being enraged at his failure to enter the sanctuary at Jerusalem, determined to wreak his vengeance on the Jews in Egypt, and assembled them for this purpose in the circus, that they might be trampled under foot by drunken elephants, but was hindered by the miraculous interposition of God; whereupon the king liberated the Jews, prepared for them a sumptuous feast, and gave them permission to take vengeance on their apostate countrymen. The narrative probably has a groundwork of truth with legendary embellishments, after the manner of the later Jews. Its author is believed to have been an Alexandrine Jew, but his age cannot be determined. It was never admitted into the Romish canon.

26. The fourth book of Maccabees opens with a philosophical discussion respecting the supremacy of devout reason over the passions, which is then illustrated by the history of the

martyrdom of Eleazar and the mother with her seven sons, an account of which we have in 2 Macc., chaps. 6 and 7. {362} The author of this book was a Jew imbued with the spirit of the stoical philosophy. It has been falsely ascribed to Josephus.

27. The fifth book of Maccabees exists only in Arabic. We draw our notice of it from Alexander's Kitto, according to which "it contains the history of the Jews from Heliodorus' attempt to plunder the treasury at Jerusalem till the time when Herod revelled in the noblest blood of the Jews;" that is, from 184-86 B.C., thus embracing a period of 98 years. The book is a compilation made in Hebrew, by a Jew who lived after the destruction of Jerusalem, from ancient Hebrew memoirs or chronicles, which were written shortly after the events transpired. In the absence of the original Hebrew, the Arabic versions of it, printed in the Paris and London Polyglotts, give the text upon which we must rely.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin] [BibleAuthenticity] [Apocrypha]

24. Language of the New Testament

PART III.

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT.

{365} FIRST DIVISION, GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LANGUAGE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

1. In the character of the original languages of the Bible, as in every thing else pertaining to the plan of redemption, God's hand is to be reverently acknowledged. It was not by chance, but through the provident care of Him who sees the end from the beginning, that the writers of the Old Testament found the Hebrew, and those of the New Testament the Greek language ready at hand, each of them so singularly adapted to the high office assigned to it. The stately majesty, the noble simplicity, and the graphic vividness of the Hebrew fitted it admirably for the historical portions of the Old Testament, in which, under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the direct intuition of God's purposes and of the deep springs of human action superseded the necessity of philosophical argument and deduction. The historians of the Old Testament did not pause to argue concerning their statements of men's motives and God's designs. They saw both with wonderful clearness of vision; and they found in the simplicity and directness of the Hebrew syntax, {366} so far removed from all that is involved and complex, a suitable vehicle for their simple and direct statements of truth. How congenial the Hebrew language is to poetic composition, as well in its rugged and sublime forms as in its tender and pathetic strains, every reader of the Old Testament in the original understands. The soul is not more at home in the body than is sacred poetry in the language of the covenant people. As the living spirit of the cherubim animated and directed the wheels of the chariot in Ezekiel's vision, so does the spirit of inspired poesy animate and direct the words and sentences of the Hebrew language: "When the cherubim went, the wheels went by them; and when the cherubim lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also turned not from beside them. When they stood, these stood; and when they were lifted up, these lifted up themselves also: for the spirit of the living creatures was in them." Ezekiel 10:16-17. The same characteristics fitted the Hebrew language most perfectly for prophetic vision, in which the poetic element so largely prevails.

2. Turning now from the Hebrew of the Old Testament to the Greek of the New, we have a language very different in its structure; elaborate in its inflections and syntax, delicate and subtle in its distinctions, rich in its vocabulary, highly cultivated in every department of writing, and flexible in an eminent degree; being thus equally adapted to every variety of style-plain unadorned narrative, impassioned oratory, poetry of every form, philosophical discussion, and severe logical reasoning: in a word, a language every way fitted to the wants of the gospel, which is given not for the infancy of the world but for its mature age, and which deals not so much with the details of particulars as with great principles, which require for their full comprehension the capacity of abstraction and

generalization. In the historical records of the Old Testament, and in its poetic and prophetic parts, the Hebrew language was altogether at home. But for such compositions as the epistle to the Romans the Greek offered a more perfect medium; and here, as everywhere else God's providence took care that the founders of the {367} Christian church should be furnished in the most complete manner.

3. We find, accordingly, that centuries before our Lord's advent, preparation began to be made in the providence of God for this change in the language of the inspired writings. One result of the Babylonish captivity was that Hebrew ceased to be the vernacular of the masses of the people, and a form of Aramaean took its place. Chap. 14, No. 4. After the return of the Jews from this same captivity and their reëstablishment in their own land, the spirit of prophecy was also withdrawn, and the canon of the Old Testament brought to a close. Thus the cessation of Hebrew as the spoken language of the people, and the withdrawal of the spirit of prophecy were contemporaneous events. The canon was locked up in the sacred language, and the interpreter took the place of the prophet. "The providential change of language suggested a general limit within which the voice of inspiration might be heard, as the fearful chastisements of the captivity turned men's minds to the old Scriptures with a devotion unknown before." Westcott's Introduc. to the Study of the Gospels, chap. 1.

4. But the conquests of Alexander the Great (B.C. 334-323) brought the Greek language and the Greek civilization into Asia and Egypt, as a sure leaven destined to leaven the whole mass. To this influence the Jews could not remain insensible. It reached even Palestine, where they naturally clung most tenaciously to the Aramaean language and to the customs of their fathers. But out of Palestine, where the Jews were dispersed in immense numbers, it operated more immediately; especially in Egypt, whose metropolis Alexandria was, after the age of Alexander its founder, one of the chief seats of Grecian learning. To the Jews of Alexandria the Greek language was vernacular. By them was executed, as we have seen, under the patronage of the Egyptian king, the first version ever made of the Hebrew Scriptures, namely, that called the Septuagint (Chap. 16, Nos. 1-7), which was begun, if not completed, in the latter part of the third century before Christ. Though {368} this version encountered bitter opposition on the part of the unbelieving Jews after the establishment of the Christian church, in consequence of the effective use made of it against them by Christian writers, it was received from its first appearance and onward with general favor. The Hellenistic Jews-those using the Greek language and conforming themselves to Grecian civilization-made constant use of it, and the knowledge of it was very widely diffused beyond the boundaries of Egypt. In our Saviour's day it was in very general use, as the abundant quotations from it in the New Testament show; and it must have contributed largely to the spread of the knowledge of the Greek language among the Jewish people in and out of Palestine. Though the Roman empire succeeded to that of the Greeks, the Roman could not supplant the more polished Greek tongue, with its immense and varied literature. On the contrary, the Greek language penetrated into Italy, and especially into Rome, the metropolis of the civilized world, where, in our Saviour's day, Greek literature was in high repute, and the Greek language was very generally understood. Thus, in the good providence of God, the writers of the New Testament, also, found ready at hand a language singularly adapted to their service.

Biblical scholars have noticed the significant fact that of the long list of names in the sixteenth chapter of Romans, the greater number belongs to the Greek language, not to the Latin. "The

flexibility of the Greek language gained for it in ancient time a general currency similar to that which French enjoys in modern Europe; but with this important difference, that Greek was not only the language of educated men, but also the language of the masses in the great centres of commerce." Westcott in Smith's Bible Dict., Art. Hellenist.

5. Respecting the character of the New Testament Greek there was in former times much controversy, often accompanied with unnecessary heat and bitterness. One class of writers seemed to think that the honor of the New Testament was involved in their ability to show the classic purity and elegance of its style; as if, forsooth, the Spirit of inspiration could only {369} address men through the medium of language conformed to the classic standard of propriety. Another class went to the opposite extreme, speaking in exaggerated terms of the Hebraisms and solecisms of the New Testament writers. The truth lies between these extremes. The style of the New Testament is neither classical nor barbarous. Its characteristics are strictly conformable to the history of its origin. (1.) Its basis is not the Greek of Plato and Xenophon, but the so-called Hellenic or common dialect which arose in the age of Alexander the Great, when "the previously distinct dialects, spoken by the various sections of the Hellenic nation, were blended into a popular spoken language." Winer, Gram, of the New Test., sec. 2. The Alexandrine Jews doubtless learned it not so much from books as from the daily intercourse of life, and it probably had its provincial peculiarities in Alexandria and the adjacent region. (2.) In Jewish usage this common Greek dialect received an Hebraic coloring from the constant use of the Septuagint version, which is a literal rendering of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, of course with the retention of many Hebrew idioms. Only such thorough Greek scholars as Josephus and Philo could rise above this influence. The New Testament writers manifest its power in different degrees; for, as it respects Hebraisms, they do not by any means stand on a common level. (3.) As the Aramaic-the so-called Syro-Chaldaic-was the language of the mass of the people, the style of the New Testament writers received a tinge from this also. (4.) More than all, the style of the New Testament receives a peculiar impress from the fact that the authors were Jews writing under the full influence of a Jewish education and a Jewish faith, with the superadded element of Christianity. It is the phenomenon of the spirit and thoughts of Jewish Christians embodied in the language of Greece; and this at once separates the writings of the New Testament by a wide interval from all purely classic compositions. The apostolic writers imposed on the Greek language an arduous task, that of expressing ideas foreign to the conceptions of the most cultivated {370} among the pagan authors; ideas partly common to the old Jewish and the Christian religions, partly peculiar to Christianity. This could only be done by giving to existing terms a new and higher meaning, whereby they assumed a technical character wholly unknown to the classic writers.

"Compare particularly the words: works (to work, Romans 4:4), faith, to believe in Christ, or to believe absolutely, confession, righteousness, to be justified, to be chosen, the called, the chosen, the saints (for Christians), edification and to edify in a figurative sense, apostle, to publish the good tidings and to publish absolutely for Christian preaching, the adoption of baptisma, baptism, for Christian baptism, perhaps to break bread for the holy repast (the Agape with the communion), the world, the flesh, fleshly, in the known theological sense," etc. Winer's Gram, of the New Test., sec. 3.

6. From all the abovenamed causes the language of the New Testament received a form differing widely from the classic style, but admirably adapted to the high office assigned to it. To those who

study the New Testament in the original, the peculiarities of its language offer a wide and interesting field of inquiry. But for the common reader the above hints will be sufficient.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin] [BibleAuthenticity]

25. External Form of the New Testament

CHAPTER XXV.

EXTERNAL FORM OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

1. The writings of the New Testament fall into three main divisions; the historical, the epistolary, and the prophetical, the latter including only the Apocalypse. This distinction is not to be understood in an absolute sense; since, as every reader knows, there are prophetical passages in the historical books, and both historical and prophetical in the epistles; but it gives with accuracy the general character of each division. In outward form the Apocalypse is epistolary, being addressed, with the apostolic greeting, to the seven churches of Asia, and containing messages to each. But its contents, after the first three chapters, are so wholly prophetical, that it is entitled to stand by itself in any general division.

2. The order of these main divisions is natural and appropriate. The gospel, as was remarked at the outset (Chap. 1, No. 1), is not a mere system of philosophy or ethics, but rests on a basis of historic facts. On these its whole system of doctrines and duties is built; so that to destroy the foundation would be to destroy the superstructure also. It is suitable, therefore, that the record of the facts should hold the first place. The apostolic epistles, which unfold the doctrines and duties involved in the gospel, and make a practical application of them to all the manifold relations of life, naturally follow the historic record. The mighty system of prophecies contained in the book of Revelation, which stretches over the whole future history of the church to the end of time, forms an appropriate close to the entire collection of writings.

3. Equally appropriate is the order of the two subdivisions of the historic part-first, the four Gospels, containing the history of our Lord's life; secondly, the Acts of the Apostles. In the general arrangement of the epistles, the thirteen which bear {372} the name of Paul stand first in order. The seven so-called catholic epistles occupy the last place. Intermediate between these two subdivisions stands the epistle to the Hebrews, which is anonymous, though generally ascribed to Paul. The epistles which bear the name of Paul fall into two groups-nine addressed to Christian churches, which occupy the first place; then four to particular persons. Of these last, the first three, being addressed to Timothy and Titus, the apostle's companions in travel and in the gospel ministry, are appropriately named from their contents the pastoral epistles. The letter to Philemon, a private member of the church in Colosse, naturally stands last of all.

We add from Bleek (Introduc. to New Test., secs. 18 and 254) the following additional notices: The present order of the Gospels is very ancient. Only in some manuscripts of the Old Latin version, in one Greco-Latin manuscript (the so-called Codex Bezae or Cambridge Codex), and in the manuscript of the Gothic version, the two apostles Matthew and John stand first; then the two companions of apostles, Luke and Mark, or sometimes Mark and Luke. In the very ancient Curetonian-Syrian manuscript the order is Matthew, Mark, John, Luke. The Acts of the Apostles stand in some manuscripts after the Pauline or after the catholic epistles. In the oldest Greek

manuscripts, and generally in the greatest number of Greek manuscripts which contain the whole New Testament, the catholic epistles stand before the Pauline; an arrangement which some modern editors, as Lachmann and Tischendorf, have followed. In many manuscripts, the oldest Greek included, the epistle to the Hebrews stands after 2 Thessalonians, immediately before the pastoral epistles. Luther placed together, at the end of his version, the epistles to the Hebrews, the epistles of James and Jude, and the Apocalypse. But this arrangement rested on no authority of manuscripts. It was only an expression of his private judgment respecting their canonical authority, which he placed below that of the other books of the New Testament.

4. We have seen (Chap. 13, No. 4) that in the arrangement of the books of the Old Testament, the order of time is followed only very partially. The same is true respecting the order of books in the New Testament, a fact which the biblical student ought always {373} to bear in mind. If we look to the several divisions and subdivisions of the New Testament writings, it is obvious that the arrangement is not chronological. It is generally admitted that the Gospel according to John was written after the death of Peter and Paul; consequently, after the Acts of the Apostles (which were written during the life of Paul, Chap. 5, No. 5), after all the Pauline epistles, and probably after all the Catholic epistles except those which are ascribed to John himself. The Acts of the Apostles, again, are of later date than several of Paul's epistles. Finally, neither the Pauline nor the catholic epistles are arranged in chronological order. See below, Chap. 30, No. 6. The intelligent student of the New Testament will avail himself of all the means at his command to ascertain the date, proximately at least, of each particular book; that he may thus connect it with the development of Christianity in the threefold line of doctrine, practice, and polity.

5. The present distinction of large letters (capitals) and small did not come into use before the ninth century. In conformity with ancient usage, the manuscripts executed before this period are written in large disconnected letters (the so-called uncial), without any marks of interpunction, or even division of words. This is called the continuous writing (scriptio continua), in which it is left to the reader's discretion to make the necessary division of words and sentences; as if the beginning of the Gospel according to John were written thus in Latin and English:

Latin. English.

INPRINCIPIOERATVERBUMET VERBUMERATAPUDDEUMETDEUSE
RATVERBUMHOCERATINPRINCIPI OAPUDDEUMOMNIAPERIPSUMFA
INTHEBEGINNINGWASTHEWORDAND THEWORDWASWITHGODANDGODW
ASTHEWORDTHESAMEWASINTHEBEGIN NINGWITHGODALLTHINGSBYHIMWEREMA

Writers before our Saviour's time do indeed speak of signs of interpunction; but they seem to have been in use only in the grammatical schools, and with a limited application to certain doubtful passages in the ancient writers. That they were unknown in the older manuscripts of the New Testament is evident from the discussions that arose among the church fathers respecting the right division of certain passages, in which they never appeal to the authority of manuscripts, but argue solely from the nature of {374} the connection. The reader may see a collection of examples in Hug's Introduction to the New Testament, § 43, where are also some curious examples of the wrong division of words.

6. To obviate the inconvenience of this continuous mode of writing, there was introduced, about the middle of the fifth century, what is called the stichometrical mode (Greek stichos, a row or line, and metron, a measure). This consisted in arranging in a single line only so many words as could be read, consistently with the sense, at a single inspiration. The invention of stichometry has been generally ascribed to Euthalius, a deacon in Alexandria, who, in the year 458, set forth a copy of Paul's epistles stichometrically arranged; but Tregelles is inclined to the opinion that he borrowed the system from an earlier writer, Pamphilus the martyr. However this may be, the original conception doubtless came from the stichometry of Hebrew poetry. Hug (§ 44) and Tregelles (Horne's Introduct., vol. 4, chap. 4) give an example in Greek from a fragment of the Pauline epistles. This example (Titus 2:2-3), when literally translated into English according to the Greek order of words, reads as follows:

THEAGEDMENTOBESOBER

GRAVE

SOBERMINDED

SOUNDINTHEFAITH

INLOVE

INPATIENCE THEAGEDWOMENLIKEWISE INBEHAVIORASBECOMESHOLYWOMEN

NOTSLANDERERS NOTGIVENTOMUCHWINE TEACHERSOFGOODTHINGS

Though the design of stichometry was not interpunction according to the connection of thought, yet it seems to have led to this result. The expensiveness of this mode of writing, owing to the waste of parchment, naturally suggested the idea of separating the lines by a simple point, thus:

{375} THEAGEDMENTOBESOBER. GRAVE.

SOBERMINDED. SOUNDINTHEFAITH.

INLOVE. INPATIENCE. THEAGED WOMENLIKEWISE. INBEHAVIORAS BECOMETHHOLYWOMEN. NOTSLAN DERERS. NOTGIVENTOMUCHWINE.

TEACHERSOFGOODTHINGS. As these divisions were mainly rhythmical, and often broke the true connection of thought, men sought to introduce a more logical system of interpunction. Thus was laid the foundation of our present system; which, however, was not perfected till after the invention of the art of printing. In the opinion of some, the use of the dot, at least to some extent, was earlier than stichometry. From the eighth or ninth century punctuation in manuscripts became more common and systematic. In cursive manuscripts-those that employ the running hand with large and small letters and the separation of the words, a style of writing that became the common one from the ninth century and onward-punctuation also prevails, though not according to any one established system. Tregelles, ubi sup. Various other particulars interesting to those who study the Greek text in the original, as those relating to the accents, the smooth and rough breathing, and the iota subscript, are here omitted.

7. We come next to consider the ancient divisions made in the contents of the sacred text. Chapters are very early mentioned, as by Tertullian and Dionysius of Alexandria. But it is uncertain whether any thing more is meant than parts or sections of given contents. The earliest formal division of the four gospels that has come down to us consists of the Ammonian sections (Greek kephalaia, heads or chapters), so named from Ammonius of Alexandria, who, about the middle of the third century, prepared a harmony of the four gospels-the Gospel by four, as Eusebius calls it. His plan was, to arrange in the order of Matthew the parallel passages side by side, interpolating those that were wanting in Matthew. To this end, he divided each of the gospels into sections the length of which was very various, being wholly determined by the parallelisms of the other gospels. Of these sections Matthew contained {376} 355; Mark, 234 (in Wordsworth's Greek Testament, 236 are given); Luke, 342; John, 231 (in Wordsworth's Greek Testament, 232). The infelicity of this arrangement was that, with the exception of the first gospel, the true order of the evangelists was broken up-"The train of sequence of the three was destroyed in respect to the orderly course of reading," as Eusebius says (Letter to Carpianus, given in Wordsworth's Greek Testament). To remedy this evil, Eusebius, bishop of Cæsarea, in the following century connected with these Ammonian sections his ten canons. These are ten tables, arranged according to the order of Matthew, or where sections are wanting in Matthew, according to the order of the next evangelist that contains them, in such a way as to show at a glance what sections of the other evangelists answer to any given section of that gospel which stands first in order in each canon.

Numbering the four gospels in order-1, 2, 3, 4-the ten canons of Eusebius contain as follows:

I. Sections common to 1, 2, 3, 4.

II. 1, 2, 3.

III. 1, 3, 4.

IV. 1, 2, 4.

V. 1, 3.

VI. 1, 2.

VII. 1, 4.

VIII. 2, 3.

IX. 3, 4.

X. Sections peculiar to one. A couple of examples will make this matter plain. Turning to what is now the beginning of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, we find (the Greek numerals being exchanged for those in common use) the sign 131/II that is, the 131st Ammonian section of Matthew with the second canon of Eusebius. Turning to the table of the second canon, we find, corresponding to the 131st section of Matthew, the 36th of Mark and the 76th of Luke, which contain the parallel passages concerning the sower. Again, connected with Mark 1:23, is the sign, 14/VIII whence we learn, by reference to the eighth canon, that the fourteenth section of Mark answers to the 25th of Luke. By a repetition of the canons as often as necessary, so as to allow each gospel in turn to take the lead, Wordsworth has greatly facilitated the work of comparing

parallel passages.

"The Codex Vaticanus B, contains a distribution into sections wholly peculiar. Of these, St. Matthew contains 170, St. Mark 61, etc. The length of these divisions is very unequal; the sense being the reason of the {377} breaks occurring when they do. In the gospels, at least, the sections are perhaps the best that were ever devised; and this system of capitulary division is probably the earliest of which we have the means of knowing any thing." Horne's Introduction, vol. 4, chap. 4, revised edition, 1860.

8. Different from the Ammonian-Eusebian sections, and later in their origin, are the divisions of the gospels called titles, because each of them received a title from one of the first or principal subjects mentioned in it. They are thought to have been connected with the public reading of the gospels. Of these, Matthew contains 68; Mark, 48; Luke, 83; John 18:1-40 They are, therefore, larger than the Ammonian sections, and resemble more nearly our modern chapters.

These titles are called by the Latins briefs (breves), and the tables of their contents breviaries (breviaria). They did not come into common use before the fifth century, and are commonly annexed to manuscripts along with the Ammonian-Eusebian sections. But they are the only divisions known to some of the church fathers, as Euthymius and Theophylact.

9. The divisions of the other books of the New Testament are thought to be of later origin. Euthalius introduced into a copy, which he sent to Athanasius the younger, divisions called chapters. He has sometimes been considered the author of those in the Acts and catholic epistles; but he probably took them from an older source. Those in the Pauline epistles he expressly ascribed to "one of the wisest and most Christ-loving of our fathers." He also gave headings to the chapters, descriptive of their contents, but collected from previous sources. The Apocalypse was divided into twenty-four larger sections and seventy-two smaller-a work ascribed to Andreas of Cæsarea in Cappadocia. Tregelles, in Horne's Introduction, vol. 4, chap. 4.

10. Our present division of chapters was made in the thirteenth century, by Cardinal Hugo, from whom proceeded also that in the Old Testament. It was first introduced into the Latin copies, and afterwards into the Greek. Our present division of verses was made by Robert Stephens, in 1551. It {378} was preceded by some earlier divisions, as that of Pagninus, in which the verses were longer than those of Stephens.

Distinct from all the above divisions are the church-lessons, made very early, in imitation of the Jewish Haphtaroth, or sections from the prophets. Chap. 13, No. 6. The beginning of these seems to have been in special selections for the church festivals. But the usage was afterwards extended so as to include selections for all the Sabbaths and feast-days of the year. Hence from the fifth century and onward the whole New Testament was no longer publicly read, as in the primitive days of Christianity, according to the free judgment of those who conducted the church-services; but these selected sections (pericopae). Collections of these lessons were called by the general name of lectionaries (lectionaria). Those from the gospels or Acts and epistles received special names indicative of their contents. See Bleek, § 265; Horne's Introduction, vol. 4, chap. 4, end.

11. From the above brief survey, it is manifest that none of the external divisions of the sacred text rest on any divine authority. They are the work of uninspired men, and are to be treated accordingly. For convenience of reference, a division of the Scriptures into chapters and verses is

indispensable; and we may well rest contented with that which now prevails, though it cannot claim perfection. But in the interpretation of the inspired word we must go behind human divisions, carefully inquiring after the true connection of thought, according to the acknowledged laws of interpretation. To give one example out of many, we must not infer that the last verse of the eleventh chapter of the book of Revelation belongs to the preceding and not the following context, because of its separation from the latter in the division of chapters; but we must determine its true connection independently of this division. A very good arrangement is that of Paragraph Bibles, in which the distinctions of chapter and verse are thrown into the margin, the text being broken into longer or shorter sections according to the true course of thought. Yet this mode of division also is human, and cannot be infallible.

12. The titles of the several books of the New Testament did not proceed immediately from the authors themselves. In form {379} they present some diversity; for example: The Gospel according to Matthew; according to Matthew; the holy Gospel according to Matthew, etc., the shorter and simpler titles being, as a rule, the more ancient. For substance, however, the different forms are the same. They represent the ancient church tradition, and are of very high authority. The subscriptions, on the other hand, which stand at the end of the epistles of Paul, that to the Hebrews included-are confessedly the work of later copyists. They are of no authority, and are sometimes manifestly incorrect.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin] [BibleAuthenticity]

26. The New Testament Text and Its History

CHAPTER XXVI. THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT AND ITS HISTORY. The history of the New Testament text naturally falls into two main divisions, that of the manuscript text, and that of the printed text. A few remarks will be added on the principles of textual criticism. See PLATES at the beginning of this book.

[Transcriber's Note: The Plates are at the end of this e-book.] I. THE MANUSCRIPT TEXT.

1. The preservation of the primitive text of the gospels from all essential corruptions, additions, and mutilations has already been shown at some length (Part 1, Chap. 3). The same line of argument applies substantially to the other books of the New Testament. Though the text of different books varies in respect to purity, there is no ground for supposing that if we had the autographs of the evangelists and other sacred writers, they would present to us a gospel differing in any essential particular from that which we now possess. We should see in them the same glorious Saviour, and the same holy system of doctrines and duties.

2. But it has not pleased God to interpose in a miraculous way for the purpose of keeping the primitive text in a state of immaculate purity. He has left it subject to those common influences which produce what are called various readings in all works that are perpetuated from age to age by transcription. Compared indeed with any other ancient writings, the text of the New Testament has immensely the advantage in regard to uncorruptness of preservation and means of verification. This arises from the early multiplication of copies, as well as from the high value attached by the primitive churches to their sacred books, and their consequent zeal for their uncorrupt preservation. But the same multiplication of copies which constitutes a sure guarantee against essential mutilations and {381} corruptions increases also the number of various readings. Suppose, for example, that of two books equal in size the second has been, from the first, copied a hundred-fold oftener than the first. It is plain that, while the means of ascertaining and verifying the true text of the second will abound, the number of variations among the different manuscripts will abound also. The greater the number of copies, the greater will be the number of various readings, but this will make the true text not more but less uncertain; for by diligent collation a text may be produced which, though not absolutely immaculate, is very near to the primitive autograph, and which can be certainly known to agree with it in every essential respect. God does not rain down upon men bread and raiment from heaven, as he could do with infinite ease; but he imposes upon them the necessity of gaining both by hard labor. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" is the stern law. God does not miraculously communicate to the missionary who goes to Syria or India or China a knowledge of the vernacular in his field of labor; but he must learn it by years of patient study. And when he begins the work of translating, God does not keep him in a supernatural way from all errors. He must find out and correct his errors by the diligent use of the means at his disposal. Just so it is the will of God that we should have a pure text of the New Testament-pure in a critical sense-not without hard labor, but by years of patient toil in the study and collation of the abundant materials which his good providence has preserved for us.

3. Various readings have arisen in the manuscripts of the New Testament, as elsewhere, from the mistakes, and sometimes from the unskilful corrections of the copyists and those subsequently employed to compare and correct the copies. They are commonly divided into the three classes of substitutions, insertions, and omissions.

Substitutions from similarity of sound would naturally arise among the vowels when, as was sometimes the case, the copyist wrote from dictation, being guided by the ear instead of the {382} eye. Most of these, however, are mere matters of orthography. It is only when they affect the sense that they come under the head of various readings. Synonymous words, or those of kindred meaning, are frequently put for one another, or the order of words is altered; sometimes a different word is made through inadvertence by the change of a single letter or a couple of letters; compound words are interchanged with simple; contracted words are confounded with each other; plainer or more grammatical readings are substituted for those that are difficult or less grammatical, etc. Especially are parallel passages in one writer altered, so as to be brought into conformity with the same in another.

Insertions are the most frequent mode of variation. The copyist fills out the text of his author from a parallel passage, inserts marginal notations in the text, repeats clauses through inadvertence, etc. Of amplification from parallel passages many undoubted examples could be given. A single one must suffice. In Acts 9:5, the words, It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks, have been added from Acts 26:14. The most fruitful source of omissions is the similar termination of two adjacent words, lines, or sentences, causing the eye of the copyist to overlook the word, line, or sentence intervening between the two similar endings. The same error may be caused by the circumstance of two sentences beginning in the same way. It should be remembered that in the ancient manuscripts the text was written continuously in uncial-that is, capital-letters, without any division between the words, which made it more difficult for the copyist to follow the manuscript before him, and for both the copyist and collater to discover the errors made in transcription. By far the greatest number of various readings had their origin in simple inadvertence. Some of them, however, are due to unskilful criticism; as when the copyist or the corrector sought to bring a passage in one writer into more exact agreement with the corresponding passage in another, to supply {383} supposed deficiencies or correct supposed errors in his copy, or to substitute smoother and more grammatical forms of expression. Wilful falsifications in the interest of a particular sect or party cannot with any show of justice be imputed to the men who have perpetuated to us the text of the New Testament.

4. The materials for textual criticism are much more abundant in the case of the New Testament than of the Old. A vast mass of manuscripts has been collected from different and distant regions, dating from the fourth century and onward. Of these, part are in the original Greek, part in ancient versions, or bilingual, that is, containing the original and a version of it side by side. In addition to these are the quotations of the early fathers, which are so abundant that a large part of the New Testament text might be collected from them alone. The question of the history of the text, as gathered from this rich mass of materials, is very interesting, but is foreign to the plan of the present work. To give even a history of the controversies respecting the proper classification of the manuscripts of the New Testament according to their characteristic readings would require a volume, and the question must be regarded as yet unsettled. There are, however, some general results, a few of the more important of which are here given from Tregelles (in Horne, vol. 4, chap:

8). The variations in the form of the sacred text are not due to any general recensions or revisions by ecclesiastical authority, but arose gradually from the causes above considered (No. 3). These variations exhibit such gradations of text that it is impossible to draw definite lines of classification, without admitting so many exceptions as almost to destroy the application of such a system.

There is a general difference in characteristic readings between the more ancient manuscripts, versions, and citations, and the copies of general circulation in more recent times. This gives rise to the general line of demarcation between the more ancient and the more recent texts; each of these two classes, however, having, in turn, its own points of difference among the texts belonging to it. The more ancient manuscripts, versions, and citations which we possess range themselves under what we know from their combined testimony {384} to be the more ancient text. Among the manuscripts and documents so allied there are such shades of difference and characteristic peculiarities, that the versions and manuscripts might be easily contemplated as ramifying into two subclasses. The most ancient documents in general are sufficiently dissimilar to enable us to regard their testimony, when combined, as cumulative.

5. Respecting the materials for writing in ancient times-papyrus and parchment, afterwards paper made from linen or cotton; the form of manuscripts-the roll with papyrus, and the book-form with leaves when parchment was used; the use of palimpsests; the uncial and cursive styles of writing; and the means of determining the age of manuscripts, see in Chap. 3, No. 2. The existing manuscripts have been all numbered and catalogued. The custom since the time of Wetstein has been to mark the uncial manuscripts by capital letters, and the cursives by numbers or small letters. We append a brief notice of a few of the more celebrated manuscripts.

There are four very ancient and important manuscripts, all of which originally contained the entire Greek Bible of the Old and New Testament, and which belong to a time when the arrangements of Euthalius, especially his stichometrical mode of writing (Chap. 25, Nos. 6-9), had either not been introduced or not come into common use. These are the following:

(1.) The Codex Vaticanus, Vatican manuscript, marked by the letter B, and so called from the Vatican library at Rome to which it belongs. It is written continuously (without any division of words) on very fine vellum-one of the marks of high antiquity-in small but neat uncial letters, very much like those of the manuscript rolls of Herculaneum, and has three columns to the page, which is of the quarto size. Originally it had at the end of particular sections a small empty space of the breadth of a letter or half a letter, but no ornamental capitals, marks of punctuation, or accents, though some of these have been added by later hands. The divisions into sections made by the empty spaces above named are peculiar to this codex, not agreeing with those of any other system. Of these Matthew has 170; Mark, 62 (so says Cardinal Mai, but others say 72 or 61); Luke, 152; John, 80. Most of the books have also brief titles and subscriptions. The manuscript contained originally the whole Bible, the Apocrypha included, as also the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians. The order of the books in the New Testament, if entire, would be the same as in the Alexandrine manuscript, the Catholic epistles preceding the Pauline, and the epistle to the Hebrews coming in between 2 Thessalonians and 1 Timothy. See {385} below. At present the Old Testament wants the greater part of Genesis and a part of the Psalms. In the New Testament the epistle to Philemon, the three pastoral epistles, the latter part of the epistle to the Hebrews, and the Apocalypse are wanting. This manuscript is generally referred to the fourth century. Its

authority is very high, but through the jealousy of its Roman conservators it has been of late years, for all practical purposes, inaccessible to biblical scholars. Cardinal Mai's edition of it in 1858, and the revision of this in 1859, are unreliable. Tischendorf has published an edition of the New Testament part of it. No. (3) PLATE II.

(2.) The Codex Sinaiticus, Sinai manuscript, designated by Tischendorf, its discoverer, by the Hebrew letter aleph ([Hebrew: A]). One of the most interesting events of the present century, in the department of biblical science, is the very unexpected discovery of a complete manuscript of the New Testament, belonging, as is generally agreed, to the fourth century; therefore as old, at least, as the Vatican manuscript, perhaps older, and of very high authority in biblical criticism. In a visit to Mount Sinai in 1844, Tischendorf had found at the convent of St. Catharine on Mount Sinai forty-three beautiful parchment leaves belonging to a manuscript of the Septuagint not before known to biblical scholars. In a subsequent visit to the same convent in February, 1859, it was his high privilege to find of the same manuscript all the Greek New Testament entire, part of the Old, the so-called epistle of Barnabas, and part of the writing called the Shepherd of Hermas, the whole contained in one hundred and thirty-two thousand columnar lines, written on three hundred and forty-six leaves. This precious manuscript Tischendorf managed to obtain for the emperor Alexander of Russia as the great patron of the Greek church, and it is now at St. Petersburg. It is written on parchment of a fine quality in large plain uncial letters, with four columns to a page. It contains, as is commonly the case with ancient manuscripts, revisions and so-called corrections by a later hand; but, as it proceeded from the pen of the original writer, it had neither ornamented capitals, accents, nor divisions of words or sentences. The style of writing is plain, and every thing about it bears the marks of high antiquity. The order of the books is as follows: (1) the gospels; (2) the epistles of Paul, that to the Hebrews included, which stands after 2 Thessalonians; (3) the Acts of the Apostles; (4) the Catholic epistles; (5) the Apocalypse. It has the Ammonian sections and Eusebian canons, but whether from the first or a subsequent hand is doubtful. A splendid edition of this Codex was published at St. Petersburg in 1862, which seeks to preserve with the greatest possible accuracy the form of writing, columns, corrections, etc. The Leipsic edition is adapted to popular use. See No. (1), PLATE I.

(3.) We will consider next in order the Codex Alexandrinus, Alexandrine manuscript, placed first in the list of uncial manuscripts, and accordingly {386} marked A. It is now in the British Museum, London. In the year 1628 it was sent as a present to Charles I., king of England, by Cyrillus Lucaris, patriarch of Constantinople, by whom it was brought from Alexandria in Egypt, where Cyrillus had formerly held the same office. Hence the name Alexandrine. Cyrillus himself, in a notice attached to it, says that tradition represented a noble Egyptian woman of the fourth century named Thecla as the writer of it (an Arabic subscription makes her to have been Thecla the martyr). These external notices are not so reliable as the internal marks, all of which show it to be of a great age. Some assign it to the fourth century, but it is more commonly assigned to the fifth, and Egypt is generally regarded as the place where it was written. It is on parchment in uncial letters, without divisions of words, accents, or breathings, and with only occasional marks of interpunction-a dot to indicate a division in the sense. The lines are arranged in two columns, and the sections begin with large letters, placed a little to the left of the column-outside the measure of the column. The order of the books is: (1) the gospels; (2) the Acts of the Apostles; (3) the Catholic epistles; (4) the epistles of Paul, with that to the Hebrews between 2 Thessalonians and 1

Timothy; (5) the Apocalypse. In the gospels, the Ammonian sections with the Eusebian canons are indicated, and at the top of the pages the larger sections or titles. In the Old Testament it is defective in part of the Psalms. In the New it wants all of Matthew as far as chap. 25:6; also from John 6:50-71; John 7:1-53; John 8:1-52; and from 2 Corinthians 4:13-18; 2 Corinthians 5:1-21; 2 Corinthians 6:1-18; 2 Corinthians 7:1-16; 2 Corinthians 8:1-24; 2 Corinthians 9:1-15; 2 Corinthians 10:1-18; 2 Corinthians 11:1-33; 2 Corinthians 12:1-6. It has appended at the end the genuine letter of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, and a fragment of a second spurious letter. To these apocryphal additions we owe the preservation of the Apocalypse in an entire state. Until the discovery of the Sinai codex, the Alexandrine exhibited the text of the New Testament in far the most entire state of all the uncial manuscripts. See No. (2), PLATE I.

(4) The fourth manuscript of this group is the celebrated palimpsest called Codex Ephraemi, Ephraem manuscript, preserved in the Imperial library of Paris, and marked in the list of uncials with the letter C. Originally it contained the whole of the New Testament, and apparently the Old also, elegantly written on thin vellum, with a single column to a page. The writing is continuous, without accents or breathings, and the letters are rather larger than in the Alexandrian manuscript, the first letter of each section being of larger size than the rest, and standing, as in that manuscript, a little to the left of the column. The Ammonian sections stand in the margin, but without the Eusebian canons. The gospels were preceded by the list of titles, or larger sections, of which those of Luke and John alone are preserved. The titles and subscriptions are short and simple. The date of the manuscript is supposed to be the first half of the fifth century. It has undergone corrections at the hand of at least two persons, {387} possibly a third. These can be readily distinguished from the original writing. The critical authority of this codex is very high. Tregelles (in Horne, vol. 4, chap. 13) places it next to the Vatican manuscript. A few words on its history. About the thirteenth century, being regarded as a worn-out and obsolete manuscript, the vellum on which it was written was taken for a new purpose, that of receiving the Greek works of Ephraem the Syrian saint, a celebrated theologian of the old Syrian church, who flourished in the fourth century. "For this purpose the leaves were taken promiscuously, without any regard to their proper original order, and sewed together at hap-hazard, sometimes top end down, and front side behind, just as if they had been mere blanks, the sermons of Ephraem being the only matter regarded in the book." Stowe, Hist. of the Books of the Bible, p. 75. In the latter part of the seventeenth century, Allix first observed the older writing under the works of Ephraem. It was very illegible, but a chemical preparation applied in 1834-5 revivified it to a certain extent. It has been diligently collated by eminent scholars, and in 1842 Tischendorf printed an edition of it page for page and line for line. Of the two hundred and nine leaves contained in this manuscript, one hundred and forty-five belong to the New Testament, containing not quite two-thirds of the sacred text. The order of the books is the same as in the Alexandrine codex. See No. (4), PLATE III.

Besides the abovenamed four manuscripts, a few others may be briefly noticed. An interesting palimpsest of great critical value is the Codex Dublinensis rescriptus, Dublin palimpsest manuscript, in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, designated by the letter Z. It contains with other writings thirty-two leaves of the gospel by Matthew. They were edited, as far as legible, in 1801, by Dr. John Barrett, Fellow of Trinity College. In 1853 Dr. Tregelles made a new and thorough examination of the manuscript, and, by the aid of a chemical process, brought all that exists of the gospel text to a legible condition. This manuscript is assigned to the sixth century. Its letters are

written in a singularly bold style, which unites the three qualities of ease, elegance, and symmetry. A celebrated bilingual manuscript (in this case Graeco-Latin, containing the Greek and Latin texts) is the Codex Bezae, Beza's manuscript, called also Codex Cantabrigiensis, Cambridge manuscript, from the place of its deposit, which is the public library of the University of Cambridge, England. It is designated by the letter D, and contains the four gospels and Acts of the Apostles in Greek and Latin on opposite pages, stichometrically written. The account of Theodore Beza, its former possessor, was that he found it during the French civil wars in 1562, in the monastery of St. Irenæus, at Lyons. In 1581 he sent it as a present to the University {388} of Cambridge. The interest felt in this manuscript arises in great part from the very peculiar character of its readings. "The text of this codex," says Bleek (Introduc. to New Test., sec. 270), "presents much that is peculiar-many additions and alterations that have even an apocryphal character, but are yet not uninteresting. Its native country is the West, and more definitely the south of Gaul." See No. (5), PLATE IV.

Among the fragments of manuscripts of high antiquity is one called Codex purpureus, Purple manuscript. Four leaves of this are in the Cotton Library in the British Museum, six in the Vatican, two in the Imperial Library at Vienna. The manuscript to which they belonged was written in silver letters (the names of God and Christ in gold) on purple vellum. The writing is in two columns with large and round letters. It is referred to the end of the sixth or beginning of the seventh century.

Many other uncial manuscripts, or fragments of manuscripts, some of them of great critical value, might be described; but the above brief notices must suffice. Of those which contain ancient versions, a few of the more important will be noticed in the following chapter. The cursive manuscripts of the Now Testament are numbered by hundreds. In general their authority is less than that of the more ancient uncials. But a cursive manuscript may give indirectly a very ancient text. There are some cursives which, from their characteristic readings, were manifestly executed from codices of high antiquity, and are for this reason very valuable. As such Tregelles specifies those numbered 1 and 33. For further notices of these, as also of the lectionaries, containing selections for church readings, the reader may consult the works devoted to biblical criticism.

II. THE PRINTED TEXT.

6. The primary editions of the Greek New Testament, whence is derived what is called the received text (Textus receptus) are the following: (1) the Complutensian; (2) the Erasmian; (3) those of Robert Stephens; (4) those of Beza and Elzevir. Their authority in textual criticism depends wholly upon that of the manuscripts from which their text was formed. As no stream can rise higher than its fountains, so no printed text can obtain a just weight of influence above that of its manuscript sources. It becomes, then, a matter of interest to inquire what was the basis of these early printed editions.

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(1.) The entire New Testament was printed for the first time in Greek in the fifth volume of the Complutensian Polyglott (so called from Complutum, that is Alcala in Spain, where it was printed under the patronage of Cardinal Ximenes). It bears the date of 1514, but was not published until 1522, when Erasmus had already printed three editions of his Greek Testament. Its editors professed to have formed their text from manuscripts sent to them from the papal library at Rome.

What these manuscripts were cannot now be ascertained; but that they were very ancient and correct, as alleged by these editors, is contradicted by the character of the text, which agrees with the modern in opposition to the most ancient manuscripts.

(2.) At the request of Froben, a celebrated printer and publisher of Basle, Erasmus, who was then in England, where he had devoted some time to a revised Latin translation of the New Testament with annotations, went to Basle in 1515, and began the work of editing a Greek New Testament. "By the beginning of March, 1516," says Tregelles, "the whole volume, including the annotations as well as the Greek and Latin texts, was complete; in less, in fact, than six months from the time that the first sheet was begun." The design of this haste was to anticipate the publication of the Complutensian edition. The critical apparatus in Erasmus' possession was quite slender. It consisted of such manuscripts as he found at Basle, with the help of the revised Latin translation already prepared in England and Brabant. For the Apocalypse he had but one manuscript, and that defective at the end. In his four subsequent editions-1519, 1522, 1527, 1535-he made many corrections. In that of 1527 he availed himself of the Complutensian text. This edition, from which the fifth and last published during his life differs but slightly, is the basis of the common text now in use.

(3.) In 1546, 1549, 1550, appeared the three editions of Robert Stephens, the celebrated Parisian printer. In the first two of these the text is said to have been formed from the Complutensian and Erasmian. In the third edition, although he had the aid of thirteen Greek manuscripts, his text is almost identical with that of Erasmus' fifth edition.

(4.) In 1565, Theodore Beza published at Geneva his first edition of the Greek Testament with his own Latin version, and also the Vulgate with annotations. Three other editions followed in 1576, 1582, 1588-9. He had the use of the Codex Bezae above described, the Codex Claromontanus (an ancient Graeco-Latin manuscript of the Pauline epistles), the Syriac version then recently published by Tremellius, with a close Latin translation, and Stephens' collations. But he is said not to have made much use of these helps. The first of the Elzevir editions, so celebrated for their typographical beauty, was issued in 1624, its text being mainly copied from that of Beza. This is the text that has acquired the name of Textus receptus, the Received Text, {390} as it was for more than a century the basis of almost all subsequent editions. The genealogy of this Textus receptus is thus succinctly given by Bishop Marsh: "The Textus receptus, therefore, or the text in common use, was copied, with a few exceptions, from the text of Beza. Beza himself closely followed Stephens; and Stephens (namely, in his third and chief edition) copied solely from the fifth edition of Erasmus, except in the Revelation, where he followed sometimes Erasmus, sometimes the Complutensian edition. The text, therefore, in daily use, resolves itself at last into the Complutensian and the Erasmian editions." Divinity Lectures, part I, p. 111.

7. It requires but a moderate acquaintance with the history of textual criticism to understand that the Elzevir text is not only not perfect, but is more imperfect than that which has been elaborated by the help of the abundant manuscripts, versions, and citations of the early fathers, of which modern criticism has availed itself. It is no reproach to the editors of the primary editions that, with their comparatively scanty materials, they could not accomplish as much as we can with the rich and varied means at our disposal. The essential integrity of the received text, we do indeed thankfully acknowledge and firmly maintain. Our fathers had presented to them in this text the

same divine and glorious Saviour, the same way of salvation, the same holy system of doctrines and duties, as we now find in the most carefully revised modern text. Nevertheless, a true reverence for the inspired word must impel us to the diligent use of all the means at our command for setting forth a pure text, that is, a text conformed as nearly as possible to that of the original autographs. Viewed in this light the modern critical editions of the New Testament must possess a deep interest for all who are able to read it in the original tongue. But to discuss the merits of these would be foreign to the design of the present work.

Examples of the more important various readings occur in John 1:18; Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:16. The passage 1 John 5:7-8, in heaven-in earth, is generally rejected on the testimony of the manuscripts (see the full discussion in Horne, vol. 4, ch. 36). Among the passages which are regarded as more or less doubtful may be mentioned John 5:4; John 8:3-11; {391} Acts 8:37. In regard to all these the biblical scholar must be referred to the critical commentaries. So also for the questions connected with the text of Mark 16:9-20, which are of a peculiar character.

III. PRINCIPLES OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM.

8. The end proposed by textual criticism is to restore the sacred text as nearly as possible to its primitive purity (Chap. 7, No. 1). To this work the biblical scholar should come in a candid and reverential spirit, prepared to weigh carefully all the evidence which is accessible to him, and decide, not as an advocate, but as a judge, in the simple interest of truth. The three great sources of evidence for the original text of the New Testament are Greek manuscripts, versions, and the citations of the fathers. Of these, Greek manuscripts hold the first place. But all manuscripts are not of equal value. Other things being equal, the oldest manuscripts have the highest authority. "If the multiplication of copies of the New Testament had been uniform, it is evident that the number of later copies preserved from the accidents of time would have far exceeded that of the earlier, yet no one would have preferred the fuller testimony of the thirteenth to the scantier documents of the fourth century. Some changes are necessarily introduced in the most careful copying, and these are rapidly multiplied." Westcott in Smith’s Bible Dict.; Art. New Test. Yet, as the same writer remarks, we may have evidence that a recent manuscript has been copied from one of great antiquity, and thus has preserved to us very ancient readings. Revisions and corrections by a later hand are to be carefully distinguished from the primitive writing. Yet these may be valuable, as testifying to the prevailing reading of the age to which they belong. The general class or family to which a given manuscript belongs is also to be taken into the account. In a word, so many elements of judgment are to be taken into account in determining the relative weight of authority that belongs to a given manuscript, that the right decision of the question requires large observation combined with much critical tact.

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9. Ancient versions are of great value in textual criticism; for some of them, as the old Latin and Syriac, to which may be added the old Egyptian versions, are based on a text more ancient than that preserved to us in any manuscript. In textual criticism, the testimony of a version is valuable in proportion to its antiquity, its fidelity-not its elegance or even its correctness of interpretation, but its literal closeness-and the purity of its text. Versions are liable to all the corruptions of text incident to Greek manuscripts, and far more liable to interpolations by explanatory glosses. The difference of idiom, moreover, frequently prevents such a literal rendering as shall be a sure

indication of the form belonging to the original text.

10. The citations of the church fathers, which are immensely numerous, constitute another source of testimony. But less authority belongs in general to these, because they are often made loosely from memory alone. Their testimony is chiefly valuable as corroborative. "Patristic citations alone have very little weight; such citations, even when in accordance with a version, have but little more; but when a citation is in accordance with some ancient MSS. and translations, it possesses great corroborative value. It is as confirming a reading known independently to exist, that citations are of the utmost importance. If alone, or nearly alone, they may be looked at as mere casual adaptations of the words of the New Testament." Tregelles in Horne, vol. 4, ch. 34.

11. The application of the above sources of criticism to the sacred text demands very extensive research and much sound judgment. "Canons of criticism," as they are called are valuable in their proper sphere; but, as Westcott remarks (ubi supra), "they are intended only to guide and not to dispense with the exercise of tact and scholarship. The student will judge for himself how far they are applicable in every particular case; and no exhibition of general principles can supersede the necessity of a careful examination of the characteristics of separate witnesses, and of groups of witnesses."

{393} We bring this subject to a close by an enumeration of the last six of the thirteen rules laid down by Westcott.

8. "The agreement of ancient MSS., or of MSS. containing an ancient text, with all the ancient versions and citations marks a certain reading."

9. "The disagreement of the most ancient authorities often marks the existence of a corruption anterior to them."

10. "The argument from internal evidence is always precarious." This canon he illustrates by several examples: "If a reading is in accordance with the general style of the writer, it may be said on the one side that this fact is in its favor, and on the other that an acute copyist probably changed the exceptional expression for the more usual one," &c.

11. "The more difficult reading is preferable to the simpler." This canon rests on the obvious ground that a copyist would be more apt to substitute an easy reading for a difficult than the reverse.

12. "The shorter reading is generally preferable to the longer." Because of all corruptions of the text, additions from parallel passages, or to meet its supposed wants, are the most common.

13. "That reading is preferable which explains the origin of the others."

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin] [BibleAuthenticity]

27. Formation and History of the New Testament Canon

CHAPTER XXVII.

FORMATION AND HISTORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON.

1. Respecting the canon of the New Testament there are two distinct but related fields of inquiry. The first has reference to the origin and gradual accumulation, of the materials which enter into the canon; the second, to the collection of these materials into a volume or series of volumes possessing coördinate authority with the books of the Old Testament, and constituting with them the sum of written revelation. The first of these questions has been already discussed in great measure. In Chs. 2-4, the genuineness, uncorrupt preservation, authenticity, and credibility of the four gospels were shown at some length; in Ch. 5 the same was done in respect to the Acts of the Apostles and the acknowledged epistles; in Ch. 6 was considered the position of the disputed books in respect to the canon; and in Ch. 7 the inspiration of the canon was demonstrated. Connected with these inquiries were some general notices respecting the date of the several books of the New Testament; but the fuller consideration of this latter question is reserved for the second division of the present Part-that of Particular Introduction. It will be sufficient to state here in a general way that, if we leave out of account the writings of the Apostle John, the remaining books of the New Testament were written somewhere between A.D. 45-70 (according to the commonly received opinion, between A.D. 50-70); while the most probable date of John’s writings is A.D. 70-100. The composition of the books of the New Testament, then, spreads itself over a period of about half a century.

2. Turning our attention, now, to the second question, that of the collection and arrangement of these writings in a volume or series of volumes coördinate in authority with the books of {395} the Old Testament, we have a succession of periods, not sharply separated from each other, but each of them possessing, nevertheless, its prominent characteristics in relation to the canonical writings.

3. First in order is the apostolic age, extending to about A.D. 100, especially the first half of it when many of the apostles still survived. This is the period of the composition of the books of the New Testament, but we have no certain evidence that they were then collected into a whole. The writings of apostles and apostolic men had of course the same authority as their spoken word: that is, an authority that was supreme and decisive, according to the principle laid down by the Saviour: "He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." Matthew 10:40 But so long as the churches had the presence of the apostles they could not feel, as we do now, the need of an authoritative written rule of faith and practice; nor is there any proof that the apostles themselves understood in the beginning of the gospel God’s purpose to add, through them, a second part to the canon of revelation that had been for so many centuries closed. A considerable number of years elapsed after the ascension before it was thought necessary to give to the churches under apostolic sanction a written account of our Lord’s life and teachings. The Acts of the Apostles were not composed till about A.D. 61-63. The apostolic

epistles were for the most part written on special occasions and to meet special exigencies, the greater number of them not till between A.D. 50-70, those of John still later. The Christians of this age drew their knowledge of the gospel mainly from the same sources to which Luke refers in the preface to his gospel; from oral tradition, namely, received directly or indirectly from them "who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word."

4. After the death of the apostles came what may be called the age of the apostolic fathers; men who, like Ignatius, Polycarp, and others whose names have not come down to us, had been the disciples of the apostles. Ignatius suffered martyrdom at {396} Rome, A.D. 107 or 116. Polycarp survived beyond the middle of the second century. The literary remains of this period are very scanty, the genuine writings of the apostolic fathers being confined to a few epistles-one of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, seven of Ignatius, one of Polycarp to the Philippians, to which we may add the so-called epistle of Barnabas; since whoever was the author, it does not date from later than the early part of the second century. From these writings we gather in general that the gospels and apostolic epistles were in current use in the churches, but nothing definite in regard to the collection of these writings into a whole.

"With the exception of the epistles of Jude, 2 Peter 2:1-22, 3 John, with which no coincidences occur, and 1, 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Titus, and Philemon, with which the coincidences are very questionable, all the other epistles were clearly known, and used by them; but still they are not quoted with the formulas which preface citations from the Old Testament (The Scripture saith, It is written, &c.), nor is the famous phrase of Ignatius (To the Philadelphians 5: Betaking myself to the gospel, as to the flesh of Christ, and to the apostles, as the eldership of the church) sufficient to prove the existence of a collection of apostolic records as distinct from the sum of apostolic teaching. The coincidences with the gospels on the other hand are numerous and interesting, but such as cannot be referred to the exclusive use of our present written gospels." Westcott, in Smith’s Bible Dict.; Art. Canon. The reason of this, as the writer goes on to show, was that "the details of the life of Christ were still too fresh to be sought for only in written records." There is, however, one remarkable passage in the epistle of Barnabas, the Greek text of which has been recently discovered appended to the Sinaitic manuscript, in which he says (ch. 4): "Let us take care that we be not found as it is written, many are called, but few are chosen." This formula, "as it is written," distinguishes the gospel from which it is quoted as a part of the inspired word; for it is the customary formula employed by Christ and his apostles in accordance with the usage of their age, when they appeal to the Old Testament as of divine authority; and is never applied to writings of mere human authority.

5. Next in order comes what may be called the period of transition between the age of the apostolic and that of the early church fathers. The most distinguished writer of this period is Justin Martyr. It is now generally conceded that the "Memoirs" of which he so often speaks were our canonical gospels. {397} Chap. 2, No. 7. Besides the abundant use of these he mentions the Apocalypse by name, and ascribes it expressly to the apostle John-"a certain man among us named John, one of the apostles of Christ, prophesied, in the revelation given him, that those who have believed in our Christ will spend a thousand years in Jerusalem," etc. Dialogue with Trypho, chap. 81. He has also some apparent allusions to the Pauline epistles, but how far he possessed and used a collection of the New Testament writings, we have no means of judging. Towards the middle of the second century, however, events occurred which had a powerful influence, not

indeed, for establishing the authority of the apostolic writings (since that existed from the beginning), but for bringing home to the consciousness of the churches their supreme importance as an authoritative rule of faith and practice, and also the necessity of carefully defining their extent as well as their true interpretation. Heretical teachers arose who sowed in the Christian church the seeds of gnosticism. Of these some, as Marcion, rejected on dogmatical grounds a portion of the apostolic writings, and mutilated those which they retained; others, as Valentinus, sought by fanciful principles of interpretation to explain away their true meaning. Chap. 2, No. 12. The reaction upon the churches was immediate and effectual. They set themselves at once to define and defend the true apostolic writings as well against Marcion's false and mutilated canon, if canon it may be called, as against the false interpretations of Valentinus, Heracleon and others. The occasion had now come for the recognition of a New Testament canon coördinate in authority with that of the Old Testament, and from this time onward we find the idea of such a canon clearly developed in the writings of the church fathers. What aided essentially in this work was the execution, about this time, of versions of the New Testament books, such as the Old Latin and Syriac; for the authors of these versions must of necessity have brought together the writings, which, in their judgment, proceeded from the apostles and their companions.

6. We find, accordingly, when the age of the early church fathers {398} opens, about A.D. 170, a clearly recognized canon-sometimes described in two parts, the gospels and the apostles-which is placed on a level with that of the Old Testament as the inspired word of God, and cited in common with it as the Scriptures, the divine Scriptures, the Scriptures of the Lord, etc. Both canons are mentioned together as The entire Scriptures both prophetical and evangelical; The prophets, the gospel, and the blessed apostles; the law and the prophets, with the evangelical and apostolical writings; the Old and the New Testament; the entire instrument of each Testament, etc. Irenæus, against heresies, 2. 46; 5. 20; Letter to Florinus in Eusebius' Hist. Ecclesiastes, 5. 20 : Clement of Alexandria, Strom., 7, p. 757; Tertullian, against heretics, chap. 30. 36: against Marcion, 4. 6, etc. The canon was not, however, completed in its present form; for the right of certain books-the so-called antilegomena, chap. 6. 6.-to a place in it remained for a considerable time an open question, which, in its application to particular books was answered differently in the East and the West. See chap. 6. On the other hand, certain writings of the apostolic fathers (as the so-called epistle of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas, the epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians), being read in certain of the early churches, found their way into some codices of the New Testament. Chap. 6, No. 4. To the latter part of the second century belong two important canons, that of the Syriac Peshito, and the Muratorian canon. The former of these represents the judgment of the Eastern churches; the latter apparently that of the Western. The canon of the Peshito has, of the seven disputed books, Hebrews and James. It wants the other five, namely, 2 Peter 2:1-22, 3 John, Jude, Revelation. The Muratorian canon is in such an imperfect state that its testimony on some points is doubtful. It contains Jude and Revelation; perhaps also 2, 3 John. It wants Hebrews, and 2 Peter, and it adds the apocryphal book called the Apocalypse of Peter.

Origen in the third century (as quoted by Eusebius, Hist. Ecclesiastes, 6. 25) and Eusebius in the fourth, Hist. Ecclesiastes, 3. 25, give each a review of the New Testament canon with a statement of the differing judgments as to the disputed books. The details will come up hereafter in connection with the books in question.

{399} The Synodical Council of Loadicea, which was probably held between A.D. 343-381, gives in its 60th canon (the genuineness of which, however, has been called in question by some) a list of the books of the Old and New Testaments. That of the New Testament wants the Apocalypse. The third Council of Carthage, held A.D. 397, contains all the books of our present canon. So also the Latin fathers, as Jerome, Rufinus, etc. But the Syrian churches still adhered to the canon of the Peshito.

7. The history of Christian opinion in regard to the canon of the New Testament, of which a very brief outline has been given, has all the marks of naturalness and truthfulness. The Biblical student should carefully remember the two following important considerations:

(1.) The books of the New Testament were not received as a whole, but separately upon the evidence that each gave of its apostolic origin. Doubts in respect to certain books throw no shadow of suspicion upon the rest, the genuineness and authenticity of which were acknowledged by all from the beginning. The question, therefore, is not concerning the truth of revelation, but simply concerning the claims of certain books to be a part of the record of revelation. However it may be decided in particular cases, the apostolic authority of the universally acknowledged books, which constitute the main body of the New Testament, remains perfectly sure.

(2.) The early diversities of judgment in respect to certain books furnish satisfactory evidence of the freedom of thought and discussion among the primitive Christians, and of the sincerity and earnestness of their investigations. It was precisely because they would not accept any book without full evidence of its apostolic authority, that these diversities of judgment prevailed.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin] [BibleAuthenticity]

28. Ancient Versions of the New Testament

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ANCIENT VERSIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. In the present chapter those versions of the Old Testament also that were made in connection with versions of the New, and in the interest of Christianity, will be briefly considered.

I. LATIN VERSIONS.

1. A peculiar interest attaches to the early Latin versions. The "Old Latin" translation of the New Testament, in connection with which one of the Old Testament was executed from the Septuagint, is perhaps the earliest that exists in any language. The Old Syriac alone can rival it in antiquity, and if either may claim the precedence, it is probably the Latin. This version, and afterwards the revision of it by Jerome, was the grand medium through which the Holy Scriptures were known to the Western or Latin churches for more than twelve centuries. It has exercised no small influence on the popular modern versions of Christendom, and it is the great storehouse of theological terms for both Catholic and Protestant Christianity. The English version of Wiclif (1324-1384) is a literal translation of the current text of the Latin Vulgate. The Psalter of the English Prayer Book is taken from Cranmer’s Bible called the "Great English Bible:" and the version of the Psalms follows the Gallican Psalter, the second of the revisions made by Jerome from the Old Latin. See below, No. 4.

2. How early the ante-Hieronymian Latin version (that current before the days of Hieronymus, that is, Jerome), was executed is unknown; but the writings of Tertullian furnish satisfactory proof that it was in popular use in North Africa (the place where it was made) in the last quarter of the second century. According to the testimony of the ancient church {401} fathers, its text existed in a great variety of forms, and the same variety has come down to us in the old manuscripts that contain it. Some, indeed, have maintained that several independent versions existed. But the sum of the evidence from both the early fathers and the manuscripts goes to show that there was never more than one that could be called independent. The copies of this were subjected to multiplied emendations or revisions from the Greek original, till the text had fallen in the days of Augustine and Jerome into a state of great confusion. The language of Augustine is very strong: "The translators of the Scriptures from the Hebrew tongue into the Greek can be numbered, but the Latin interpreters can by no means be numbered. For whenever, in the first ages of Christianity, any one had gained possession of a Greek manuscript, and imagined himself to possess some little skill in the two languages, he ventured to become an interpreter." De Doct. Christ. 2. 16. According to the received opinion the so-called Itala (Italian) was not an independent version, but one of these revisions, apparently made in Italy, and as some think, under ecclesiastical auspices. This, Augustine recommends as more faithful and perspicuous than the rest.

3. The canon of the Old Latin version seems to have wanted, in the New Testament, Hebrews, James, and 2 Peter. In the Old Testament it followed the Septuagint. It contained, therefore, the

apocryphal books of that version, to which was also added the second of Esdras. Appendix to Pt. 2, No. 6. The text of this version is known to us from two sources, quotations and manuscripts. For our knowledge of the Old Testament we are dependent mainly on the quotations of the early Latin fathers, since only a few fragments remain in the shape of manuscripts. The same is true of some parts of the New Testament, particularly the Apocalypse. But of the gospels as well as other parts of the New Testament, we have some very ancient manuscripts which are of high value in textual criticism. The agreement of this version in many characteristic readings with the oldest known Greek manuscripts has already been noticed. Chap. 3, No. 3. Such agreement is the strongest possible testimony {402} for the genuineness of the readings in question. Chap. 26, No. 2. The Codex Vercellensis, belonging to the fourth century, and said to have been written by Eusebius, bishop of Vercellae (now Vercelli) in Northern Italy where the manuscript is preserved, is one of the oldest manuscripts of the sacred text in existence. The Codex Veronensis at Verona, the Graeco-Latin Codex Claromontanus in the Imperial Library at Paris, the Codex Vindobonensis at Vienna, the Codex Bobbiensis at Turin, and others that might be named, are also very ancient. Among the codices that contain what is called the Italic version, is the Brixianus of the sixth century.

4. About A.D. 388, Jerome at the solicitation of Damasus, bishop of Rome, undertook the arduous task of revising the Old Latin version by a comparison with the original Greek text. In this work he proceeded very cautiously, being well aware of the prejudices which he must encounter on the part of multitudes who could not discriminate between the authority of the original Greek text and that of the Latin version made from it. He began with the four gospels. According to his own testimony, he selected ancient Greek manuscripts, but such as did not differ much from the Latin usage; and in the use of these he so restrained his pen that, when he had corrected those things only which seemed to change the sense, he suffered the rest to remain as they were. (Preface to the four gospels addressed to Damasus.) His work of revision was afterwards extended to the remaining books of the New Testament; a revision which Tregelles describes as "less complete and uniform than that of the gospels, and in which many parts seem to have received hardly any alterations from his hand." In Horne, vol. 4, ch. 23. About the same time he turned his attention to the Latin version of the Old Testament, which had been made, not from the original Hebrew, but from the Greek Septuagint. Of this he first revised the Psalter, but not very thoroughly; in his own words, "cursorily for the most part." This first revision is known by the name of the Roman Psalter. A later and more thorough revision, executed by Jerome at Bethlehem between A.D. 384-391, is called the Gallican Psalter. {403} There is good reason to believe that Jerome's revision extended to all the remaining books of the Old Testament, though we have positive evidence in respect to only a part of them-Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles, Chronicles.

Gregory of Tours is said to have introduced Jerome's second revision of the Psalter into the public service in France; whence its name Gallican. The Roman Psalter was retained in Italy till the time of Pius V., who introduced the Gallican generally. But three churches, one of them that of the Vatican, continued to use the Roman Psalter. Westcott in Smith's Bible Dict.; Art. Vulgate.

5. Jerome was soon convinced of the necessity of undertaking a new translation of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew. To this arduous task he addressed himself with great earnestness, availing himself of the help of Jewish scholars to complete his knowledge of the Hebrew. The whole work occupied his time, with periods of intermission, from A.D. 385 to A.D.

405. See in Horne, vol. 2, p. 89. He did not venture, however, to make a new version from the Hebrew of the book of Psalms, the constant use of which in the church service was a barrier to the substitution of a new translation. He accordingly retained his second revision from the Septuagint, which is called the Gallican Psalter. Of the Apocryphal books he translated only two, Judith and Tobit. The remaining Apocryphal writings were retained in their old form. The Latin bible thus in part revised and in part translated by Jerome (most of the Apocryphal writings being left unrevised) is called the Vulgate, that is common or current version, although this term belonged, before the days of Jerome, to the Old Latin itself. Its diversified character is thus briefly indicated by Westcott.-"(1.) Unrevised Old Latin: Wisdom, Ecclesiastes 1:1-18; Ecclesiastes 2:1-26 Macc., Baruch. (2.) Old Latin revised, from the LXX.: Psalter. (3.) Jerome's free translation from the original text: Judith, Tobit. (4.) Jerome's translation from the original: Old Testament except Psalter. (5.) Old Latin revised from Greek MSS.: Gospels. (6.) Old Latin cursorily revised: the remainder of New Testament." In Smith's Bible Dict.; Art. Vulgate.

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It is not necessary to follow the history of the text of the Vulgate since Jerome's day. Suffice it to say that the simultaneous use of the Old Latin and Vulgate led to a corruption of both texts, which has not yet been thoroughly removed. The present standard text is that called the Clementine, from Pope Clement VIII., under whose auspices the Vulgate was edited in 1592. This is better than the preceding Sixtine edition, A.D. 1590, but not by any means the pure text of Jerome, as it might be recovered, proximately at least, by a careful collation of ancient manuscripts and quotations. The oldest and best manuscript of the Latin Vulgate Old and New Testaments, is the Codex Amiatinus in the Laurentian Library at Florence. It belongs to the sixth century, and exhibits the text of Jerome in a very pure form, carrying us back to about 120 years from Jerome's death. The Codex Fuldensis is said to belong to the same century. There are other good manuscripts more or less complete of the eighth and ninth centuries.

Many other Latin versions have appeared in modern times, sometimes in connection with the original text, and sometimes separately, which it is not necessary to notice in detail.

II. SYRIAC VERSIONS.

6. The ancient Syriac version called the Peshito belongs, in the judgment of biblical scholars, to the second century. It comprises the Old Testament as well as the New. The version of the Old Testament was made from the original Hebrew, and thus has the honor of being the oldest translation of the Hebrew Scriptures for Christian use, the Old Latin version having been made from the Septuagint. The version of the New Testament was made in connection with that of the Old, so that both together constitute one work.

Syrian tradition makes extravagant claims in respect to the antiquity of the Peshito, telling us that it was executed by men sent to Palestine by the apostle Thaddeus (whom tradition connects with the founding of the church at Edessa), and by Abgarus, King of Edessa, a contemporary of the Saviour. The Old Testament was sometimes referred to a still earlier age-that of Solomon and Hiram, or that of the captivity of the ten tribes. Without giving credence to such traditions, we may well believe that it belongs to the earliest period of the Syrian churches, and cannot be placed later than the last part of the second century. Of the term Peshito, that is, simple, there are different

explanations. The most usual is that it denotes a simple and literal version, free from glosses and allegorical interpretations. Tregelles suggests that it was called simple in contrast with the translation made by Paul of Tela from the Hexaplar text of Origen {405} (see below, No. 8), which was replete with asterisks and obeli to mark Origen's revisions, and had also marginal references. It is agreed that the Old Testament was translated from the original Hebrew and Chaldee, though the translators seem to have had before them the Greek version of the Seventy, and to have consulted it in the progress of their work.

7. The Peshito is a free, and at the same time, a faithful version of Scripture, holding the first place among the ancient versions for its general excellence, while it ranks with the Old Latin in antiquity. Its authority in both textual criticism and interpretation is deservedly high. As it regards textual criticism, however, its value is diminished by the fact that its text has not come down to us in a pure state. It has suffered in the same way as the text of the Old Latin, though not to the same extent.

Among the manuscripts brought from the Nitrian monasteries, and deposited in the British Museum, is one of great antiquity, containing large portions of the four gospels in Syriac. Dr. Cureton published in 1858 the text of this manuscript as "Remains of a very ancient Syriac recension of the four gospels in Syriac, hitherto unknown in Europe," with an English translation and preface. Its appearance was hailed with lively interest and has excited warm discussions. The manuscript itself is assigned to the fifth century, but it presents a text which, in the judgment of competent scholars, is older than the current text of the Peshito. Whether it is an older form of the Peshito version, or another and earlier version of the gospels, is a question that has been differently answered. It is maintained, on the one hand, that the Peshito is a revision of the Curetonian text, "replete with readings unknown in the second century" (Tregelles in Smith's Bible Dict.); on the other, that it is "an older version than the Peshito; which the author or authors of the latter consulted throughout." Davidson in Alexander's Kitto. Its great value for critical purposes must be acknowledged by all. In many characteristic readings it agrees with the oldest manuscripts and quotations. It has also some erroneous readings known to be of great antiquity. In a word, the high antiquity of its text cannot be reasonably questioned. Drs. Cureton and Tregelles think that the gospel of Matthew {406} may be a translation from the apostle's Hebrew copy. But this is denied by Davidson and others.

8. The Philoxenian Syriac version was executed A.D. 508, under the auspices of Philoxenus, or Xenaias, bishop of Hierapolis or Mabug in Syria. Philoxenus belonged to the sect of the Monophysites, and it is generally thought that the version was made in the interest of that sect. The translator's name was Polycarp, one of Philoxenus' rural bishops. With the exception, perhaps, of certain books (see below), the text of this version has not come down to us in its original form. We have only a revision of it made A.D. 616 by Thomas of Harkel in a monastery of Alexandria, whence this version is also called the Harclean Syriac. The characteristic of this version is its extremely literal character. It is the translator's aim to represent every Greek word, even the article, by a corresponding Syriac word, even where the idiom of the language must thereby be violated. Hence its style is of necessity barbarous. But this very character of literalness gives to the Philoxenian version high authority in respect to textual criticism. So far as it has come down to us in its primitive form, it is, in truth, equal to the Greek text of its own time.

About the time that Thomas of Harkel revised the Philoxenian version of the New Testament, Paul of Tela, another Monophysite, executed what is called the Hexaplar Syriac version of the Old Testament, because it was made from the text of Origen's Hexaplar. Chap. 16, No. 12. It coincides with the Philoxenian version of the New Testament in respect to its character as well as the time of its appearance, being made on the principle of following the Greek text word for word as exactly as possible. Thus the Hexaplar version of the Old, and the Philoxenian version of the New, constitute together a whole of like character throughout.

After the example of Origen, Paul introduced into his version asterisks and obeli; the asterisk (*) to indicate insertions made in the text on the authority of manuscripts and other versions; the obelus (÷), to mark passages of doubtful character. Thus it supplies, as far as a version can, the Hexaplar of Origen, of which only a few fragments remain. 407 The Philoxenian version of the New Testament, as revised by Thomas of Harkel, contains also the same asterisks and obeli. Critical marks and marginal readings also appear in most of the manuscripts. This critical apparatus is generally thought to have proceeded from Thomas himself, in imitation of the Hexaplar Syriac of the Old Testament; but whether to indicate comparison with the Peshito, or with the Greek manuscripts employed by Thomas is not certain. There is a version of the Catholic epistles wanting in the Peshito—2 Pet., 2, 3 John, Jude—existing in two forms, one of which is thought to be the unrevised Philoxenian text. There is a codex at Rome containing the four gospels which has also been supposed to contain the same unrevised text. The Jerusalem Syriac Lectionary, containing simply lessons from the four gospels, is a peculiar version known to us from a single manuscript in the Vatican Library which belongs to the eleventh century. The version itself is referred by some to the sixth century, by others to a later date. Its dialect is barbarous, being a mixture of Chaldee and Syriac, but its readings are said often to coincide with the oldest and best authorities.III. EGYPTIAN AND ETHIOPIC VERSIONS.9. Formerly but one version was known to exist in the language of the ancient Egyptians. This, which was made in the dialect of lower Egypt, was naturally called Coptic. When it was discovered that another version existed in the dialect of upper Egypt, the Arabic term Sahidic was applied to it. But since the word Coptic is generic, applying to both dialects alike, it has been proposed to call the former version Copto-Memphitic or simply Memphitic, from Memphis, the ancient capital of lower Egypt; and the latter Copto-Thebaic or Thebaic, from Thebes, the celebrated capital of ancient upper Egypt. When these versions were executed cannot be determined with certainty. But they existed in the fourth century, and probably in the latter part of the third century. Their high antiquity gives to them great value in textual criticism. The latter of them, however, exists only in a fragmentary form. Some fragments of a third version, differing from both the Memphitic and the Thebaic, have been discovered. To this, the epithet Bashmuric has been applied, from the Arabian name Bashmur, a district of lower Egypt in the Delta to the East. But Egyptian scholars doubt whether the term is well applied, as the version is said to have stronger affinity to the Thebaic than to the Memphitic version.408 The Memphitic and Thebaic versions are said to have contained the whole Bible, that of the Old Testament being made from the Septuagint. The whole Memphitic New Testament has been several times published, but never in such a manner as to meet the wants of Biblical criticism. Of the Thebaic version only some fragments have been published.10. An Ethiopic version of the whole Bible exists in the ancient dialect of Axum. That of the Old Testament was made from the Septuagint; that of the New is a close version of the original Greek. The age to which it belongs is not known. Many of the readings of its text are said to show an affinity with the older class of Greek

manuscripts, while others are of a later character. This leads to the suspicion that the version has undergone revision by the aid of later Greek manuscripts. An edition of the whole Bible is in process of publication in Germany.IV. THE GOTHIC AND OTHER VERSIONS.11. The first information which European scholars had of the existence of a Gothic version of the New Testament was in the sixteenth century, when one Morillon copied from a Gothic manuscript in the library of the Monastery of Werden in Westphalia the Lord’s Prayer and some other parts, which were afterwards published. When the Swedes, in 1648, took Prague, among the spoils sent to Stockholm was the celebrated Codex Argenteus, Silver manuscript, containing a copy of the Gothic gospels written on purple vellum in silver letters, except the beginnings of the sections which are in gold. When entire the manuscript is said to have contained 320 leaves, but when found it had but 188 in quarto size. In its present state it wants parts of all the gospels. The letters are deeply furrowed, and beautifully regular. It is thought that this manuscript was executed for the use of some Gothic king. After various changes of place, it was finally deposited in the library of the University of Upsal in Sweden, where it is now preserved enclosed in a silver case. The Gothic version, of which the Codex Argenteus is a transcript, was made in the fourth century by Ulphilas, second bishop of the Goths in Moesia (the so-called Moeso-Goths). 409 The manuscript itself belongs, it is thought, to the sixth century.12. In 1762 a palimpsest was discovered by Knittel at Wolfenbüttel, a city of the duchy of Brunswick in Germany, containing, as the earlier writing, part of the epistle to the Romans in Gothic and Latin, the versions standing side by side. In 1817 the late Cardinal Mai discovered in the Ambrosian Library at Milan five palimpsests, from which, in connection with the Wolfenbüttel palimpsest, the Gothic text of the greater part of the Pauline epistles (that to the Hebrews not included) has been recovered, as also some fragments of the gospels, and of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. All that has been recovered of the Gothic version was edited in 1835-6 by Gabelentz and Loebe with a Latin translation, notes, and a Gothic dictionary and grammar. There are several later editions partly of the Codex Argenteus, and partly of all the Gothic remains of the Scriptures. Thus this interesting version, which represents the text of the New Testament in the fourth century as it was known to Ulphilas, is made available for the purposes of Biblical criticism.13. There is an ancient Armenian version unaccompanied as yet by any Latin translation; and thus available for critical purposes only through the help of those who know the language. By means of such help Dr. Tregelles used it for his critical edition of the New Testament, and he speaks of its value "as a critical witness as to the general reading of certain Greek copies existing in the former half of the fifth century." In Smith’s Bible Dict., Art. Armenian Version.Other ancient versions, as the Arabic and Slavonic, we pass by; as their comparatively late date makes them of little importance for critical studies. The history of modern versions, among which is our own authorized version, presents a wide and interesting field of inquiry, but it does not come within the scope of the present work.

29. The Historical Books

SECOND DIVISION, PARTICULAR INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER XXIX. THE HISTORICAL BOOKS.

1. The New Testament, like the Old, is not an abstract system of doctrines and duties, but a record of facts involving doctrines and duties of the highest import. This record does not constitute an independent history, complete in itself, and to be explained in its own light. It is rather the necessary sequel to the record of the Old Testament. It interprets the Old Testament, and is itself interpreted by it. The two constitute together an organic whole, and can be truly understood only in their mutual connection. To discard the Old Testament whether formally or in practice, is to throw away the key which unlocks to us the treasures of the New; for the writers of the New Testament continually reason out of the Scriptures of the Old. If we cannot truly comprehend the Old Testament except when we view it as preparatory to the revelation contained in the New, so neither can we have a full understanding of the New except as the completion of the revelation begun in the Old. In a word, we understand revelation aright only in its unity.

2. The New Testament uses all the teachings of the Old, but it does not repeat them all. The unity, personality, and infinite perfections of God; his universal providence, and his supremacy as well over nations as individuals; the duties that men owe to God and each other, as embodied for substance in the ten commandments and expanded in the teachings of Moses and the prophets; the indissoluble connection, on the one hand, between righteousness and true prosperity, and on the other, between sin and ruin-all these great truths are so fully unfolded in the Old Testament that they need no formal repetition in the {411} New. The person and office of the Messiah-as that great prophet, like unto Moses, whom God should raise up for his people in the latter days; as that mighty king of David's line, who should sit on his throne and in his kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice forever; as that high priest after the order of Melchisedec whom God should establish forever with a solemn oath-had been prefigured in the institutions of Moses, in the Psalms, and in the writings of the prophets.

Some other important truths not so fully revealed in the Old Testament but deducible in a legitimate way either from its general scope or from some brief hints in its teachings, had become firmly established in the faith of the Jewish people during the long interval that elapsed between Malachi and Christ. Such particularly were the doctrines of the resurrection of the dead and of future rewards and punishments. These truths, also, as well as those more directly and fully taught in the Old Testament, were assumed by the Saviour and his apostles as a platform for the peculiar revelations of the gospel, the sum of which is Jesus Christ crucified for the salvation of the world. The four gospels, then, as containing the history of our Lord's appearance and works, lie at the foundation of the revelation contained in the New Testament. To these, then, our attention must first be given; after which the history of the apostolic labors, as given in the Acts of the Apostles, will naturally follow.

I. THE GOSPELS AS A WHOLE.

3. The word gospel (Anglo-Saxon, god, good, and spell, history or tidings) answers to the Greek word euangelion, good-tidings, whence comes the Latin evangelium, with the derived words in use among us, as evangelist, evangelical, etc. It properly signifies the good message itself, and it is only by a secondary usage that it is applied to the written histories of the Saviour's life, as being the embodiment of this message. The titles prefixed to these gospels from the beginning; "The Gospel according to {412} Matthew", "The Gospel according to Mark," etc., indicate that the written record is not itself the gospel, but rather an account of the gospel according to these different writers. Christ himself is the author of the gospel. It existed and was received by many thousands before a line of it was put upon record on the written page.

4. The genuineness, uncorrupt preservation, and authenticity of the four canonical gospels have already been shown at some length. Chaps. 2, 3, 4. In connection with the argument for their genuineness, their natural division into two parts-the first three, commonly called the synoptical gospels, and the gospel according to John; the remarkable agreements and differences of the three synoptical gospels among themselves; and the remarkable contrast which the fourth gospel presents to all three of the synoptical gospels, have also been considered simply as existing facts. Chap. 2, Nos. 14 and 15. But when we seek an explanation of these remarkable phenomena, we enter upon a very difficult problem, one on which the ingenuity of Biblical scholars has exhausted itself for several successive generations without reaching thus far a result that can be regarded as perfectly satisfactory. Almost all conceivable theories and combinations of theories have been proposed, some of which, however, are now generally abandoned as untenable, and need not be considered at large.

5. Looking at the three synoptical gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we find a remarkable agreement not only in their general plan, but in many of their details also. With the exception of our Lord's last journey to Jerusalem and the history of his passion there, they are mainly occupied with his ministry in Galilee. The selection of incidents is also to a great extent the same. "The most remarkable differences lie in the presence of a long series of events connected with the Galilean ministry, which are peculiar to St. Matthew and St. Mark (Matthew 14:22-36; Matthew 15:1-39; Matthew 16:1-12; Mark 6:45-56; Mark 7:1-37; Mark 8:1-26), and a second series of events connected with the journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-62; Luke 10:1-42; Luke 11:1-54; Luke 12:1-59; Luke 13:1-35; Luke 14:1-35; Luke 15:1-32; Luke 16:1-31; Luke 17:1-37; Luke 18:1-14), which is peculiar to St. Luke." Westcott, Introduct. {413} to the Study of the Gospels, chap. 3. The coincidences of language, as well as incident, are also remarkable; and here the general law prevails that these coincidences are more common, as has been shown by Norton and others, in the recital of the words of others than in the narrative parts of the gospels, and most common when our Lord's own words are recited.

6. But with these remarkable agreements coexist equally remarkable differences. Each writer has his own peculiarities of style, which appear more distinctly in the original than they can in any version. It has been noticed also by Biblical scholars that these peculiarities are more marked in the narrative than in the recitative parts of the gospels in question. Each writer, moreover, brings in incidents peculiar to himself, not in the form of patchwork, but as parts of a self consistent whole. So far is he from exact outward conformity to either of the other gospels, in respect to arrangement

and circumstantial details, that the diversity between him and them in these particulars, sometimes creates serious difficulties when we attempt to arrange the three different narratives in the form of a harmony.

7. No theory of the origin of these three gospels can be true which does not explain both their coincidences and their differences. Hence we may set aside at once the hypothesis of their mutual dependence on each other-that the later evangelists used the writings of the earlier. By the different advocates of this theory, each of the three synoptic gospels has been made in turn the primary record from which the others drew; but no one of them has been able, upon this hypothesis, to account for the omissions or insertions of the supposed later evangelists, much less for the remarkable fact already noticed, that the peculiarities of each writer appear more fully in the narrative than in the recitative part of his gospel. The later evangelists may, indeed, have been acquainted with the writings of the earlier and have consulted them, but this supposition alone does not explain their peculiar coincidences and differences.

Another hypothesis is that of an original document or documents, from which all three are supposed to have drawn. The {414} assumption of a single original written gospel, as the basis of our first three canonical gospels, is manifestly untenable. Had a primitive gospel existed of such compass and authority as to be the common source of our three synoptic gospels, it is inconceivable that the churches, which carefully preserved these three gospels, though two of them proceeded not from apostles themselves but only from their companions, should have allowed the original gospel so speedily and utterly to perish, that no traces of it remained in the days of Irenæus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria. Besides, this hypothesis, as it was soon seen, does not explain the peculiar relation of these gospels to each other in respect to coincidences and differences. Hence various modifications were proposed-an original Aramaic gospel with various Greek translations, this original Aramaic gospel variously increased with new matter, etc. In a word, the form of these assumed original documents was hypothetically explained from the actual form of our three synoptic gospels; the very reverse of the true problem, which was to explain, from some reliable data, the form of the canonical gospels themselves. The remaining hypothesis is that of oral tradition emanating from the apostles themselves, and maintained in its purity during their lives by their personal presence and teaching. That the gospel existed in this form alone for some years after the beginning of Christianity is admitted by all. The apostles were Christ’s chosen witnesses of his life and teachings. From their lips proceeded the tradition which now constitutes our written gospels. The necessity of embodying this tradition in the form of permanent records was not felt at the beginning. But, as the churches were multiplied, oral tradition became liable to corruption in many ways through the multiplicity of the organs employed in its transmission. Then the need of written gospels began to manifest itself, and it was natural that the apostles should look to the supply of this need either by their own direct agency, or by that of men writing with their knowledge and approbation. How many years elapsed before the {415} appearance of the earliest of our canonical gospels, which is commonly supposed to have been that of Matthew, we have no means of ascertaining with accuracy. But we may reasonably suppose that the period was long enough to allow the apostolic tradition of our Lord’s life and teachings to assume a somewhat definite shape in respect to both matter and outward form. First, in respect to matter. As their public instructions could not cover the whole of our Saviour’s history (John 20:30; John 21:25), they naturally selected, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, those

parts of it which embodied the spirit and meaning of the whole. Since, moreover, the apostles remained together at Jerusalem for some time after our Lord's ascension (Acts 8:1; Acts 15:6), it is highly reasonable to suppose that in a matter of such moment they had a mutual understanding-an understanding which, while it interfered with the freedom of no one, secured a general agreement as to the points in our Lord's history and teachings which should be especially insisted on. Secondly in respect to outward form. While the apostles were preserved by the illumination of the Holy Spirit from any superstitious regard to the letter of our Lord's teachings, their reverence for him as a perfect teacher, whose words were truth unmixed with error, must have made them anxious to put the oral tradition of his sayings into as perfect a form as possible; whence the tradition of our Saviour's words would assume from the first a more fixed form than that of his life generally.

It is supposed by many that the writers of the first three gospels drew each from this common body of oral tradition such materials as suited his general plan; no one of them proposing to give the whole of our Lord's history, or even to observe a strict chronological order in the events recorded by him, any farther than such order was rendered necessary by their nature and essential connection. In the case of Matthew, who was one of the twelve apostles, it might be thought that he wrote simply from his own personal knowledge; but his gospel could not cover all the ground of our Lord's history as known to him, and we may well suppose that in the selection of his {416} materials he had regard-not a servile, but a free regard-to the common oral tradition of the apostles, which was, in fact, the embodiment of their united wisdom under the illumination of the Divine Spirit. Each evangelist, as well Mark and Luke who were not apostles, as Matthew who belonged to the number of the twelve, wrote independently of the other two. The later writers may, indeed, have been acquainted with the writings of the earlier, but a bare inspection of the three gospels shows that there was no labored effort on the part of one evangelist to adjust his work to those of the others. Hence arise apparent discrepancies, as in the two genealogies of our Lord, which it is sometimes hard to explain. But these very difficulties witness to the independent truthfulness of the writers. Had they written in concert, or borrowed systematically from each other, such difficulties would not have existed.

Although apostolic oral tradition is thus made the main source whence the writers of these gospels drew their materials, it is not necessary to affirm or deny their use, in a subordinate way, of written documents. That such documents existed in the time of Luke we know from his own words, chap. 1:1. He does not condemn them, but neither does he rely upon them. His gospel is not derived from them, but from his own accurate investigations; "It seemed good to me also, having accurately traced out all things from the beginning" (as the original Greek means), "to write to thee in order, most excellent Theophilus." Chap. 1:3. And if Luke, the companion of Paul, was not dependent for his materials on any previously existing writings, neither was Mark, the companion of both Peter and Paul, nor Matthew, who was himself an apostle. Nor can the incorporation of such writings into the synoptic gospels be shown with any degree of probability. If it cannot be claimed for this hypothesis of a primitive apostolic tradition, as the source whence the writers of the synoptic gospels drew their materials, that it explains all the phenomena of their mutual relation to each other, it is, nevertheless, more satisfactory than any other that has been proposed, and may be regarded as a near approximation to the actual facts in the case.

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Between the traditions of which the apostle Paul speaks (2 Thessalonians 2:15; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; also, according to the original, 1 Corinthians 11:2) received immediately from his mouth or pen, and the pretended traditions of later days, handed down from century to century through a succession of uninspired men, the difference is that between light and darkness, between truth and fiction. We have in the writings of the New Testament the genuine apostolic tradition, at first oral, but put into a written form during the lifetime of the apostles. These traditions are the "gold, silver, precious stones" of divine truth. All other traditions are the "wood, hay, stubble" of human origin. In settling the question respecting the genuineness of the New Testament writings, we proceed as in the case of any other writings. We avail ourselves of all the evidence within our reach, external and internal. We take the testimony of Irenæus and Tertullian, and also of Marcion and Valentinus; though none of them were inspired, and the two latter were heretical. But when we have once determined what books were written by apostles or apostolic men, these contain for us the only authoritative tradition, as defined by the apostle: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle." 2 Thessalonians 2:15.

8. In comparing the synoptic gospels with each other and with the fourth gospel, we must ever bear in mind that no one of them professes to give a complete history of our Lord's life, or to arrange all the incidents which he relates in the exact order of time. Under the guidance of the divine Spirit each one pursues his own course, independently of the others, here inserting what one or more of the rest have omitted, or omitting what one or more of them have inserted; and here, again, bringing in incidents without regard to their exact chronological order, with some general preface like the following: "at that time," Matthew 12:1; "and he began again," Mark 4:1; "and it came to pass as he was alone praying," Luke 9:18; "and it came to pass as they went in the way," Luke 9:57; etc. Thus the wisdom of God has given us, not all the particulars of our Lord's history, but such a selection from both the incidents of his public life and his public and private teachings as best embodies the great facts of the gospel, and the doctrines and duties connected with them. In the four canonical gospels the church has, not all of our Lord's history and teachings, but all that the Holy Ghost judged needful for her establishment and edification to the end of time.

{418} Of our Lord's history before his baptism we have only his genealogy in a twofold form; some notices of his miraculous conception; an account of his birth and circumcision, with the visions and prophecies connected with them; a history of his preservation from Herod's attempt to destroy him; the subsequent residence of his parents in Nazareth, with a single incident of his childhood. Luke 2:40-52 hew-52 hew-52. All these particulars have, in one way or another, a bearing on his divine mission and work as the Son of God. The apocryphal gospels on the contrary, as, for example, the Gospel of the Infancy, and the Gospel of Nicodemus, abound in frivolous stories relating to our Lord's infancy and later life, which have no connection with the great work of redemption.

9. The peculiarities of the fourth gospel, as well as its relation to the three preceding gospels, will come up for consideration hereafter. At present we only remark that John wrote many years after the appearance of the synoptic gospels, and that, whatever reference he may have had to them, his gospel constitutes, in the plan of revelation, a true complement to the other three. For (1) if we except the narrative of our Lord's passion, it covers, for the most part, ground not occupied by them. They give mainly the history of the Saviour's ministry in Galilee (Luke also, at some length, that of his last journey to Jerusalem); the scene of much of John's gospel, on the contrary, is Jerusalem and its near vicinity. (2) John unfolds more fully the nature of our Lord's person, and his

peculiar relation to the Father and to his church. This he does, more especially, in his prologue (chap. 1:1-18); in the record of the Saviour's discussions with the Jews (chaps. 3, 5-12); and in that of his discourses addressed in private to the circle of the apostles, chaps. 13-17. Thus John's gospel is emphatically that of Christ's person, as illustrated by his works and words; while the three earlier evangelists give rather the gospel of his public ministry, through which his divine person everywhere shines forth. This deeper view of our Lord's person and office which the gospel of John unfolds met the wants of the primitive church in a more advanced stage, when false teachers were already beginning to sow the seeds of those errors which, in the next generation, brought forth such a rank and poisonous {419} harvest. The same great characteristics adapt it to the wants of the church in all ages. Without the fourth gospel she could not be completely furnished to meet the assaults of error, which, from one generation to another, makes, with unerring instinct, its main assault upon the person and office of the Son of God. But if the evangelical narrative would not be complete without the fourth gospel, neither would it be perfect for the use of the church with this alone. The record of our Lord's life and teachings as given in the first three gospels is preëminently adapted to popular instruction. It is precisely such a record as the preachers of the gospel need in their public ministrations. With it they can use the fourth gospel with effect; but without it they would want the natural preparation for and introduction to those deep and spiritual views of Christ's person and office which the bosom-disciple unfolds. It is not in the three synoptic gospels, nor in the gospel of John taken separately, that we find the complete evangelical armor, but in the perfect whole of the four.

10. Very numerous attempts have been made to construct harmonies of the four gospels. One plan is to form out of the whole, in what is supposed to be the true chronological order, a continuous narrative embracing all the matter of the four, but without repetitions of the same or similar words. Another plan is to exhibit in chronological order, the entire text of the four gospels arranged in parallel columns, so far as two or more of them cover the same ground. The idea is very imposing, but the realization of it is beset with formidable if not insurmountable difficulties. It is certain that the evangelists do not always follow the exact order of time, and it is sometimes impossible to decide between the different arrangements of events in their records. In the four narratives of the events connected with the resurrection all harmonists find themselves baffled. Had we a full account of all the particulars of that exciting scene, we might undoubtedly assign to the different parts of each narrative its true place in the order of time. {420} But with our present means of information this is impossible. Experience shows that the most profitable way of studying the evangelical narrative is to take each gospel as a whole, but with continual reference to the parallel parts of the other gospels, so far as they can be ascertained. In this work a good harmony, like that of Robinson, may render essential service, though its arrangements must in many cases be regarded only as tentative-essays at obtaining the true order, rather than the certain determination of it. The relative number of chapters in the different gospels does not give their true relation in respect to size. The chapters are respectively 28, 16, 24, 21; which are to each other in the proportion of 7, 4, 6, 5 1/4. But estimating according to the number of pages (in an edition without breaks for the verses), it will be found that the gospel of Luke holds the first place, its size being to that of the other gospels nearly as 60 to 57, 35, 46. The relation of Matthew's gospel to that of Mark, in respect to the quantity of matter is then nearly that of 8 to 5. In the notices of the separate gospels which follow it is not thought necessary to give an elaborate analysis of their contents. The aim will be rather to exhibit the prominent characteristics of each, and its special

office in the economy of divine revelation.

II.Matthew 11:1-30. The unanimous testimony of the ancient church is that the first gospel was written by the apostle Matthew, who is also called Levi. With his call to the apostleship he may have assumed the name of Matthew, as Saul took that of Paul. He was of Hebrew origin, the son of Alphaeus, and a tax-gatherer under the Roman government, Matthew 10:3; Mark 2:14; Mark 3:18; Luke 5:27; Luke 5:29; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13. He was evidently a man of some means (Luke 5:29), and his office must have required for its proper discharge a knowledge of the Greek as well as of his native Hebrew; that is, Aramaean, as the word Hebrew means in the New Testament, when applied to the vernacular of the Palestine Jews.

12. The question respecting the original language of Matthew's gospel has been, since the time of Erasmus, a matter of {421} controversy, in which eminent biblical scholars have been found on different sides. The problem is to find a solution which shall bring into harmony the following well-established facts: (1) that, according to the united testimony of the early church fathers, Matthew originally wrote his gospel in Hebrew; (2) that our present Greek gospel has all the freedom of an original work, that it has remarkable coincidences in language with the second and third gospels, and especially that the citations from the Old Testament which stand in our Lord's discourses follow as a rule the Greek version of the Seventy; (3) that all the early writers, those who testify to the Hebrew original of this gospel included, receive and use our present Greek gospel as the genuine and authoritative gospel of Matthew; (4) that the original Hebrew gospel, to the existence of which there is such abundant testimony, was allowed utterly to perish, while the Greek form of it alone was preserved and placed at the head of the canonical books of the New Testament.

13. The testimony from Papias, in the beginning of the second century, and onward to the fourth century, has often been quoted and discussed. It is not necessary to adduce it here at length. It may be found in Kirchhofer, in the critical commentaries and introductions, and also in the modern Bible dictionaries. The words of Papias, as preserved to us by Eusebius (Hist. Ecclesiastes, 3. 39) are as follows: "Matthew therefore wrote the oracles in the Hebrew dialect, and every one interpreted them as he was able." If there were any ground for doubting what Papias meant by "the oracles," it would be removed by the testimony of the later writers, as Pantaenus and Origen (in Eusebius' Hist. Ecclesiastes, 5. 10; 6. 25), Irenæus (Against Heresies, 3. 1), Eusebius himself (Hist. Ecclesiastes, 3. 24), Epiphanius (Heresies, 29. 9; 30. 3), and others. They who maintain that Matthew wrote originally in Greek suppose that the early fathers confounded an apocryphal gospel, the so-called "gospel according to the Hebrews," with the true gospel of Matthew. Others think, perhaps with more reason, {422} that the gospel according to the Hebrews was a corrupted form, or, what amounts to nearly the same thing, a close imitation of the true Hebrew gospel of Matthew. The Ebionites and Nazarenes used each apparently a different form of a Hebrew gospel which is sometimes called the gospel according to Matthew, but more properly "the gospel according to the Hebrews" (once by Jerome "the gospel according to the apostles"). According to Epiphanius that in use among the Ebionites was "not entire and full, but corrupted and abridged." Heresies, 30. 13. Jerome says: "Matthew, who is called Levi, having become from a publican an apostle, first composed in Judea, for the sake of those who had believed from among the circumcision, a gospel of Christ in Hebrew letters and words. Who was the person that afterwards translated it into Greek is not certainly known. Moreover, the Hebrew copy itself is at this day

preserved in the library of Cæsarea which Pampilus the Martyr collected with much diligence. The Nazarenes, who live in Beroca, a city of Syria, and use this volume, gave me the opportunity of writing it out." De Vir. Illustr., 3. Here he certainly identifies this gospel, which, as he repeatedly informs us, he translated, with the true Hebrew gospel of Matthew. But he afterwards speaks of it more doubtfully, as "the gospel according to the Hebrews," and more fully as "the gospel according to the Hebrews, which is written indeed in the Chaldee and Syriac language, but in Hebrew letters, which the Nazarenes use to the present day, [being the gospel] according to the apostles, or, as most think, according to Matthew" (Against the Pelagians, 3); "the gospel which the Nazarenes and Ebionites use, which we have lately translated from the Hebrew language into the Greek, and which is called by most the authentic gospel of Matthew." Comment. in Matthew 12:13. The most probable supposition is that Jerome, knowing that Matthew originally wrote his gospel in Hebrew, hastily assumed at first that the copy which he obtained from the Nazarenes was this very gospel. The character of the quotations which he and Epiphanius give from it forbids the supposition that it was the true Hebrew gospel of Matthew. It may have been a corrupted form of it, or an imitation of it.

14. Of those who, in accordance with ancient testimony, believe that the original language of Matthew’s gospel was Hebrew, some assume that the apostle himself afterwards gave a Greek version of it. In itself considered this hypothesis is not improbable. Matthew, writing primarily for his countrymen in Palestine, might naturally employ the language which was to them vernacular. But afterwards, when Christianity had {423} begun to spread through the Roman empire, and it became evident that the Greek language was the proper medium for believers at large; and when also, as is not improbable, some of the existing canonical books of the New Testament had appeared in that language, we might well suppose that, in view of these circumstances, the apostle himself put his gospel into the present Greek form. But it is certainly surprising that, in this case, no one of the ancient fathers should have had any knowledge of the matter. In view of their ignorance it seems to be the part of modesty as well as prudence that we also should say with Jerome: "Who was the person that afterwards translated it into Greek is not known with certainty." The universal and unhesitating reception of this gospel by the early Christians in its present Greek form can be explained only upon the supposition that it came to them with apostolic authority; that it received this form at the hand, if not of Matthew himself, yet of an apostle or an apostolic man, that is, a man standing to the apostles in the same relation as Mark and Luke. This supposition will explain the freedom of Matthew’s gospel and its coincidences in language with the gospels of Mark and Luke. An apostle or apostolic man would give a faithful, but not a servile version of the original. The oral tradition of our Lord’s life and teachings from which the first three evangelists drew, as from a common fountain (see above, No. 7), must have existed in Palestine in a twofold form, Aramaean and Greek. The translator would naturally avail himself of the Greek phraseology, so far as the oral tradition coincided with that embodied in Matthew’s gospel. Those who have carefully examined the subject affirm that the citations from the Old Testament adduced by Matthew himself in proof of our Lord’s Messiahship are original renderings, with more or less literalness, from the Hebrew. The citations, on the contrary, embodied in the discourses of our Lord himself follow, as a rule, the Greek version of the Seventy; probably because the translator took these citations as they stood in the oral tradition of these discourses.

Meanwhile the original Hebrew form of the gospel, being superseded by the Greek in all the congregations of believers except those that used exclusively the vernacular language of {424} Palestine, gradually fell into disuse. The "gospel according to the Hebrews," noticed above, may have been a corrupted form of this gospel or an imitation of it. As Marcion chose the Greek gospel of Luke for the basis of his revision, so the Ebionites and Nazarenes would naturally use the Hebrew gospel of Matthew for their purposes.

15. The gospel of Matthew opens with the words: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." In accordance with this announcement, it traces back our Lord's lineage through David to Abraham, giving, after the manner of the Jews, an artificial arrangement of the generations from Abraham to Christ in three sets of fourteen each, chap. 1:17. To effect this, certain kings of David's line are omitted-between Joram and Ozias (the Uzziah of the Hebrews), Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah; between Josias and Jechonias, Eliakim-and David is reckoned twice; once as the last of a set of fourteen, then as the first of the following fourteen. The thoroughly Jewish form of this introduction indicates the primary design of Matthew's gospel, which was to exhibit to his countrymen Jesus of Nazareth as their long promised Messiah and king. To this he has constant reference in the facts which he relates, and which he connects with the prophecies of the Old Testament by such forms of quotation as the following: "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet," chaps. 1:22; 2:15, 23; 13:35; 21:4; 27:35; "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet," chaps. 4:11; 8:17; 12:17; "then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet," chap. 2:17; etc. His direct references to the Old Testament in proof of our Lord's Messiahship are more numerous than those of either of the other evangelists. Peculiar to him is the expression "the kingdom of heaven," to signify, in accordance with Rabbinic usage, the kingdom which the Messiah was to establish in accordance with the prophecies of the Old Testament; though he takes a spiritual view of its character, and not the earthly and political view of the Jewish {425} doctors. Another designation of the same idea, common to him with the other evangelists, is "the kingdom of God," which also was current among the Rabbins. This "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" is also the kingdom of the Messiah. Chaps. 13:41; 20:21.

16. But precisely because Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah, his mission is not to the Jews only, but to all mankind, in accordance with the original promise to Abraham: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Genesis 22:18. While he records the fact that our Lord's personal ministry was restricted to the Jews (chaps. 10:5, 6; 15:24), he also shows from our Lord's own words that the unbelieving "children of the kingdom"-the Jews as the natural heirs to the Messiah's kingdom-shall be cast out, and the believing Gentiles received into it (chaps. 8:11, 12; 21:43); and he brings his gospel to a close with the great commission: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Chap. 28:19, 20.

17. A striking characteristic of this gospel is the fulness and orderly manner with which it records our Lord's discourses. Striking examples of this are the Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5-7), his awful denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees (chap. 23), and the majestic series of parables (chap. 25). Doubtless, Matthew had by nature a peculiar endowment for this work, which the Holy Spirit used to preserve for the church much of our Lord's teachings which would otherwise have

been lost. The narrative part of this gospel, on the other hand, has not the circumstantial fulness of the following gospel. As already remarked, the field covered by Matthew's narrative is mainly that of our Lord's Galilean ministry, with the great events connected with his final visit to Jerusalem, though he gives indications of repeated visits to that city. Chap. 23:37-39.

18. It has been assumed by some that Matthew follows, as a {426} general rule, the order of time. But others deny this, thinking that his arrangement is according to subject-matter rather than chronological sequence, especially in the first part (Alexander's Kitto); and this appears to be the correct judgment. He follows the exact order of time only when the nature of the events recorded requires him to do Song of Solomon 19. It is universally admitted that Matthew wrote his gospel in Palestine. This fact accounts for the absence of explanatory clauses relating to Jewish usages, such as are not unfrequent in the gospel of Mark. As to the interpretation of Hebrew words, as "Immanuel" (chap. 1:23); and the words on the cross (chap. 27:46), that belongs to the Greek form of the gospel. The date of this gospel is doubtful. According to the tradition of the ancient church it was written first of the four gospels. Assuming that it originally appeared in Hebrew, we may reasonably suppose that a period of some years elapsed before it was put into its present Greek form.

20. The integrity of this gospel is unquestionable. In modern times the genuineness of the first two chapters has been called in question by various writers, but the insufficiency of their arguments has been shown by many, among whom may be mentioned Davidson, Introduction to New Testament, vol. 1, pp. 111-127. In the words of this writer the chapters in question are found "in all unmutilated Greek MSS., and in all ancient versions;" "the earliest fathers had them in their copies, and received them as a part of the gospel;" "the ancient heretics and opponents of Christianity were acquainted with this portion of the first gospel;" "the commencement of the first chapter is closely connected with something preceding;" and "the diction of these two chapters bears the same impress and character which belong to the remainder of the gospel, proving that the gospel, as we now have it, proceeded from one author."

III. Mark 21. There is no valid ground for doubting the correctness of the ancient tradition which identifies the author of the second {427} gospel with "John whose surname was Mark" (Acts 12:12; Acts 12:25; Acts 15:37), who is called simply John (Acts 13:5; Acts 13:13), and Marcus or Mark (Acts 15:39; Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; perhaps also 1 Peter 5:13). He was cousin to Barnabas (Colossians 4:10, not sister's son, as in our version), which relationship may explain Barnabas' earnest defence of him (Acts 15:37-39). His mother Mary resided in Jerusalem, and it was to her house that Peter resorted immediately upon his miraculous deliverance from prison (Acts 12:12). The intimacy of Peter with Mary's family must have brought about an early acquaintance between the apostle and Mark. Ancient tradition uniformly affirms a close relation between Peter and Mark, representing the latter to have been the disciple and interpreter of the former. See below.

Papias (in Eusebius' Hist. Ecclesiastes 3. 39) says, upon the authority of John the Presbyter, "Mark being Peter's interpreter, wrote down accurately as many things as he remembered; not, indeed, as giving in order the things which were spoken or done by Christ. For he was neither a hearer nor a follower of the Lord, but, as I said, of Peter, who gave his instructions as occasion required, but not as one who was composing an orderly account of our Lord's words. Mark,

therefore, committed no error when he thus wrote down certain things as he remembered them. For he was careful of one thing, to omit nothing of the things which he heard and to make no false statements concerning them." These words of Papias are somewhat loose and indefinite. But, when fairly interpreted, they seem to mean that as Peter taught according to the necessities of each occasion, not aiming to give a full history of our Lord in chronological order, so Mark wrote not all things pertaining to our Lord's life and ministry, but certain things, those namely that he had learned from Peter's discourses, without always observing the strict order of time. We need not press the words "in order" and "certain things," as if Papias meant to say that Mark's gospel is only a loose collection of fragments. It is a connected and self-consistent whole; but it does not profess to give in all cases the exact chronological order of events, nor to be an exhaustive account of our Saviour's life and teachings. Eusebius has preserved for us in his Ecclesiastical History the testimony of Irenæus on the same point (Hist. Ecclesiastes, 5. 8); also of Clement of Alexandria (Hist. Ecclesiastes, 6.14); and of Origen (Hist. Ecclesiastes, 6. 25). He also gives his own (Hist. Ecclesiastes, 2. 5). We have besides these, the statements of Tertullian (Against Marcion, 6. 25); and Jerome (Epist. ad Hedib. Quaest., 2). All these witnesses, though not consistent among themselves in respect to several minor details, yet agree in respect to the {428} two great facts, (1) that Mark was the companion of Peter and had a special relation to him, (2) that he was the author of the gospel which bears his name. We add from Meyer (Introduction to Commentary on Mark) the following exposition of the word interpreter as applied to Mark in his relation to Peter: "No valid ground of doubt can be alleged against it, provided only we do not understand the idea contained in the word interpreter to mean that Peter, not having sufficient mastery of the Greek, delivered his discourses in Aramaean, and had them interpreted by Mark into Greek; but rather that the office of a secretary is indicated, who wrote down the oral communications of his apostle (whether from dictation, or in the freer exercise of his own activity) and so became in the way of writing his interpreter to others."

Mark's connection with the apostle Paul, though interrupted by the incident recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (15:37-39), was afterwards renewed and he restored to the apostle's confidence, as is manifest from the way in which he notices him. Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11. If, as is probable (see below, No. 22), Mark wrote between A.D. 60 and 70, his long intimacy with Peter and Paul qualified him in a special manner for his work.

22. Ancient tradition favors the idea that Mark wrote his gospel in Rome. Had he written in Egypt, as Chrysostom thinks, we can hardly suppose that Clement of Alexandria would have been ignorant of the fact, as his testimony shows that he was. In respect to date, the accounts of the ancients differ so much among themselves that it is difficult to arrive at any definite conclusion. We may probably place it between A.D. 64 and 70. The language in which Mark wrote was Greek. This is attested by the united voice of antiquity. The subscriptions annexed to some manuscripts of the Old Syriac, and that in the Philoxenian Syriac version, to the effect that Mark wrote in Roman, that is, in Latin, are of no authority. They are the conjectures of ignorant men, who inferred from the fact that Mark wrote in Rome that he must have used the Latin tongue. The story of the pretended Latin autograph of Mark's gospel preserved in the Library of St. Mark at Venice is now exploded. The manuscript to which this high honor was assigned is part of the Codex Forojuliensis, {429} which gives the text of the Latin Vulgate. The text was edited by Blanchini in the appendix to his Evangeliarium Quadruplex, Fourfold Gospel. The gospel of Mark having been

cut out and removed to Venice was exalted to be the autograph of Mark. See Tregelles in Horne, vol. 4, chap. 23. The fact that Mark wrote out of Palestine and for Gentile readers at once accounts for the numerous explanatory clauses by which his gospel is distinguished from that of Matthew. Examples are: chaps. 7:3, 4; 12:42; 13:3; 14:12; 15:42; and the frequent interpretations of Aramaean words: 3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 10:46; 14:36; 15:34.

23. The opening words of Matthew's gospel are: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham," by which, as already remarked, he indicates his purpose to show that Jesus of Nazareth is the long promised Messiah of David's line, and the seed of Abraham, in whom all nations are to be blessed. Mark, on the contrary, passing by our Lord's genealogy, commences thus: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." He recognizes him, indeed as the son of David, and the promised Messiah and king of Israel. Chaps. 10:47, 48; 11:10; 15:32. But, writing among Gentiles and for Gentiles, the great fact which he is intent on setting forth is the person and character of Jesus as the Son of God. Matthew gives special attention to the Saviour's discourses. With these considerably more than a third of his gospel is occupied. Mark, on the contrary, devotes himself mainly to the narrative of our Lord's works. With this is interwoven a multitude of his sayings; since it was the Saviour's custom to teach in connection with surrounding incidents. But if we compare the set discourses of our Lord recorded by Mark with those which Matthew gives, they will hardly amount to a fifth part in quantity. Between the narrative parts of Matthew and Mark, on the contrary, there is not a very great disparity in respect to the space occupied by each.

24. Though Mark has but little matter that is absolutely new, he yet handles his materials in an original and independent way, weaving into the narratives which he gives in common with one or more of the other evangelists numerous little incidents in the most natural and artless way. His characteristics as a {430} historian are graphic vividness of description and circumstantiality of detail. If we except some striking passages of John's gospel, he brings us nearer to our Lord's person and the scenes described than either of the other evangelists. He brings before us, as in a picture, not only our Lord's words and works, but his very looks and gestures. It is he that records as has been often noticed, how the Saviour "looked round about" him with anger on the unbelieving multitudes and on Peter (chap. 3:5; 8:33); with complacency on his disciples (chap. 3:34; 10:27); and with the piercing look of inquiry (chap. 5:32); how he looked up to heaven and sighed when he healed one who was deaf and dumb (chap. 7:34); and how he sighed deeply in spirit at the perverseness of the Pharisees (chap. 8:12). He sometimes gives us the very words of the Saviour when he performed his mighty works-Talitha cumi (5:41), Ephphatha (7:34). His narratives are remarkable for bringing in little incidents which can have come from none but an eyewitness, but which add wonderfully to the naturalness as well as the vividness of his descriptions. When the storm arises he is asleep on a pillow (chap. 4:38); Jairus' daughter arises and walks, for she was of the age of twelve years (chap. 5:42); the multitudes that are to be fed sit down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties (chap. 6:40), etc. As examples of vivid description may be named the account of the demoniac (chap. 5:2-20), and the lunatic. Chap. 9:14-27. It is not necessary to assume that Mark was himself a disciple of our Lord. If, as ancient tradition asserts, he was the disciple and interpreter of Peter he could receive from his lips those circumstantial details with which his narrative abounds.

25. The closing passage of this gospel, chap. 16:9-20, is wanting in a number of important manuscripts, among which are the Vatican and Sinaitic. The same was the case also in the days of Eusebius and Jerome. But it was known to Irenæus, and quoted by him and many others after him. The reader must be referred to the critical commentaries and introductions for the discussion of the difficult questions concerning {431} it. Tregelles, who, in his account of the printed text has given a full statement of the case, thus expresses his judgment (in Horne, vol. 4, p. 436): "It is perfectly certain that from the second century and onward, these verses have been known as part of this gospel (whoever was their author)." He thinks that "the book of Mark himself extends no farther than 'for they were afraid,' chap. 16:8; but that the remaining twelve verses, by whomsoever written, have a full claim to be received as an authentic part of the second gospel, and that the full reception of early testimony on this question does not in the least involve their rejection as not being a part of canonical Scripture."

IV. Luke 26. The unanimous voice of antiquity ascribes the third gospel with the Acts of the Apostles to Luke. He first appears as the travelling companion of Paul when he leaves Troas for Macedonia (Acts 16:10); for the use of the first person plural-"we endeavored," "the Lord had called us," "we came," etc.-which occurs from that point of Paul's history and onward, with certain interruptions, through the remainder of the Acts of the Apostles, admits of no other natural and reasonable explanation. There is good reason to believe that he is identical with "Luke, the beloved physician," who was with Paul when a prisoner at Rome. Colossians 4:14; Philemon 1:24; 2 Timothy 4:11. From the first of these passages it has been inferred that he was not a Jew by birth, since he is apparently distinguished from those "who are of the circumcision," v. 11.

Tradition represents him to have been by birth a Syrian of Antioch (Eusebius, Hist. Ecclesiastes, 3. 4; Jerome, Preface to Matt., and elsewhere), and a Jewish proselyte (Jerome, Quest. on Gen., chap. 46); and it adds various other legends which are not worth repeating.

27. The evangelist himself, in his dedicatory address to Theophilus (chap. 1:1-4), gives us clear and definite information respecting the sources of his gospel. He does not profess to have been himself an eye-witness, but has drawn his information from those "who from the beginning were eye-witnesses {432} and ministers of the word." His investigations have been accurate and thorough: "having accurately traced out all things from the beginning" (as the original words mean), he writes to Theophilus "in order;" that is, in an orderly and connected way. He proposes to give not some loose fragments, but a connected narrative; although, as we have seen above (No. 10), his order is not always that of strict chronological sequence. From the long and intimate connection of Luke with Paul it is reasonable to suppose that the latter must have exerted an influence on the composition of this gospel. Luke, however, did not draw the materials of his narrative from Paul (at least not principally), but, as he expressly states, from those "who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word." He did not write from Paul's dictation, but in a free and independent way; though there is no reasonable ground for doubting that it was with Paul's knowledge and approbation. The "eye-witnesses and ministers of the word" are those who (1) were from the beginning eye-witnesses of our Lord's public ministry; (2) were intrusted with the work of preaching the word; that is, the apostles and such of their associates as had companied with them all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them. Acts 1:21. The words of Luke must not be strained; for he records some incidents of our Lord's history before his public appearance which could have been learned only from Mary and her circle. The remarkable

agreement between Luke’s account of the institution of the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:9; Luke 22:20), and Paul’s (1 Corinthians 11:28-25) has often been noticed. It is most naturally explained by the supposition that Luke recorded the transaction in the form in which he had often heard it from the lips of Paul. But there is nothing in the character of this gospel which can warrant the supposition that the apostle exercised a formal supervision over its composition. Such a procedure would be contrary to the spirit of the apostolic age. The apostle himself wrote by an amanuensis. But when one of his associates in the ministry wrote, in whom he had full confidence, he left him to the free exercise of his judgment under the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

28. In respect to the date of this gospel, if we assume that the Acts of the Apostles were written at Rome about A.D. 63-65 {433} (Chap. 5, No. 5), it is reasonable to suppose that the gospel, which is dedicated to the same personage, was composed not very long before, perhaps even during the two years of Paul’s imprisonment at Rome, in which case Rome would also be the place of its composition. Whether Luke wrote before or after Mark is a question that has been differently answered, and cannot be determined with certainty. The proof that all three of the first evangelists wrote before the destruction of Jerusalem has been already given. Chap. 3, No. 14.

29. Though Luke dedicates his gospel to Theophilus (chap, 1:1-4), it is not to be supposed that it was written for his use alone. He had a more general end in view, and that is indicated by the form of our Lord’s genealogy as given by him. While Matthew traces the Saviour’s lineage through David to Abraham, in conformity with his design to show that he is the promised seed of Abraham and king of Israel, Luke traces it back through David and Abraham to Adam "the son of God." He identifies Jesus of Nazareth not with the Messiah alone of Abraham’s and David’s line, but with man as man. He is the second Adam, and as such the Saviour of the race. This universal aspect of the gospel, as a gospel not for one nation but for all mankind, shines forth indeed in all the gospels, but it appears with wonderful sweetness and power in some of the parables which are peculiar to Luke, as those of the good Samaritan (chap. 10:30-37), the lost sheep (chap. 15:3-7), the lost pieces of silver (chap. 15:8-10), the prodigal son (chap. 15:11-32); in all which Jesus is set forth as the Saviour of suffering humanity.

30. As it respects the character and plan of Luke’s gospel, the following particulars are to be noticed. In the distribution of matter between the narration of events and the recital of our Lord’s discourses it holds a position between the first and the second gospel; being less full in the latter respect than Matthew, but far more full than Mark. In the narrative part there is an easy and graceful style which charms every reader. In the introduction of minute incidents he goes beyond {434} Matthew, though he has not the circumstantial exactness of Mark. The agreement of Luke’s gospel with the two preceding in its general plan is recognized at once by every reader. Like them it is mainly occupied with our Lord’s Galilean ministry. In regard to the Saviour’s infancy he is more full than Matthew, the matter of the first three chapters being in a great measure peculiar to him. He omits a long series of events recorded by the first two evangelists. Matthew 14:22-36; Matthew 15:1-39; Matthew 16:1-12; Mark 6:45-56; Mark 7:1-37; Mark 8:1-26. On the other hand he introduces (chap. 9:43-18:30) "a remarkable series of acts and discourses which are grouped together in connection with the last journey to Jerusalem. Some of the incidents occur in different connections in the other evangelists; and the whole section proves, by the absence of historical data and the unity of its general import, that a moral and not a temporal sequence is the law of the gospels." Westcott, Introduct. to Gospel, chap. 7. Very much of the matter in this remarkable

section is peculiar to Luke, and contains passages of wonderful beauty and sweetness which would have been lost to the church but for the record of this gospel. Among these are the mission of the seventy, several miracles, some striking lessons of instruction from passing incidents, and no less than twelve parables: the good Samaritan, the unfortunate friend, the unclean spirit, the rich fool, the barren fig-tree, the lost sheep, the lost pieces of silver, the prodigal son, the unfaithful steward, the rich man and Lazarus, the unjust judge, the Pharisee and publican. While the attentive reader perceives the very near relationship of the third gospel to the first and second, he notices also the fact that it differs from both of them more than they do from each other.

"If the total contents of the several gospels be represented by 100, the following table is obtained:

Peculiarities. Concordances.

St. Mark 7 93 St. Matthew 42 58 St. Luke 59 41 St. John 92 8

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"From this it appears that the several gospels bear almost exactly an inverse relation to one another, St. Mark and St. John occupying the extreme positions, the proportion of original passages in one balancing the coincident passages in the other. If again the extent of all the coincidences be represented by 100, their proportionate distribution will be:

St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke 53 St. Matthew, St. Luke 11 St. Matthew, St. Mark 20 St. Mark, St. Luke 6"

[Westcott, after Stroud and Norton.] Of absolutely new matter in Mark a striking example is the beautiful parable, chap. 4:26-29. The two miracles peculiar to him (chap. 7:31-37; 8:22-26) are both of a very striking character, and related with circumstantial minuteness of detail. Where his narratives coincide with those of the other evangelists, they are characterized by the addition of details, which, as already remarked, add much to the vividness and graphic power of his descriptions.

31. The integrity of the third gospel has been recently assailed in Germany in the way of attempting to show that the gospel of Luke, as we now have it, is corrupted by interpolations, and that Marcion had it in its true form. See Chap. 2, No. 12. But the result of a voluminous discussion is that Marcion’s gospel is now acknowledged to have been a mutilated form of the canonical gospel, in accordance with the testimony of the ancient fathers. On the relation to each other of the two genealogies of our Lord given by Matthew and Luke respectively, and the different modes of bringing them into harmony with each other, many volumes have been written. Two different principles of interpretation are proposed. According to the first, the genealogies of both Matthew and Luke are those of Joseph, the legal father of Jesus, and the only one that could be known in this relation in the public registers. The second view is that Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph, and Luke that of Mary, Joseph being called the son of Heli, in the sense of son-in-law; and being perhaps also legal heir to Heli through Mary in the absence of brothers. The reader will find statements of these two views, the former in Smith’s Bible Diet., the latter in Alexander’s Kitto, Art. Genealogy of Jesus Christ; also in the commentaries generally. We only add that though we may not be able to determine {436} with certainty what is the true solution of the difficulty, no one can show that such a solution is impossible. The reverent believer will quietly wait for more light, if it

shall please God to give it; otherwise he will be content to remain without it.

V. John 32. Though the writer of the fourth gospel everywhere refrains from mentioning his own name, he clearly indicates himself as the "bosom disciple." When he speaks of two disciples that followed Jesus, afterwards adding that "one of the two" "was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother" (chap. 1:37, 40); of "one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved" (chap. 13:23; 21:7, 20); and of "another disciple" in company with Simon Peter (chap. 18:15, 16; 20:2-8), the only natural explanation of these circumlocutions is that he refers to himself. Even if we suppose, with some, that the two closing verses of chapter 21 (the former of which ascribes this gospel directly to John) are a subscription by another hand, their authenticity is unquestionable, sustained as it is by the uniform testimony of antiquity, and by the internal character of the gospel.

33. The Scriptural notices of John are few and simple. He was the son of Zebedee, a fisherman of Bethsaida on the Western shore of the sea of Galilee not far from Capernaum. Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19-20; Luke 5:10-11. His mother's name was Salome. Matthew 27:56 compared with Mark 15:40 His parents seem to have been possessed of some property, since Zebedee had hired servants (Mark 1:20), and Salome was one of the women who followed Jesus in Galilee, and ministered to him. Mark 15:40-41 hew-41 ew, 41. From the order in which he and his brother James are mentioned-James and John, except Luke 9:28 -he is thought to have been the younger of the two. Early in our Lord's ministry he was called to be one of his followers; was one of the three who were admitted to special intimacy with him, they alone being permitted to witness the raising of Jairus' daughter, the transfiguration, and the agony of Gethsemane (Matthew 17:1; Matthew 26:37; Mark 5:37; Mark 9:2; Mark 14:33; Luke 8:51; Luke 9:28); and of the three was, though not first in {437} place, first in the Lord's love and confidence-"the disciple whom Jesus loved," and to whose tender care he committed his mother as he was about to expire on the cross. By his natural endowments, as well as by his loving and confidential intercourse with the Saviour, he was prepared to receive and afterwards to publish to the world, those deep and spiritual views of Christ's person and office which so remarkably characterize his gospel. So far as we have any notices of John in the Acts of the Apostles and epistles of Paul, his residence after our Lord's ascension was at Jerusalem. But, according to the unanimous testimony of antiquity, he spent the latter part of his life in Ephesus, where he died at a very advanced age, not far from the close of the first century. The subject of his banishment to the isle of Patmos will come up in connection with the Apocalypse.

There is a mass of traditions respecting the latter years of this apostle, which are, however, of a very uncertain character. Among the more striking of these are: his being taken to Rome during the persecution under Domitian, and there thrown into a caldron of boiling oil, whence he escaped unhurt; his refusal to remain under the same roof with the heretic Cerinthus, lest it should fall upon him and crush him; his successful journey on horseback into the midst of a band of robbers to reclaim a fallen member of the church who had become their leader; and especially, that during the last days of his life, he was customarily carried into the assembly of the church, where he simply repeated the words: "Little children, love one another."

34. The arguments for the late composition of this gospel-after the destruction of Jerusalem-have already been given. Chap. 2, No. 14. If we say between A.D. 70 and 100, it will be as near an approximation to the time as we can make. The place, according to Irenæus (in Eusebius, Hist.

Ecclesiastes 5:8) was Ephesus, with which statement all that we know of his later life is in harmony.

35. From the beginning of our Lord's ministry John was, as we have seen, admitted to his intimate companionship and friendship. He was not therefore, dependent on tradition. {438} His gospel is the testimony of what he had himself seen and heard. Yet it covers only a part of the Saviour's ministry; and the question remains why, with the exception of the closing scenes of our Lord's life on earth, that part should be to so remarkable an extent precisely what the earlier evangelists have omitted. In answer to this question it might be said that those actions and discourses of our Lord which John selected most clearly exhibit his person and office as the son of God; and that these were especially, (1) his encounters with the Jewish rulers at Jerusalem, (2) his private confidential intercourse with his disciples. Whatever weight we may allow to this consideration, it cannot be regarded as a full explanation of the difference between John and the other evangelists in the selection of materials. With the exception of the miracle of the loaves and fishes and the incidents connected with it (chap. 6:1-21) his notices of our Lord's ministry in Galilee relate almost entirely to incidents and discourses omitted by the other evangelists. It is altogether probable that, although John did not write his gospel simply as supplementary to the earlier gospels, he yet had reference to them in the selection of his materials. His own statement: "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name" (chap. 20:30, 31), is not inconsistent with such a supposition. The "many other signs" he may have omitted, in part at least, because he judged that a sufficient account of them had been given by the earlier evangelists, of whose writings, when we consider the time that in all probability intervened between their composition and that of his gospel, we cannot suppose him to have been ignorant. Such a reference to these writings does not in any way exclude the general design which he had, in common with the earlier evangelists, to show "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," through faith in whose name eternal life is received.

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Ancient tradition represents, in a variety of forms, that John intended to complete the evangelical history, as given by the other evangelists, in the way of furnishing additional events and discourses omitted by them. The citations may be seen in Davidson's Introduct. to New Test., vol. 1, pp. 320-22. Though the statements of the fathers on this point cannot be accepted without qualification, there is no valid ground for denying the general reference above assumed.

36. In writing his gospel John had not a polemical, but a general end in view. It was not his immediate aim to refute the errors and heresies of his day; but, as he tells us, to show that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, in order that men, through faith in his name, may have eternal life. Yet, like every wise and practical writer, he must have had regard to the state of the churches in his day and the forms of error by which they were assailed. In the latter part of the apostolic age the seeds of those heresies which in the following century yielded such a rank and poisonous harvest, had already begun to be sown. Like all the heresies which have troubled the Christian church to the present day, they consisted essentially in false views respecting our Saviour's person and office. The beloved disciple who followed Jesus through the whole of his ministry and leaned on his bosom at the last supper, has given us an authentic record of the Redeemer's words

and works, in which, as in a bright untarnished mirror, we see both the divine dignity of his person and the true nature of his office as the Redeemer of the world. Such a record was especially adapted to refute the errors of his day, as it is those of the present day. It is preëminently the gospel of our Lord's person. It opens with an account of his divine nature and eternal coëxistence with the Father; his general office as the creator of all things, and the source of light and life to all men and his special office as "the word made flesh," whom the Father sent for the salvation of the world, and by whom alone the Father is revealed to men. Equality with the Father in nature, subordination to the Father in office, union with human nature in the work of redeeming and judging men, and in all {440} these perfect union with the Father in counsel and will-such are the great doctrines that run through our Lord's discussions with the unbelieving Jews, as recorded by this evangelist. In the same discussions, but more especially in his private confidential intercourse with his disciples, he adds deep views of his relation to the world, as the only revealer of God's truth, the only source of spiritual life, and the only way of access to the Father; and to believers, as the true vine, through vital union with which they have life, nourishment, and fruitfulness. He unfolds also more fully than the other evangelists the office of the Comforter, whom the Father shall send to make good to the church the loss of his personal presence. Thus the gospel of John becomes at once an inexhaustible storehouse of spiritual food for the nourishment of the believer's own soul, and a divine armory, whence he may draw polished shafts in his warfare against error. This last record of our Lord's life and teachings owes its present form, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, partly to the peculiar character of the writer, and partly to the lateness of the period when it was composed. In both these respects we ought devoutly to recognize the superintending providence of him who sees the end from the beginning.

VI. THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

37. The author of the Acts of the Apostles is identical with that of the third gospel, as we learn from the dedication to the same Theophilus. Chap. 1:1. Both are ascribed to Luke by the unanimous testimony of the ancient church. The genuineness of this book, its credibility, and the time of its composition-about A.D. 63-65-have been already shown. Chap. 5, Nos. 2-5. It remains to consider its plan and its office in the system of Revelation 38. In respect to plan this book naturally falls into two main divisions, the former embracing the first twelve chapters, the latter the remainder of the work. The first division contains the history of the apostolic labors after the ascension, in Jerusalem and from Jerusalem as a centre. Here, if we except {441} the events connected with the martyrdom of Stephen (chs. 6, 7), the conversion of Saul (chap. 9:1-31), and the Ethiopian eunuch (chap. 8:26-40), Peter everywhere appears as the chief speaker and actor, being first among the twelve, though possessing no official authority over them. It is he that proposes the choice of one to supply the place of Judas, and that is the foremost speaker on the day of Pentecost, at the gate of the temple, before the Jewish Sanhedrim, and in the assembly of the church. Chaps. 1:15-22; 2:14- Matthew 3:4-17; Matthew 4:8-12; Matthew 5:3-11; Matthew 5:29-32. Associated with him we often find the apostle John. Chaps. 3:1; 4:13, 19; 8:14. When the Samaritans are to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, Peter and John are sent to them from Jerusalem. Chap. 8:14-25. When the gospel is to be carried for the first time to the Gentiles, Peter is sent by the Holy Ghost to the house of Cornelius in Cesarea (chap. 10), for which mission he afterwards vindicates himself before the brethren at Jerusalem. Chap. 11:1-18. Further notices of Peter we have in chaps. 9:32-43; 12:3-19. We know that the other apostles must have been actively and successfully

employed in prayer and the ministry of the word (chap. 6:4), but it does not come within the plan of this narrative to give a particular account of their labors. The second division is occupied with the history of Paul's missionary labors among the Gentiles, from Antioch as a centre. He had already been sent from that city with Barnabas to carry alms to the brethren in Jerusalem and Judea (chaps. 11:27-30; 12:25), when "the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them;" and they were sent, with fasting and prayer and the solemn laying on of hands, on their great mission to the Gentiles. Chap. 13:1-3. Thenceforward the narrative is occupied with an account of the labors of Paul among the Gentiles. The fifteenth chapter is no exception; for the convocation of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem was occasioned by the missionary labors of Paul, and had especial reference to them.

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Two cities are mentioned in the New Testament which have the name of Antioch-Antioch of Pisidia so-called, though situated in the southern part of Phrygia near the border of Pisidia (Acts 13:14; Acts 14:19; Acts 14:21; 2 Timothy 3:11); and Antioch of Syria, situated on the southern bank of the Orontes about fifteen miles from its mouth. Acts 11:19-27; Acts 13:1; Acts 14:26; Acts 15:22-35; Acts 18:22; Galatians 2:11. The latter city was the centre of Gentile Christianity. It was the metropolis of Syria, the residence of the Syrian kings, and afterwards the capital of the Roman provinces in Asia. Here the first Gentile church was gathered, and the disciples first received the name of Christians. Acts 11:19-26. Hence Barnabas and Saul were sent to Jerusalem to bear alms (Acts 11:29-30; Acts 12:25); and afterwards to consult the apostles and elders at Jerusalem on the question of imposing the Mosaic law on the Gentile converts. From this city also the apostle started on his three missionary journeys, and to it he returned from his first and second journey. Acts 13:1-3; Acts 14:26; Acts 15:36; Acts 15:40Acts 18:22-23 From the time that Barnabas first brought the apostle to Antioch (Acts 11:26) to that of his seizure at Jerusalem and subsequent imprisonment, most of his time not occupied in missionary journeys was spent at Antioch. Acts 11:26; Acts 12:25; Acts 14:26-28; Acts 15:30; Acts 15:35; Acts 18:22-23. As Jerusalem was the centre for the apostles of the circumcision, so was Antioch in Syria for the apostle of the Gentiles.

39. This brief survey of the plan of this book gives us also an insight into its office. First of all it gives us a fresh and vivid portraiture of the apostolic labors and the spirit of the apostolic church, as pervaded and quickened by the presence of the promised Comforter. On the side of the apostles, we see a boldness and ardor that no persecution can check, united with simplicity and godly sincerity. On the side of the brethren, we see a whole-hearted devotion to the Saviour, under the mighty impulse of faith and love, which opens their hearts in liberality and causes them to have all things in common. On the side of both the apostles and the brethren, we see untiring activity and patient endurance in the Master's service, such as make the primitive church a bright illustration of the promise: "Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that be of thee shall build the old waste places." Isaiah 58:11-12. On the side of the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles, on the contrary, we behold, as ever since, a series of unsuccessful efforts to hinder {443} the work of God; the very ringleader of the persecutors being called, in the midst of his heat and fury against Christianity, to be the "ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." Such an authentic record of apostolic times is of immense value to the church in all ages. It gives the true standard of enlightened Christian zeal and activity, and the true exhibition of what constitutes the real strength and prosperity of the Christian church. The Acts of the Apostles

give also a cursory view of the inauguration of the Christian church, by the descent of the Holy Spirit in his plenary influences (chap. 2), by the appointment of deacons (chap. 6), and the ordination of elders, though these last are only mentioned incidentally (chaps. 14:23; 20:17), the office being understood of itself from the usages of the Jewish Synagogue. The scantiness of the information which we have on this matter of church organization is a part of the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, and is full of instruction to the church in all ages.

Once more, the Acts of the Apostles give a most interesting and instructive account of the way in which "the middle wall of partition" between Jews and Gentiles was gradually broken down. The full import of the Saviour's last command: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," seems to have been at first but dimly apprehended by the apostles. For some time their labors were restricted to their own countrymen. But when, upon the dispersion of the disciples in the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen's martyrdom, the gospel had been preached to the Samaritans, the apostles Peter and John were sent to them, and they in common with the Jews received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Chap. 8:5-25. This was an intermediate step. Afterwards Peter was sent among the Gentiles proper, and they also received the Holy Spirit, to the astonishment of the Jewish brethren who had accompanied Peter. Chap. 10. The same thing happened also at Antioch (chap. 11:20), where the true reading is Hellenas, Greeks, that is, Gentiles, not Hellenistas, {444} Hellenists. But the work was not yet finished. It remained that the believing Gentiles should be, by the solemn and formal judgment of the assembled apostles and elders, released from the yoke of the Jewish law. Of this we have an account in the fifteenth chapter. Thus was the demolition of the middle wall of partition completed. Of the greatness of this work and the formidable difficulties by which it was beset-difficulties having their ground in the exclusive spirit of Judaism in connection with the false idea that the Mosaic law was to remain in force under the Messiah's reign-we who live so many centuries after its accomplishment can form but a feeble conception.

. Brief and imperfect as is the sketch which Luke has given us, it is sufficient for the instruction of the churches in subsequent ages. God deals with them not as with children, to whom the command, "Touch not, taste not, handle not," must continually be repeated; but as with full-grown men, who need general principles rather than specific and minute directions. The facts recorded in the Acts of the Apostles are of a representative character. They embody the spirit of apostolic times, and the great principles upon which the cause of Christ must ever be conducted. Fuller information in respect to details might gratify our curiosity, but it is not necessary for our edification.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin] [BibleAuthenticity]

30. The Epistles of Paul

CHAPTER XXX. THE EPISTLES OF PAUL.

1. The apostolic epistles are a natural sequence of the office and work committed by the Saviour to the apostles. They were the primitive preachers of the gospel, and, under Christ, the founders of the Christian church. From the necessity of the case they had a general supervision of all the local churches, and their authority in them was supreme in matters of both faith and practice. It was to be expected, therefore, that they should teach by writing, as well as by oral instruction. It does not appear, however, that epistolary correspondence entered originally into their plan of labor. Their great Master taught by word of mouth only, and they followed his example. "We," said the twelve, "will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." Acts 6:4. It was only when circumstances made it necessary, that some of them took up the pen to write to the churches. Passing by for the present the disputed question of the time when the epistle of James was written, and assuming that the conversion of Paul took place about A.D. 36, we have an interval of at least sixteen years between this event and the date of his earliest epistles, those to the Thessalonians, written about A.D. 53. The apostles did not regard themselves as letter-writers, but as preachers of the word. They took up the pen only when some special occasion made it necessary. The apostolic epistles are incidental; and for this very reason they are eminently life-like and practical. In respect to themes, and the manner of handling them, they present a rich variety. All the great questions of faith and practice that have agitated the Christian church since the apostolic age come up for discussion in these letters, not indeed, in their ever-varying outward forms, but in their great underlying {446} principles. Thus the providence of God has provided in them a rich storehouse of truths for the instruction and edification of believers to the end of time.

2. Of the twenty-one epistles contained in the New Testament fourteen belong to Paul (if we include the anonymous letter to the Hebrews), all written in the prosecution of his great work as the apostle to the Gentiles. The Saviour’s personal ministry was restricted to the Jews, and so was that of the twelve apostles and the seventy disciples whom he sent forth before his crucifixion. Matthew 10:5-6; Matthew 15:24; Luke 10:1. But his last command was: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matthew 28:19. In carrying into execution this command, which involved such an immense change in the outward form of God’s visible earthly kingdom, it was necessary-

(1) That the apostles should insist very earnestly and fully on the great fundamental doctrine of the gospel, that men have justification and eternal life, not through the law of Moses, or any other possible system of works, but through faith in Jesus Christ; a doctrine which cuts up Pharisaism by the roots.

(2) That, since faith in Christ is the common ground of justification for Jews and Gentiles, both were to be admitted upon equal terms to all the rights and privileges of the Christian church; the ancient prerogative of the Jews above the Gentiles being done away in Christ.

(3) Still further, that since the Gentiles had justification and salvation not through the law of Moses, but through faith alone, the Mosaic law was not to be imposed upon them. This was virtually announcing its abolition, its types and shadows having been fulfilled in Christ.

(4) That this removal of "the middle wall of partition" between the Jews and Gentiles was in accordance with Moses and the prophets-not a change of God's original plan, but only the full accomplishment of it. Acts 15:15-18; Romans 3:21; Romans 3:31; Romans 4:6-25; Galatians 3:6-9.

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We have seen how this great work was begun by the gift of the Holy Spirit, in connection with the preaching of the gospel, first to the Samaritans (Acts 8:5-17), and afterwards to the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-48; Acts 11:20-26, etc.); and how it was completed, so far as concerns the principles involved in it, by the solemn decree of the apostles and the elders (Acts 15:1-29).

3. But for the realization of these principles in the actual preaching of the gospel to the Gentile nations, and the establishment of Christian churches among them which should embrace on equal terms Jews and Gentiles, a man of very peculiar qualifications was raised up in the providence of God. Saul of Tarsus was a Jew, brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, thoroughly instructed in the law and the prophets, and able therefore to speak with authority concerning the Old Testament to both Jews and Gentiles. His indomitable energy and fiery zeal, united with rare practical wisdom, had made him the foremost man in persecuting the Christians. When the proper time had come Jesus met him on the road to Damascus with converting power, and all his superior education and endowments were thenceforth consecrated to the work of preaching the faith which once he destroyed, especially to the Gentile world. But in this matter he felt and acted as a Jew. He did not separate himself abruptly from his countrymen. Cherishing towards them the tenderest affection, they were everywhere the first objects of his Christian effort. Into whatever city he went, he first sought the Jewish synagogue, and there he "reasoned with them out of the Scriptures," Acts 13:14; Acts 14:1; Acts 17:2; Acts 17:10; Acts 18:4; Acts 19:8. It was only when they persisted in opposing and blaspheming, that he desisted from further effort among them and turned to the Gentiles. Acts 13:45-47; Acts 18:6; Acts 19:9. Wherever he went he encountered the bitterest persecution on the part of his own countrymen, because of the prominence which he gave to the great evangelical principles above considered-that men have justification not wholly or in part through the Mosaic law, but simply through faith in Christ, and that in him the distinction between Jews {448} and Gentiles is abolished. Even the believing Jews found it hard to apprehend these truths in their fullness. In the narrowness of their Jewish prejudices they were anxious to impose on the Gentile converts the yoke of the Mosaic law. This, Paul steadfastly resisted, and it is to his defence of Gentile liberty that we owe, in great measure, those masterly discussions on the ground of justification, and the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, which are so prominent in his epistles. Yet with his uncompromising firmness of principle he united remarkable flexibility in regard to the means of success. To those who would impose circumcision on the Gentiles he "gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour." Galatians 2:5. But where no great principle was concerned, he was willing to circumcise Timothy, out of regard to the feelings of the Jews; thus becoming, in his own words, "all things to all men." 1 Corinthians 9:22.

4. The peculiar character of the apostle’s style is obvious to every reader. It is in an eminent degree argumentative. He "reasoned with them," says Luke, "out of the Scriptures." These words describe accurately the character of both his epistles and his addresses to the Jews as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. In addressing a Gentile audience at Athens, he still "reasoned with them;" but it was now from the inscription on one of their altars, from certain of their own poets, and from the manifestations in nature of God’s power and Godhead. His reasoning takes occasionally the form of an argument within an argument. He pauses by the way to expand some thought, and does not return again to complete in grammatical form the sentence which he had begun; so that his style sometimes becomes complex and obscure. The versatility of the apostle’s mind, which made him equally at home in discussing subjects the most varied, appears in his style also. It naturally takes the complexion of his themes. To understand this one has only to compare the epistle to the Romans with those to the Corinthians; the epistle to the Galatians with that to the Ephesians; and all these with the epistles to the Philippians and Thessalonians. His style may be compared {449} to a clear window, which shows with fidelity the ever varying forms and scenes that pass before it.

5. The commentaries that have been written on the epistles of Paul would themselves constitute a large library. Our own century has been very fruitful in them, and some of them are accessible to every reader. For this reason our notice of the separate epistles may well be brief. Our aim will be to give the occasion of each, its chronological order in the series, its connection with the apostle’s missionary labors, its scope, and the office which it accomplishes in the plan of revelation. In connection with Paul’s epistles the reader should carefully study the history of his life and labors, as given in the Acts of the Apostles. From Acts 9:23-26 compared with Galatians 1:16-18, we learn that the first three years after Paul’s conversion were spent at Damascus and in Arabia. Then he went up to Jerusalem, but after a short sojourn there was driven away by the persecution of the Jews, and retired to his native city, Tarsus in Cilicia. Acts 9:29-30. After an interval of some time, which he spent "in the regions of Syria and Cilicia" (Galatians 1:21), "Barnabas departed to Tarsus, for to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch." Acts 11:25-26. This is supposed to have been about A.D. 43, seven or eight years after his conversion.

Here begins his recorded public ministry in Antioch and from Antioch as a centre. See above, Chap. 29, No. 38. It embraces three great missionary tours (Acts 13:1, etc.; 15:36, etc.; 18:23, etc.), and four visits to Jerusalem besides that already noticed. Acts 11:27-30 compared with 12:25; 15:2; 18:22; 21:15. The last of these ended in his captivity and imprisonment, first at Cesarea and afterwards at Rome, with an intervening perilous voyage and shipwreck. Acts chap. 21-28. See the incidents of Paul’s life chronologically arranged in Davidson’s Introduct. to New Test., vol. 2, pp. 110-112, with the annexed table; in Horne’s Introduct., vol. 4, pp. 490-495; in Conybeare and Howson, vol. 2, Appendix 2; and in the commentaries of Hackett, Alford, Wordsworth, etc.

6. As the epistles of Paul stand in the New Testament, they are not arranged in chronological order. The principle of arrangement seems to have been, first, those to churches, then, those to individuals; the further order being that of relative size, with this modification; that two epistles addressed to the same church should stand together, and that the last of {450} them, which is always the shorter, should determine their place in the series. Where the epistles are about equal in size, it seems to have been the design to arrange them chronologically. The catholic epistles are

arranged upon the same plan. The epistle to the Hebrews, as being anonymous, now stands after those which bear the name of Paul. But in many Greek manuscripts it is placed after 2 Thessalonians, consequently between the epistles addressed to churches and those to individuals. The student of these epistles should carefully note the chronological order, because, as Wordsworth remarks (Preface to Commentary on the Epistles), the mutual illustration which the Acts of the Apostles and the apostolic epistles receive from each other "is much impaired if the apostolic epistles are not studied in connection with and in the order of the apostolic history." The following is the chronological order of the epistles, as far as it can be ascertained, though (as will hereafter appear) some uncertainty exists in respect to several of them:

1 Thessalonians about A.D. 53 2 Thessalonians about A.D. 53 Galatians about A.D. 56 or 57 1 Corinthians about A.D. 57 2 Corinthians about A.D. 57 Romans about A.D. 58 Ephesians about A.D. 62 Colossians about A.D. 62 Philemon about A.D. 62 Philippians about A.D. 63 Hebrews uncertain.

1 Timothy about A.D. 65 Titus about A.D. 65 2 Timothy about A.D. 66

Arranged according to the order of time the thirteen epistles which bear the name of Paul naturally fall into four groups: (1) the two epistles to the Thessalonians, written during the apostle’s second missionary journey recorded Acts 15:36-41; Acts 16:1-40Acts 17:1-34; Acts 18:1-22; (2) the epistles to the Galatians, Corinthians, and Romans, written during his third missionary journey, Acts 18:23-28; Acts 19:1-41; Acts 20:1-38; Acts 21:1-15; (3) the epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians, written during Paul’s imprisonment in Rome, Acts 28:16-31 (some suppose the first three to have been written during his imprisonment at Cesarea, Acts 23:35; Acts 24:1-27; Acts 25:1-27; Acts 26:1-32); (4) the pastoral epistles, the first and third probably written after his recorded imprisonment in Rome, and the second during a second imprisonment after the publication of the Acts of the Apostles, and which ended in his martyrdom A.D. 67 or 68. The epistles of Paul will now be considered in the usual order, except that the three to the Ephesians, Colossians. and Philemon, which are contemporaneous, will be taken together.

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I. EPISTLE TO THERomans 7:1-25. The date of the epistle to the Romans, as well as the place where it was written, can be gathered with much certainty from the epistle itself, taken in connection with other notices respecting Paul found in the Acts of the Apostles. He was about to bear alms to his brethren in Judea from Macedonia and Achaia. Chap. 15:25, 26. He had previously exhorted the church of Corinth in Achaia to make this very collection, which he was to receive of them when he came to them through Macedonia. 1 Corinthians 16:1-6. That he was also to bring with him a collection from the Macedonian churches is manifest from 2 Corinthians 8:1-4; 2 Corinthians 9:1-4. He wrote, moreover, from Corinth; for among the greetings at the close of the epistle is one from "Gaius mine host" (chap. 16:23), a Corinthian whom he had baptized (1 Corinthians 1:14); he commends to them Phebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea, the eastern port of Corinth, chap. 16:1; and he speaks of "the city" where he is as well known (chap. 16:23), which can be no other than Corinth. Now by comparing Acts 19:21; Acts 20:1-3; Acts 24:17, we find that he was then on his way to Jerusalem through Macedonia and Greece, for the last time recorded in the New Testament. The epistle to the Romans, then, was written from Corinth during the apostle’s third missionary tour and second abode in that city, about A.D. 58. It is

the sixth of his epistles in the order of time, and stands in near connection with those to the Galatians and Corinthians, which were apparently written during the previous year.

8. Concerning the founding of the church at Rome we have no information. At the date of this epistle Paul had not visited it. Chaps. 1:10-15; 15:23, 24. Of its composition, however, we have more certain knowledge. Founded in the metropolis of the Roman empire, where, as we know from many notices of ancient writers, many Jews resided, it must have been of a mixed character, embracing both Jews and Gentiles; with this agree the contents of the present epistle. That the {452} Gentile element largely predominated in the church at Rome appears from the general tenor of the epistle. Chaps. 1:13; 11:13-25, 30, 31; 15:16. That it had also a Jewish element is plain from the whole of chap 2, and the precepts in chap. 14.

9. The occasion of writing seems to have been of a general character. The apostle had often purposed to visit Rome, but had been as often hindered. Chap. 1:13. To compensate in part for this failure, he wrote the present epistle, having, as it appears, an opportunity to send it by Phebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea. Chap. 16:1. The apostle's design, like the occasion of his writing, was general. It was natural that, in addressing a church which he had long desired to visit, he should lay himself out to unfold the gospel of Christ in its deep foundation principles, as a plan of salvation provided for the whole world, and designed to unite Jews and Gentiles in one harmonious body, on the common platform of faith in Christ. He first shows that the Gentiles are under the dominion of sin (chap. 1:18-32), and the Jews also (chap. 2), so that both alike are shut up to salvation by grace. Chap. 3. He connects the gospel plan of salvation immediately with the Old Testament by showing that Abraham, the father of the Israelitish people, was justified by faith, not by the works of the law or any outward rite; so that he is the father of all who walk in the steps of his faith, whether Jews or Gentiles. Chap. 4. He then sets forth the love of God in Christ, who is the second Adam, sent to restore the race from the ruin into which it was brought by the sin of the first Adam (chap. 5); and shows that to fallen sinful men the law cannot give deliverance from either its condemnatory sentence or the reigning power of sin, so that its only effect is to work wrath, while the righteousness which God gives through faith in Christ sets men free from both the curse of the law and the inward power of sin, thus bringing them into a blessed state of justification, sanctification, and holy communion with God here, with the hope of eternal glory hereafter. Chaps. 6-8. Since the doctrine of the admission of the Gentiles to equal privileges with the Jews, and the rejection {453} of the unbelieving part of the Jewish nation, was exceedingly offensive to his countrymen, the apostle devotes three entire chapters to the discussion of this momentous theme. Chaps. 9-11. He then proceeds to draw from the whole subject, as he has unfolded it, such practical exhortations in respect to daily life and conduct as were adapted to the particular wants of the Roman Christians-entire consecration of soul and body to God in each believer's particular sphere (chap. 12); obedience to magistrates (chap. 13:1-7); love and purity (chap. 13:8-14); mutual respect and forbearance (chaps. 14:1-15:7). He then returns to the great theme with which he began, that Christ is the common Saviour of Jews and Gentiles, in connection with which he refers to his office and labors as "the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles" (chap. 15:8-21), and closes with miscellaneous notices and salutations (chaps. 15:22-16:27).

10. From the above brief survey the special office of the epistle to the Romans is manifest. In no book of the New Testament is the great doctrine of justification by faith so fully unfolded. The

apostle sets it in vivid contrast with the Pharisaical idea of justification by the Mosaic law, and, by parity of reason, of justification by every other system of legalism; showing that it is only by grace through Christ that men can be delivered from either the guilt of sin or its reigning power in the soul, while the effect of the law is only to excite and irritate men's corrupt passions without the power to subdue them. The place, therefore, which this epistle holds in the understandings and affections of believers must be a good measure of their progress in the Christian life.

II. EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS.

11. The first epistle to the Corinthians was written from Ephesus, not far from the time of Pentecost (chap. 16:8); not from Philippi, according to the subscription appended to it. It was during Paul's second and last visit to that city, as we learn from his directions concerning a collection for the saints at Jerusalem, and his promise to come to the Corinthians through {454} Macedonia (chap. 16:1-5); for when Paul left Ephesus after his second sojourn there he went by Macedonia and Achaia (of which province Corinth was the capital) to Jerusalem to bear alms. Acts 19:21; Acts 20:1-3; Acts 24:17. Paul's second stay in Ephesus, during which time some think that he made a short visit to Corinth not mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, which would be the second in order, that promised in this and the second epistle being the third (2 Corinthians 12:14; 2 Corinthians 13:1), extended over the space of about three years. Acts 19:1-10; Acts 20:31. From his words (chap. 16:3-8), we gather that the epistle was written not long before the close of this period. Chronologists generally place it about A.D. 57.

12. The occasion of his writing was more specific than when he penned his epistle to the Romans. Corinth, the renowned capital of the Roman province Achaia, situated on the isthmus that connects the southern peninsula of Greece-the ancient Peleponnesus and the modern Morea, and enjoying the advantage of two ports was alike distinguished for its wealth and progress in the arts, and for its luxury and dissoluteness of morals. Here the apostle had labored a year and six months, and gathered a flourishing church embracing some Jews, but consisting mostly of Gentiles. Acts 18:1-11; 1 Corinthians 12:2. These Gentile converts, having just emerged from the darkness and corruption of heathenism (chap. 6:9-11), and living in the midst of a dissolute community (chap. 5:9, 10), did not wholly escape the contamination of heathenish associations and heathenish vices. Chaps. 5, 6, 8, 10. Taking a low and worldly view of the Christian church and the spiritual endowments of its several members, they were led into party strifes and rivalries. Chaps. 1:11-13; 3:3-7. Certain vain-glorious teachers, moreover, had come in among them with a great show of worldly wisdom, who disparaged Paul's apostolical standing, taught the people to despise the simplicity of his teachings, and sought to supplant him in the confidence and affections of the Corinthian church. Chaps. 4, 9; 2 Corinthians 10:1-18; 2 Corinthians 11:1-33; 2 Corinthians 12:1-21; 2 Corinthians 13:1-14. In addition to this, certain disorders and abuses had crept into their public assemblies {455} (chaps. 11, 12, 14), and some among them denied the doctrine of the resurrection. Chap. 15. According to the most probable interpretation of chap. 5:9, the apostle had already written them a letter on some of these points which has not come down to us, and the Corinthians themselves had written to the apostle, asking his advice on some points of a practical character, particularly in respect to the marriage relation in their present state of trial. Chap. 7:1. The occasion, then, of writing this epistle, which gives also its scope and office, was to correct the above named errors and abuses, of which he had received accurate information, and also to answer the inquiries of the Corinthians in their letter. In this work the apostle employs now sharp

rebuke, now tender expostulation, and now earnest and impassioned argument. The party strifes among the Corinthians he meets by showing that Christ himself is the only head of the church, that all gifts are from him, and are to be used to his glory in the edification of believers. Chaps. 1:13, 14, 30, 31; 3:5-23. The vain-glorious boasting of their leaders he exposes by showing the emptiness and impotence of their pretended wisdom in comparison with the doctrine of Christ crucified, who is the power of God and the wisdom of God for the salvation of all that believe, without regard to the distinctions of worldly rank. Chaps. 1:18-2:16; 3:18-20. The abuses and disorders that had crept into the church he rebukes with apostolical severity; and in correcting them, as well as in answering the questions of the Corinthians, he makes an application of the general principles of the gospel to the several cases before him which is full of practical wisdom-the incestuous person (chap. 5:8), companionship with the vicious (chap. 5:9-13), litigation among brethren (chap. 6:1-8), fleshly indulgence (chap. 6:9-20), the inquiries of the Christians in respect to marriage (chap. 7), meats offered to idols and sundry questions connected with them (chaps. 8, 10), disorders in the public assemblies (chap. 11), spiritual gifts with a beautiful eulogy on love (chaps. 12-14), the doctrine of the resurrection (chap. 15). He also defends his apostolical {456} character and standing against his opposers, though by no means so earnestly and fully as in the following epistle. Chaps. 4, 9. Thus it comes to pass that the present epistle contains a remarkable variety of topics, and gives us a fuller and clearer insight into the practical working of Christianity in the primitive apostolic churches than that furnished by any other of Paul’s epistles, or, indeed, any other book of the New Testament. The great principles, moreover, which he lays down in meeting the particular wants of the Corinthian church remain valid for all time; shedding from age to age a clear and steady light, by which every tempest-tossed church may, God helping it by his grace, steer its way into the haven of peace and prosperity.

13. The reader cannot fail to notice the remarkable contrast between the tone of this epistle and that to the Galatians, which belongs in the order of time to the same group. See above, No. 6. The errors of the Corinthians were not fundamental, like those of the Galatians. They built upon the true foundation, Jesus Christ; but marred the building by the introduction of base materials-the "wood, hay, stubble" of human wisdom, instead of the "gold, silver, precious stones" of the truth as Paul had taught it. The false teachers among the Galatians, on the contrary, sought to subvert the very foundations of Christianity by bringing in a system of legal justification. In writing to the Galatians, therefore, Paul contends, with apostolic severity, for the very substance of the gospel, but in addressing the Corinthians, he seeks only to purify the gospel from the admixture of human additions.

14. The second epistle to the Corinthians was written not many months after the first, from Macedonia, where the apostle was occupied in completing a collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, with the purpose of afterwards proceeding to Corinth that he might receive the contribution of the Corinthian church also. Chaps. 8:1-4; 9:1-5. Whether he wrote from Philippi, according to the subscription of the epistle, or from some other place in Macedonia, cannot be determined.

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15. The occasion of writing was manifestly the report which he had received from Titus (and as is generally inferred from 1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 16:10, from Timothy also). He had sent Titus to Corinth with the expectation that he would bring tidings thence to Troas, where he hoped to find him on his way from Ephesus to Macedonia. But in this he was disappointed. He therefore hastened from Troas to Macedonia, where he met Titus and learned from him the effect of his first epistle. Chaps. 2:12, 13; 7:6; 12:18. So far as the main body of the Corinthian Christians was concerned, this was highly favorable, and for it the apostle devoutly thanks God (chap. 7:6, 7); commends their prompt obedience (chap. 7:11); directs them to restore the excommunicated person (chap. 2:5-10); and discusses very fully the matter of the collection for the poor Christians at Jerusalem (chaps. 8, 9). But the very success of his first epistle with the better part of the church had embittered his enemies, and made them more determined in their opposition to him. They accused him of levity in changing his original plan of visiting the Corinthian church on his way to Macedonia (chap. 1:15-17); of uttering threats which he would not dare to execute when present among them (chap. 10:9-11); of making a gain of them by indirect means (chap. 12:16-18); and sought in various ways to disparage his apostolical character and standing. This led him to dwell with great earnestness on the fullness of his apostolic credentials, the purity of his apostolic life, and the abundance of his labors and sufferings in behalf of Christ’s cause, always with reference more or less direct to his enemies. With these personal notices of himself are interwoven exalted views of the dignity of the ministerial office, and the true spirit and manner in which its weighty duties are to be performed. See chaps. 2:14-7:16; chaps. 10-13. The prominence which the apostle is thus forced to give to his own person and labor constitutes the most remarkable feature of the present epistle. To the same cause are due the peculiarities of its diction, and its rapid transitions from one theme and tone to another. "Consolation and rebuke, gentleness {458} and severity, earnestness and irony, succeed one another at very short intervals and without notice." Alford, Introduction to this Epistle. All this came about by the wisdom of God, who placed his servant in such circumstances that fidelity to the cause of truth compelled him unwillingly to set forth in himself the character of a true minister of the gospel in bright contrast with that of those vain-glorious and selfish men, who under a show of great worldly wisdom, seek to create parties in the church of Christ for their own private honor and emolument. The particular occasion which called forth this epistle soon passed away; but the epistle itself remains a rich treasure for all believers, especially for all Christian teachers.

III. EPISTLE TO THE Galatians 16. Galatia is the Greek word answering to the Roman Gallia, that is, Gaul. It was one of the central provinces of Asia Minor, and received its name from the circumstance of its being inhabited by a people of Gallic origin who came by the way of Byzantium and the Hellespont in the third century before Christ. Two visits of the apostle to Galatia are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles; the first, during his second missionary journey (Acts 16:6); and the second, at the beginning of his third journey (Acts 18:23). After which of these visits the present epistle was written is a question that has been much discussed, and answered in different ways. The most natural interpretation, however, of chapter 4:13-16 leads to the conclusion that it was after his second visit. The course of the events seems to have been as follows: He was suffering from an infirmity of the flesh when he preached the gospel to the Galatians "at the first," that is, upon the first visit (verse 13). Then they received him "as an angel of God, even as Jesus Christ," and were filled with holy joy through simple faith in Christ’s name (verses 14, 15). Upon his second visit he found it necessary to warn them in very plain terms against the seductions of false

teachers, who were seeking to draw them away from the simplicity of the gospel to faith in a system of works. {459} But after his departure these false teachers had great success; and the result was that the affections of the Galatians were alienated from Paul, who was their spiritual father. In view of this fact he asks (as we may render v. 16, after Ellicott, in perfect accordance with the idiom of the Greek): "So then, am I become your enemy, by speaking to you the truth?" that is because in my recent visit I told you the truth. According to this view the epistle belongs to the second group, and was written about A.D. 56 or 57. Farther than this we cannot go in determining the time. The place is uncertain. It may have been Ephesus, or Corinth, which cities Paul visited in his third and last missionary journey, but it cannot have been Rome, as the subscription erroneously gives it. The subscriptions are of no authority. That to the present epistle probably had its ground mainly in chapter 6:17, where the writer was erroneously supposed to allude to the bodily sufferings that he endured in connection with his last recorded imprisonment.

17. The occasion of this epistle, which gives also its design, was very specific. The Galatian churches had begun well (chap. 5:7); but soon after Paul's departure Judaizing teachers had drawn them away to the very form of error noticed in the Acts of the Apostles (chap. 15:1); "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses ye cannot be saved." They sought to impose on all the Gentile converts circumcision as essential to salvation. Thus they placed justification on a legal ground, and made faith in Christ a subordinate matter. This error was fundamental. Paul therefore attacks it with unsparing severity, with which, however, he mingles a wonderful tenderness of spirit. His argument is for substance the same as that in the epistle to the Romans, only that it takes from necessity a more controversial form, and is carried out with more warmth and vehemence of expression. It is a divine model of the way in which fundamental error should be dealt with.

18. The epistle naturally falls into three divisions. The first is mainly historic. Chaps. 1, 2. The false teachers had disparaged Paul's apostolical standing, on the ground, apparently, {460} that he was not one of the original twelve, and had not been called immediately by Christ to the apostleship, but had received his gospel from men. It would seem also that they labored to make it appear that Paul's doctrine respecting circumcision and the Mosaic law was contrary to that of Peter and the other apostles of the circumcision. Paul accordingly devotes these two introductory chapters to a vindication of his full apostolic standing. He shows that his apostleship is "not of man neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father" (chap. 1:1); that the gospel which he preaches he neither received of man, nor was taught by man but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (verses 11, 12); that, accordingly, upon his call to the apostleship, he went not up to Jerusalem to receive instruction from those who were apostles before him, but into Arabia, whence he returned to Damascus (verses 15-17); that after three years he made a brief visit of fifteen days to Peter, where he also saw James, but had no personal acquaintance with the churches in Judea (verses 20-24); that fourteen years afterwards he went up to Jerusalem by revelation, not to be instructed by the apostles there, but to confer with them respecting "the gospel of the uncircumcision" which was committed to him, and that he obtained the full recognition of "James, Cephas, and John, who were reckoned as pillars" (chap. 2:1-10); and that afterwards, when Peter was come to Antioch he withstood him to the face on this very question of circumcision, because, through fear of his Jewish brethren, he had dissembled and drawn others into dissimulation, adding also the substance of the rebuke administered by him to Peter, which contains an argument (drawn in part

from Peter’s own practice) against compelling the Gentiles to live as do the Jews (verses 11-21).

Having thus vindicated his apostolic authority against the false teachers in Galatia, he proceeds, in the second part of the epistle, to unfold the great argument for justification by faith in Christ. The Galatians have received the Holy Spirit, with the accompanying miraculous gifts, not by the works of the law, but by faith in Christ (chap. 3:1-5); Abraham was justified by {461} faith, as an example for all future ages (verses 6-9,18); the law cannot bring justification to sinners, but only condemnation (verses 10-12); from this condemnation Christ delivers us, and makes us through faith the children of Abraham, and heirs to all the promises which God made to him (verses 13, 14); the Abrahamic covenant, conditioned on faith alone, is older than the Mosaic law and cannot be disannulled by it (verses 15-17); the true office of the law was to prepare men for the coming of Christ, in whom all distinction between Jew and Gentile is abolished (verses 19-29); before Christ the people of God were like a child that has not yet received the inheritance, but is kept under tutors and governors, but through Christ they are like the same child arrived at full age, and put in possession of the inheritance (chap. 4:1-7). The apostle adds (chaps. 4:8-5:12) various arguments and illustrations, with pointed allusions to the false teachers who were subverting the simplicity of their faith in Christ; and he solemnly warns the Galatian Christians that by receiving circumcision they bind themselves to do the whole law-the whole law as the ground of their justification. They have left Christ, and thus fallen away from grace-forsaken a system of grace for one of works, so that "Christ is become of no effect" to them. Chap. 5:3, 4. The third part (chaps. 5:13-6:18) is of a practical character. The apostle affectionately exhorts the Galatians to use their Christian liberty in a worthy manner, mortifying fleshly lusts, restoring fallen brethren in meekness, bearing one another’s burdens, and being diligent in every good work. In bringing the epistle to a close he contrasts the vain-glory and hypocrisy of these Judaizing false teachers with his steadfast purpose to glory only in the cross of Christ, in whom "neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."

IV. EPISTLES TO THE COLOSSIANS, EPHESIANS, ANDPhilemon 1:19. These three epistles are contemporaneous, in the sense that they were written on the same general occasion, and forwarded {462} at the same time, though some days may have intervened between the composition of the first and the last of them. They were all written when Paul was a prisoner (Ephesians 3:1; Ephesians 4:1; Ephesians 6:20; Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:1; Philemon 1:9-10; Philemon 1:23), and all sent virtually by Tychicus; for Onesimus, a servant whom Paul sent back to his master, Philemon of Colosse, with a commendatory letter, went in company with Tychicus. Ephesians 6:21-22; Colossians 4:7-9. The epistle to the Ephesians contains no salutations; but those of the other two, are, with a single exception, sent from the same persons-Aristarchus, Marcus, Epaphras, Luke, and Demas. If any further argument for their contemporaneousness were needed, it could be found in the remarkable agreement between the contents of the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, extending not only to the thoughts but to the phraseology also.

20. It is agreed that these three epistles were written during the apostle’s imprisonment in either Cesarea or Rome; but from which of these two places is a question on which biblical scholars differ, and which cannot be answered with certainty, though the common opinion has been that the apostle wrote from Rome. It is not necessary to review the arguments advanced on the two sides. The reader who wishes to investigate the matter will find them in commentaries and bible dictionaries.

21. Another question is: In what order were the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians written? Here we have only indirect indications, and these not decisive. It is manifest, however, from a comparison of the two epistles, that the apostle had a more specific occasion for writing to the Colossians than to the Ephesians. It is natural, therefore, to suppose that he first penned his letter to the former church, and very soon afterwards, while his heart was yet warm with the great theme of that letter-the personal glory and dignity of Christ, and the union through him of both Jews and Gentiles in one holy family-he wrote to the Ephesians among whom he had so long labored, going over the same general course of thought, but with more fulness and in a less argumentative tone. However {463} this may be, it is certain that the most convenient order of studying these two closely related epistles is to begin with that to the Colossians and thence proceed to the other. We propose to consider them in this order.

22. Epistle to the Colossians. Colosse was a city lying in the southwestern part of Phrygia, in Asia Minor, in the neighborhood of Laodicea and Hierapolis. Chap. 4:13, 16. Respecting the founding of the church there we have no information. According to the most natural interpretation of chap. 2:1, Paul had not visited Colosse in person when he wrote the present epistle. The occasion of his writing seems to have been information received by him that false teachers were troubling the Colossian church. That these men were Jews is plain from chap. 2:16, 20, 21; where the reference is to Jewish ordinances. But their doctrine was not simple Phariseeism, like that of the false teachers among the Galatians. They did not seek directly to substitute circumcision and the Mosaic law for faith in Christ, as the ground of justification. They seem rather to have been Christian Jews of an ascetic turn of mind, and imbued with the semi-oriental philosophy of that day, which contained in itself the seeds of the later Gnostic systems. Having no clear apprehension of the glory of Christ’s person and the fulness of the salvation which his gospel offers to men, they sought to supplement the Christian system by their ascetic practices and their speculations concerning the orders of angels, whom they seem to have regarded as mediators between God and men. To all this human philosophy the apostle opposes directly the divine dignity and glory of Christ’s person, and the completeness of the redemption which he has provided for men. The Jewish character of these false teachers appears in their insisting on meats and drinks, holy-days, new moons, and Sabbaths (chap. 2:16, 20, 21); their ascetic character, in their doctrine concerning the mortification of the body (chap. 2:23); their speculations concerning angels, in the fact that they are described as "delighting in humility and the worship of angels" (chap. 2:18, 23). The apostle apparently refers to a false humility which, under the pretence that God is too great to be approached except {464} through the mediation of angels, made them instead of Christ the way of access to him, thus disparaging the Redeemer’s person and office.

23. In respect to plan, the epistle naturally falls into two parts of about equal length. The first is argumentative. Chaps. 1, 2. After an introduction, in which the apostle thanks God that the Colossians have been made partakers of the gospel, commends them for the fruitfulness of their faith, and assures them of his incessant prayers in their behalf (chap. 1:1-12), and passes to his great theme, which is to set forth the divine dignity and glory of Christ’s person. He is the image of the invisible God, existing before all things, and the creator and upholder of all things, those angelic orders included whom the false teachers regarded as objects of worship (verses 15-17). He is also the head of the church, and as such unites under himself all holy beings in heaven and earth in one happy family (verses 18-22). In him all fulness dwells, and all believers are complete

in him; receiving through him a spiritual circumcision which brings to them holiness of heart, forgiveness of sins, and life from the dead (verses 11-13). Christ has abolished by his death on the cross "the handwriting of ordinances"-the Mosaic ordinances under the figure of a bond which was before of binding force, but which he has annulled-so that the former ground of separation between Jews and Gentiles is done away (2:14). By the same death on the cross he has "spoiled principalities and powers"-the powers of darkness, of which Satan is the head-openly triumphing over them (verse 15). The Colossians, then, have all that they need in Christ, and the apostle affectionately warns them against being spoiled through the philosophy of these false teachers, which is a compound of ignorance, self-conceit, and will-worship, void alike of reality and power. The second part is practical. Chaps. 3, 4. The duties on which the apostle insists come mainly under two general heads. The first is that of a heavenly temper of mind growing out of their resurrection with Christ who sits at the right hand of God, and who shall appear again to receive his disciples to himself, {465} that they also may appear with him in glory. In view of this animating hope he exhorts the Colossians to put away all the sins belonging to their former state of heathenism. Chap. 3:1-8. The second is that of mutual love and harmony arising from their union with each other in Christ, whereby they have been made one holy body, in which outward distinctions are nothing "but Christ is all and in all." On this ground they are urged to cultivate all the graces of the Spirit, the chief of which is love, and faithfully to discharge, each one in his station, the mutual duty which they owe as husbands and wives, as parents and children, as masters and servants. Chaps. 3:9-4:1. They are admonished, moreover, to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly for their mutual edification (chap. 3:16); to be single-hearted in their aim to please Christ (verse 17); to be prayerful and vigilant (chap. 4:2-4); and wise in their intercourse with unbelievers (verses 5, 6). The epistle closes with notices of a personal character intermingled with salutations (verses 7-18). In chap. 4:16 the apostle directs that this epistle be read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that the Colossians likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. What was this epistle from Laodicea? (1) Some think it was a letter written by the church of Laodicea to Paul, and forwarded by him to the Colossians. (2) Others understand it of an epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans (perhaps forwarded along with the three epistles now under consideration) and which the Colossians were to obtain from Laodicea. This is the most probable supposition. On the attempt to identify this epistle with our canonical epistle to the Ephesians see below.

24. Epistle to the Ephesians.-Ephesus, the metropolis of Proconsular Asia, which comprehended the western provinces of Asia Minor, lay on the coast of the Ægean sea between Smyrna on the north and Miletus on the south. In the apostolic age it was a flourishing city, and renowned for the temple of the heathen goddess Diana. Two visits of the apostle to Ephesus are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, the latter of which was prolonged through most of three years. Acts 18:19-21; chaps. 19; 20:31. The occasion of writing this epistle {466} seems to have been of a very general nature. The apostle was sending a letter by Tychicus to the Colossians, and embraced the opportunity to write to the Ephesians also. In entire accordance with this supposition is the general character of the epistle. The apostle has no particular error to combat, as he had in the case of the Colossians. He proceeds, therefore, in a placid and contemplative frame of mind to unfold the great work of Christ’s redemption; and then makes a practical application of it, as in the epistle to the Colossians, but with more fulness, and with some important additions.

It has seemed surprising to many that the apostle should have written in so general a strain to a church on which he had bestowed so much labor, and where he had so many personal friends; particularly that he should have omitted at the close all salutations. To account for this various hypotheses have been proposed. The words "in Ephesus" are omitted in the Sinai and Vatican manuscripts, and there is reason for believing that they were wanting in some other ancient manuscripts not now extant. See the quotations from Basil the Great, and other fathers in Alford, Ellicott, Meyer, and other critical commentators. On this ground some have supposed that the present epistle was intended to be encyclical-an epistle for general circulation among the churches; others, that it is the Laodicean epistle referred to in Colossians 4:16. But in favor of the words "in Ephesus" there is an overwhelming weight of evidence. They are sustained by all the versions and all the manuscripts except the above. Besides, as every Greek scholar knows, if these words are omitted, it compels the omission from the original of the two preceding words which are found in every manuscript and version-unless, indeed, we adopt the far-fetched hypothesis that the apostle furnished Tychicus with two or more copies of the epistle for different churches, leaving a blank space to be filled as occasion should require; and then it becomes impossible to explain how the reading "in Ephesus" should have been so universal in the manuscripts and versions. There is no occasion for any of this ingenuity. The omission of these words from single manuscripts is not wonderful. It finds a parallel, as Alford remarks, in the omission of the words in Rome (Romans 1:7) from one manuscript, whether from oversight or for the purpose of generalizing the reference of its contents. Nor can any valid objection be drawn from the general character of the epistle. That depended much on the occasion which called it forth, which we have seen to have been general, and the frame of mind in which the apostle wrote. As to the omission of salutations, we shall find upon examination that the measure of Paul’s personal acquaintance with the churches was not that of his personal greetings. {467} These abound most of all in the epistle to the Romans whom he had never visited. Romans 16:1-27. They are found also in the epistle to the Colossians to whom Paul was personally a stranger. Colossians 4:10-14. On the contrary they are wanting, except in a general form, in the epistles to the Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Thessalonians (in 2 Thessalonians wholly wanting as in this epistle), Titus, and the first to Timothy. The other objections are founded on misinterpretation, as when it is inferred from chap, 1:15 that the author had never seen those to whom he wrote; and from chap, 3:2 that they had no personal acquaintance with him. But in the former passage the apostle speaks simply of the good report which had come to him from the Ephesian church since he left it; and, in the latter, the words: "if ye have heard" imply no doubt (compare 1 Peter 2:3), and cannot be fairly adduced to prove that the writer was personally unknown to his readers.

25. This epistle, like that to the Colossians, naturally falls into two divisions of about equal size; the first argumentative, the second practical. The argumentative part occupies the first two chapters. Full of the great theme with which the epistle to the Colossians is occupied-the personal dignity and glory of Christ, the greatness of his salvation, and especially the union through him of all holy beings in heaven and earth in one family of God-the apostle begins, immediately after the apostolic greeting, by pouring out his heart in thanksgiving to God for his rich mercy, which has made him and his beloved Ephesians partakers of Christ’s redemption, the greatness and glory of which he describes in glowing terms, bringing in, as he proceeds, the thought with which his mind is filled, that it is God’s purpose to "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth." Chap. 1:10. He then adds a fervent prayer for the growth of the

Ephesians in the knowledge of Christ, whom God has raised above all principality and power and made head over all things to his body the church. Returning in the second chapter to the theme with which he began, he contrasts with the former wretched condition of the Ephesians, when they had no hope and were without God in the world, their present blessed state, as fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of faith; God having through {468} Christ broken down the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, and built them all into a holy temple upon one common foundation, of which Jesus Christ is the chief corner stone. In the third chapter he dwells upon the grace of God which had committed to him, in a special sense, the office of preaching among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and adds a rapturous prayer for the strengthening of the Ephesians through the Spirit in the inner man, for their establishment in faith and love, and their illumination in the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that they may "be filled with all the fulness of God." Then follows a doxology in which the apostle labors to find words wherewith to express his conception of the greatness of God's power and grace through Jesus Christ. With the fourth chapter begins the practical part of the epistle. He begins with an exhortation to unity, the argument for which cannot be abridged: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Chap. 4:4-6. He next speaks of the diversity of gifts among believers, all of which come from Christ, and have for their end the unity of the church in faith and knowledge, and thus her stability (verses 7-16). Then follow earnest admonitions to shun the vices of their former state of heathenism, and cultivate all the graces of the Spirit. The mutual relations of life are then taken up, as in the epistle to the Colossians. Here occurs that grand digression in which the love of Christ towards his church is compared with that of the husband towards his wife. Chap. 5:23-32. The closing exhortation, in which the Christian is compared to a warrior wrestling not with flesh and blood but with the powers of darkness, and his heavenly panoply is described at length, is (with the exception of the brief figure, 1 Thessalonians 5:8) peculiar to this epistle and is very striking.

26. Epistle to Philemon.-This short epistle is essentially of a private character. It was sent to Colosse by Onesimus at {469} the same time with the epistle to the Colossians, of which Tychieus was the bearer. Colossians 4:7-9. The epistle itself plainly indicates its object. It is a plea for Onesimus, the servant of Philemon, who had left his master and apparently defrauded him (verse 18), but now returns to him a Christian. As a model of Christian delicacy and courtesy it has been the admiration of all ages.

V. EPISTLE TO THE Philippians 27. The ancient name of Philippi was Crenides (Fountains); but Philip of Macedon fortified the place and called it after his own name. It lay along the bank of a river on a plain in the eastern border of Proconsular Macedonia, and was made a colony by Augustus in memory of his victory gained there over Brutus and Cassius. Compare Acts 16:12. Its port was Neapolis on the Ægean sea about twelve Roman miles to the southeast of it. Philippi was the first place in Europe where the gospel was preached by Paul, who had been summoned across the sea to Macedonia by a vision. Acts 16:9. This was during his second missionary journey, about A.D. 53. A record of his labors and sufferings on that occasion is given in Acts 16:12-40 In his third missionary journey he twice visited Macedonia, sailing the second time from Philippi, that is, from its port Neapolis. Acts 20:1; Acts 20:3-6.

28. The occasion of this epistle seems to have been the contribution made by the Philippians to supply the apostle's necessities while a prisoner in Rome. Chap. 4:10-18. That he was a prisoner is plain from chap. 1:13, 14, 16. That the place of imprisonment was Rome is inferred from the general tone of the epistle, which shows that the apostle was awaiting a decision of his case, in accordance with his appeal to Cæsar, with the confident expectation of a favorable result (chaps. 1:19-25; 2:23, 24), and especially from the mention of Cæsar's household (chap. 4:22). From chap. 2:23, 24 we infer, moreover, that the time for a decision of his case was at hand. The date of this epistle, then, was about A.D. 63.

{470} The apostle speaks very confidently of a speedy release and restoration to the work of his apostolic office. Chaps. 1:19, 25, 26; 2:24. This language is important in connection with the two closely related questions, that of a second imprisonment at Rome and that of the date of the pastoral epistles. See below, No. 35.

29. The character of this epistle answers well to its occasion. It is a free outpouring of the apostle's heart towards his beloved Philippians, who had remembered him in his bonds and sent Epaphroditus to supply his wants. He bestows upon them no censure, unless the suggestion to Euodias and Syntyche be regarded as such, but commends them for their liberality, exhorts them to steadfastness in the endurance of persecution, and admonishes them to maintain a deportment which shall be in all things such as becomes the gospel, the several parts of which he specifies in the course of the epistle, but not in any very exact order. It is in connection with these admonitions that the apostle, while insisting on the duty of humility and self-sacrificing love, brings in that sublime description of the Saviour's original glory and equality with God, which he laid aside for our redemption, taking upon himself the form of a servant and submitting to the death of the cross; for which act of self-abasement he is now exalted to be Lord of heaven and earth. Chap. 2:5-11. Intermingled with the above named commendations, exhortations, and counsels, are frequent notices respecting himself, introduced in the most natural and artless manner, and unfolding for our edification some of the deepest principles of Christian character. His faith in Christ and love for His cause raise him above the sphere of human jealousies. He rejoices that Christ is preached, whether of good-will or of envy, knowing that this shall turn to his salvation through the prayers of the Philippians and the supply of Christ's Spirit. Chap. 2:15-19.

He knows that for himself personally it is better to depart and be with Christ: but to continue in the flesh is more needful for the Philippians. He cannot, therefore, choose between life and death. Chap. 1:21-25. How different this from the spirit {471} of some, who think of death only in connection with their own personal comfort, and how much higher the type of religion which it reveals! So far as outward advantages are concerned, no man can have more occasion than he to glory in the flesh. But all these he has renounced and counted loss for Christ. His one ambition is to know Christ, and be united with him in his death and resurrection. His present attainments he forgets in his single purpose of pressing towards the goal for the prize of God's heavenly calling in Christ Jesus. Chap. 3:4-14.

He warmly commends the Philippians for their liberality, but wishes them to understand that he does not speak in respect to personal want; for every where and in all things he has been taught the lesson of contentment with present circumstances. Chap. 4:10-14.

VI. EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS.

30. The original name of Thessalonica was Therme, whence the gulf at the head of which it is situated, was called the Thermaic gulf. The modern name of the city is Saloniki, and of the gulf, the gulf of Saloniki. In the apostolic age it was a large and wealthy city, and the metropolis of the second district of Macedonia. At the present day it is second only to Constantinople in European Turkey. Then as now a large number of Jews resided in it. In his second missionary tour the apostle, when driven from Philippi, went through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica. After his usual manner he first resorted to the Jewish synagogue "and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." After this a tumult was raised at the instigation of the unbelieving Jews, and the apostle was sent away by night to Berea. Acts 17:1-10. We cannot affirm that his stay at Thessalonica was limited to three weeks; yet it was very brief, and for this reason he was anxious to return again that he might impart further instruction and consolation to the converts there, who were undergoing a severe ordeal of temptation through persecution. Chaps. {472} 2:17-3:5. His labors at Thessalonica were not confined to the Sabbath-day and the Jewish synagogue. He preached the gospel to the Gentiles also, and his chief success seems to have been among them. 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 1 Thessalonians 2:16.

31. The First Epistle to the Thessalonians was written during the apostle’s second missionary journey, the same journey in which he first visited Thessalonica. This we gather from the fact that Silvanus (Silas) was with him (chap. 1:1), for Silas was Paul’s travelling companion only during that journey (Acts 15:40Acts 16:19; Acts 16:25; Acts 16:29; Acts 17:4; Acts 17:10; Acts 17:14-15; Acts 18:5; Acts 18:5); also from the notice of his being at Athens (chap. 3:1 compared with Acts 17:15-16). He did not, however, write from Athens, as the subscription erroneously states, but from Corinth; for it was at this place that Silas and Timotheus rejoined him, bringing good tidings from Macedonia respecting the church in Thessalonica. Chap. 3:1-6 compared with Acts 18:1-5. This is, then, the earliest of Paul’s epistles, having been written about A.D. 53.

32. The epistle clearly indicates its occasion. In consideration of the brief time which the apostle had been able to spend at Thessalonica, and of the severe persecution to which the converts in that city were exposed, he was very desirous to make them a second visit. But having been twice frustrated in this purpose, he sent Timothy and Silas to learn the condition of the Thessalonian church and bring him word concerning it, which they did while he was at Corinth. Chaps. 2:17-3:6. The letter is an affectionate outpouring of his heart in view of the good tidings received through these brethren, into which are interwoven encouragements, instructions, and admonitions adapted to the circumstances of the brethren at Thessalonica, with abundant references to the apostle’s own labors there. In the first chapter he commends, with devout thanksgiving to God, the faith and love and patience of the Thessalonian Christians. The second and third chapters are mainly occupied with a notice of his own labors and those of his colleagues at Thessalonica, of his strong desire to revisit them which he had thus far {473} been hindered from carrying into execution, and of his joy at the good tidings brought by Timothy, the whole closed with a fervent prayer in their behalf. The two remaining chapters contain miscellaneous instructions suited to the condition of a church that had been recently gathered in great part from the ranks of heathenism. In the course of these he corrects an error into which the Thessalonian believers had fallen from the idea that they who should die before Christ’s second coming might fail of their share in its glory and blessedness. Chap. 4:13-18. In both of the epistles he admonishes the Thessalonians against the neglect of their proper worldly business, a fault that was apparently connected with visionary ideas

respecting the speedy second coming of our Lord, and which he rebukes in severe terms. 1 Thessalonians 4:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12.

33. The second epistle to the Thessalonians, like the first, is written in the name of "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus," and seems to have been sent from Corinth not many months after the first. The apostle's main design was to correct a pernicious error respecting the time of our Lord's second advent, which some at Thessalonica seem to have been strenuously engaged in propagating, and to give them further instruction respecting this great doctrine and their duty in relation to it. After the apostolic salutation he expresses his gratitude to God for the growth of their Christian faith and love, and comforts them under the pressure of the persecution to which they were subjected with the assurance of our Lord's second coming in glory to destroy his and their enemies and give rest to his suffering servants; but proceeds in the second chapter to show that this day is not yet at hand, and cannot come till there has first been a great apostacy, the characteristic features of which he proceeds to give (verses 3-12). The remainder of the epistle is occupied with commendations and encouragements to perseverence, mingled with admonitions. The latter have special reference to certain idle and disorderly members of the church, whom the apostle describes as "some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies" (chap. 3:11), {474} and who also set themselves in opposition to his apostolic authority (verse 14). These disorderly persons seem to have been the same as those who were engaged in propagating erroneous notions respecting the time of our Lord's second advent. Their visionary views on this subject made them self-conceited, talkative, and self-willed, and led them to neglect the sober duties of daily life. The apostle beseeches the Thessalonians not to be soon shaken in mind, or troubled, "neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." And he adds: "Let no man deceive you in any way"-in any of the ways specified or any other way. Chap. 2:2, 3. There were then persons at Thessalonica busily occupied in misleading the Thessalonians: (1) "by spirit," that is, by prophesies which they professed to have received from the Holy Spirit; (2) "by word," by oral teaching; (3) "by letter as from us," that is, purporting to come from the apostle. Or, perhaps, we should render: "nor by word nor by letter as from us:" that is, neither by oral teaching nor by written communication alleged to have come from me. We can well understand how the unwritten words of the apostle should have been perverted by these false teachers. The question remains: Did they pervert the meaning of his language in the first epistle, or did they employ an epistle forged in his name? The latter has been from ancient times a common interpretation of this clause, and it is favored by the words: "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write." Chap. 3:17. Yet the supposition of such a forged epistle is something so improbable that many are inclined to adopt the former supposition. The question respecting "the man of sin" belongs to the commentator. In a brief introduction like the present, we cannot enter upon it farther than to say that, though we are not warranted in affirming that it has its exhaustive fulfilment in the Papacy, yet its chief embodiment thus far has been in that corrupt and persecuting power whose character answers so remarkably to the apostle's description.

34. The epistles to the churches of Philippi and Thessalonica, both lying within the bounds of ancient Macedonia, have a remarkable agreement in their general tone and manner. In both cases we have the same affectionate outpouring of the apostle's heart towards the brethren to whom he writes, and the same abundant personal notices respecting himself and his ministry. Yet they differ

precisely as we might suppose they would {475} in view of the fact that the two to the Thessalonians are the earliest of Paul's writings, and are separated from that to the Philippians by an interval of ten eventful years. In writing to the Thessalonians he gives peculiar prominence to the doctrine of our Lord's second coming, perhaps because, in the persecutions which they were undergoing, they especially needed its strengthening and consolatory influence; perhaps also because in the continual maltreatment which he had encountered ever since he entered Macedonia-at Philippi (Acts 16:19-401 Thessalonians 2:2), at Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-10), at Berea (Acts 17:13-14), at Corinth (Acts 18:6-17)-he was staying his own soul on the same glorious hope. On the contrary, we find in these earlier epistles no mention of Judaizing Christians, nor any contrast between the two opposite systems of justification by faith and by the works of the Mosaic law, such as appears in his later epistles, that to the Philippians included. Php 3:4-9. His opponents at Thessalonica are not Judaizing Christians, but unconverted Jews, whose malignant opposition he describes in strong terms. 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16. To the Thessalonians the apostle speaks of himself; but it is of his ministry, and the manner in which he has discharged its duties among them. To the Philippians he also speaks of himself; but then it is from a prison, with a trial for life or death before him, and the retrospect of a long ministry behind him. He unfolds, therefore, as is natural, his deep experiences as a Christian and an apostle of Christ. See above, No. 29. In this contrast between the earlier and the later epistles we have an evidence of their genuineness which is all the stronger because of its indirectness. It is such a mark of truth as no falsifier has power to imitate.

VII. THE PASTORAL EPISTLES.

35. The attempt to find for the pastoral epistles a place in Paul's ministry as far as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles is beset with difficulties which amount to impossibilities.

Among these difficulties are the following:

(1.) Whoever carefully studies these three epistles in their connection {476} with each other, and in contrast with the other Pauline epistles, must be profoundly impressed with the conviction that they all belong, as it respects style and tone of thought, to the same period of the apostle's life; and, as it respects subject-matter, to the same era when the churches were troubled by the same forms of error. But if we assume that they were written during that part of Paul's ministry of which Luke has left us the record, the second to Timothy must be widely separated from the other two. That was certainly written during Paul's last imprisonment near the close of his life. But when he wrote the first to Timothy and that to Titus he was at liberty and prosecuting his missionary labors in Asia Minor and the vicinity. It must have been then, upon this assumption, during his third missionary tour (when Apollos appears for the first time, Acts 18:24 compared with Titus 3:13), and before his last recorded journey to Jerusalem, his arrest there, his two years' imprisonment at Cesarea, his voyage to Rome, and his imprisonment there for the space of at least two more years.

(2.) There is no part of Paul's history "between his first visit to Ephesus and his Roman imprisonment, which satisfies the historical conditions implied in the statements of any one of these epistles." Conybeare and Howson, vol. 2, Appendix 1. The student may see the arguments on one side in Davidson's Introduction to the New Testament; and on the other in Alford, and other critical commentators. Reference may also be made to the biblical dictionaries.

(3.) Upon the assumption that the first epistle to Timothy, whom Paul had left in charge of the Ephesian church, was written before his recorded imprisonments at Cesarea and Rome, it must be earlier than his farewell address to the elders of Ephesus, and also his epistle to the Ephesians. But the contents of the epistle manifestly point to a later period, when the errors in doctrine and practice which he had predicted (Acts 20:29-30), but of which he takes no notice in his epistle to the Ephesians, had already begun to manifest themselves. The more one compares with each other these two epistles, the deeper must his conviction be that the first to Timothy is not the earlier but the later of the two.

(4.) The peculiar tone and diction of the pastoral epistles and the peculiar character of the errors combated in them all indicate a later period in the apostle's life, and a later stage in the history of the churches. To place the first and third of these among those to the Galatians, Corinthians, and Romans, and the second, among those to Philemon, the Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians, must appear forced and unnatural. It is much easier to assume the lapse of some years. Even then the contrast between these and the other epistles of Paul in respect to tone and diction is very striking. But it may be explained partly from the peculiar theme of the pastoral epistles, partly from the change which the lapse of time {477} with its manifold experiences had brought to the apostle's style and diction.

We assume, therefore, that the apostle was released from the Roman imprisonment recorded by Luke; and that, not very long before his second imprisonment which was terminated by his martyrdom at Rome, he wrote the three epistles now under consideration. It is well known that this is in accordance with ancient tradition. See the testimonies in Conybeare and Howson, chap. 27; in Alford, and in other commentators.

Against this view is urged the apostle's declaration to the elders of Ephesus that they should see his face no more; whereas, according to the present supposition, he visited Ephesus again after his first imprisonment. As a fair offset to this may be urged on the other side his equally strong declaration to the Philippians that his present imprisonment should have a favorable issue (Php 1:25); which was not the case upon the hypothesis of a single imprisonment at Rome. Such declarations, where no doctrine or fact of Christianity is concerned, are not to be taken as revelations of the Spirit. We know, for example, from Paul's own words, that he changed his declared purpose respecting a visit to Corinth, for which his enemies accused him of using lightness. 2 Corinthians 1:15-18.

It is urged again that when Paul wrote the pastoral epistles Timothy was a young man. 1 Timothy 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:22. But according to ancient ideas one might be called a young man at any age under thirty-five or even forty years. Paul found Timothy in his second missionary journey, about A.D. 52. It is not necessary to assume that he was then more than twenty years old. At the time of Paul's martyrdom, then, about A.D. 67 or 68, he may have been, for anything that appears to the contrary, a young man in the ancient sense of the word.

36. The false teachers with whom the apostle deals in these epistles are corrupt in practice as well as in doctrine. 1 Timothy 1:6; 1 Timothy 6:5; 2 Timothy 2:16-17; 2 Timothy 3:6; 2 Timothy 3:8; Titus 1:15-16. They were chiefly Jews (1 Timothy 1:7; Titus 1:10; Titus 1:14; Titus 3:9); but not Jews who held to simple Phariseeism, like the false teachers among the Galatians. They more nearly resembled those who troubled the Colossians-Jews of a speculative turn of mind, who

sought to bring into Judaism the semi-oriental philosophy of that day. They were not Gnostics; for Gnosticism was essentially anti-Judaistic, separating the God of the Jews from the God of Christianity, and placing the two in antagonism to each other. The speculations of these false teachers took a direction which was in some respects akin to the Gnosticism of {478} the second century; but the allegation that they were themselves Gnostics rests upon the misinterpretation of certain passages in these epistles, or unwarrantable inferences from them.

37. The genuineness of these epistles is sustained by the unanimous testimony of the ancient church. Only in modern times has it been called in question by certain writers, who rest their arguments wholly on alleged internal evidence. So far as their objections are founded on the assumed early date of the pastoral epistles-before the close of Paul's imprisonment at Rome recorded by Luke, on their peculiar tone and diction, or on the supposed references in them to the Gnosticism of the second century, they have already been considered. But it is further alleged:

(1.) That they reveal a hierarchical spirit foreign to the character of the apostle Paul. The answer is that no trace of such a spirit is discernible in them. The churches had from the first their officers-bishops or elders and deacons; and the apostle simply gives the necessary directions for the selection of these, with a few brief hints respecting the line of conduct to be observed towards them. 1 Timothy 5:1; 1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Timothy 5:19; 1 Timothy 5:22.

(2.) That the institution of widows (1 Timothy 5:9-16) belongs to a later age. Respecting the exact position of those who were enrolled in the class of widows there have been different opinions. One is that this class consisted of those who were to receive relief from the funds of the church; another, that they were matrons set apart for special service in the church, performing for their own sex duties analogous to those which the presbyters performed for the church generally. The latter opinion is the more probable of the two, as it explains the conditions insisted on by the apostle. But according to either view there is no difficulty in admitting the existence in apostolic times of such an arrangement.

38. In these pastoral epistles we have the affectionate counsels of the great apostle to the Gentiles, when he was now ripe in years and Christian experience and about to close his earthly ministry, addressed to two young men whom the Holy Ghost had made overseers of the churches. They are a rich storehouse of instruction for all to whom God has committed the ministry of reconciliation. Let them, as they hope at last to render up an account of their stewardship with joy and not with grief, prayerfully study and reduce to daily practice these precepts of heavenly wisdom given by the Holy Spirit through the pen of "Paul the aged."

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39. The first epistle to Timothy.-The time of this epistle lies, as we have seen, beyond the recorded history of the apostle, and before his second and final imprisonment at Rome, perhaps about A.D. 65 or 66. It was addressed to Timothy at Ephesus not long after the apostle had left that city to go into Macedonia (chap. 1:3), but whether from Macedonia or some other province of the Roman empire cannot be determined. The occasion we learn from the epistle. Paul had left Timothy in charge of the Ephesian church, and, being apprehensive of a protracted absence, he sends him these written instructions relating partly to his own personal demeanor as a Christian minister, but chiefly to his office as the overseer of the Ephesian church. In the discharge of this office he is (1)

to withstand and keep down the growing heresies of the day; (2) to superintend the government of the church in various particulars which the apostle specifies. The contents of the epistle though not arranged in systematic order, are in harmony with its occasion and design. Into the first chapter, which is of an introductory character, the apostle, in the free intercourse of confiding affection, inserts a personal notice of himself, which breathes the spirit of devout gratitude and deep humility. He then proceeds to give directions pertaining to the public worship of God-prayer, the costume of women, and their place in the public assembly (chap. 2); and to the choice of bishops and deacons (chap. 3). After a digression in the fourth chapter respecting the character of the coming apostacy foretold by the Spirit, which is followed by admonitions to Timothy of a personal character, he proceeds in the fifth chapter to give directions respecting the appointment and treatment of elders, of the elder and younger women, and especially of widows, with personal counsel to Timothy. Then follows an admonition to servants, a notice of the false teachers, a warning to the rich with further counsels to Timothy, and an animating glance at the second coming of our Lord.

Eunice, the mother of Timothy, was a Jewess distinguished for her piety, as was also his grandmother Lois. Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5. By {480} them he was carefully trained in the knowledge of the holy Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15), and had a good reputation among the brethren when Paul found him at Derbe and Lystra (Acts 16:1-2). His father being a Greek, he had never been subjected to the rite of circumcision. But in consideration of his mixed descent Paul, to allay the prejudices of his countrymen, "took and circumcised him," while he would not allow this rite to be imposed on Titus, who was of unmixed Gentile origin. Timothy was one of the most trusty and beloved of Paul’s fellow-laborers, as we learn from these and his other epistles, and he naturally desired the comfort and help of his presence in his final imprisonment at Rome. 2 Timothy 4:9; 2 Timothy 4:21. His health was feeble (1 Timothy 5:23), and there are in Paul’s epistles some indications that he was naturally timid and diffident (1 Corinthians 16:10-11; 2 Timothy 1:7-8; 2 Timothy 2:3). But grace made him faithful to the end.

. The epistle to Titus which comes next in chronological order, has a remarkable agreement with the first to Timothy in both subject-matter and style. With the exception of what relates to widows and the demeanor of women in the public assemblies, it contains the same general precepts, with additional exhortations that young men be sober-minded, and that the Cretan Christians obey magistrates and be meek and gentle in their deportment. With these counsels the apostle interweaves, as in the first epistle to Timothy, exhortations to Titus of a personal character, and animating notices of God’s grace in the gospel and of the second coming of our Lord.

Respecting the founding of the Cretan churches we have no information in the Acts of the Apostles. The only time mentioned by Luke when Paul touched at Crete was on his voyage to Rome as a prisoner (Acts 27:8); and then he had neither time nor liberty for the work of preaching the gospel in that island. Crete contained many Jews, some of whom were present at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:11). The apostle’s visit to Crete referred to in this epistle we assume to have taken place between his first and second imprisonment at Rome. Whether the churches of the island were then founded for the first time or had previously existed, it is certain that Paul left them in an imperfect state of organization. For this reason he requested Titus to remain, that he might set in order the things that were wanting, and ordain elders in every city. Chap. 1:5.

It is remarkable that we have no notice of Titus in the Acts of the Apostles. From the epistles of Paul we learn that he was his companion in travel, and intrusted by him at different times with missions to the churches. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas to the so-called Council of the Apostles {481} and Elders at Jerusalem, where, being a Greek, he was exempted from the necessity of circumcision. Galatians 2:1; Galatians 2:3. For other notices of him see 2 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 7:6; 2 Corinthians 7:13-14; 2 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Corinthians 8:16; 2 Corinthians 8:23; 2 Corinthians 12:18. His stay in Crete was not to be permanent; for the apostle directs that upon the arrival from him of Artemas or Tychicus he should rejoin him at Nicopolis-probably Nicopolis in Epirus. Chap. 3:12.

41. Second Epistle to Timothy.-The first epistle to Timothy and that to Titus are in a certain sense official; that is, they are largely occupied with apostolic counsels and directions to these two men respecting the administration of the churches which Paul had committed to their care. The present epistle is of a more private and personal character. It was written from Rome when Paul was a prisoner there (chaps. 1:8, 16, 17; 2:9), and expecting soon to seal his testimony with his blood (chap. 4:6). In his extremity, when fidelity to him could be shown only at the hazard of life, many of his friends had forsaken him. Chaps. 1:15; 4:10. He needed the presence and help of Timothy, and wrote urging him to come speedily, and to bring certain articles which he had left at Troas. Feeling that his end was near, he improved the occasion to give Timothy his affectionate apostolic counsel and encouragement. Hence the present epistle differs strikingly in its preceptive part from the other two. They contain specific directions for ordaining officers and managing the affairs of the churches; for in them the apostle writes to men in charge of specific fields of labor. In the second epistle to Timothy, on the contrary, the apostle’s exhortations are general, for he is summoning him away from his particular field to give attendance upon himself at Rome. But all three of the pastoral epistles agree remarkably, as well in their general style and diction as in their description of existing errors and false teachers. It is generally thought that Timothy was at Ephesus; and with this opinion agrees the salutation to "the household of Onesiphorus," who was at Ephesus. Chap. 4:19 compared with 1:18. The words of chap. 4:12, however, "Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus," do not favor this supposition. Hence some have thought that {482} Timothy was not in that city, but only in its vicinity. The present is undoubtedly the last of Paul’s epistles in the order of time. As such we cannot but peruse it with solemnity, as the closing testimony of one who has fought the good fight, finished the appointed course, and kept the faith; and who here instructs all, especially all preachers of the gospel, how they may do the same. "And thus we possess an epistle calculated for all ages of the church; and in which while the maxims cited and encouragements given apply to all Christians, and especially ministers of Christ, in their duties and difficulties-the affecting circumstances in which the writer himself is placed carry home to every heart his earnest and impassioned eloquence." Alford, Introduction to 2 Timothy.

VIII. EPISTLE TO THE Hebrews 42. In regard to the authorship of this epistle biblical scholars are not agreed. Each of the thirteen preceding epistles bears the name of Paul. But the present epistle is without either name or address, and it omits also at the beginning the apostolic salutation. Thus it commences in the form of an essay, though it closes in that of an epistle. These circumstances, in connection with its peculiar style and diction and the peculiar range of the topics discussed in it, have produced a diversity of opinion on the question whether Paul was its author, at least its author in the immediate sense in which he was the author of the preceding epistles. For the full

discussion of the arguments on both sides the reader must be referred to the commentaries, some of which are accessible to all. Our limits will only permit us to indicate certain facts and principles which have a bearing on the authorship of the epistle and its canonical authority. The unanimous belief of the Eastern church, where we must suppose that it was first received and whence the knowledge of it was spread abroad, ascribed it to Paul as its author either immediately or virtually; for some, as Origen (in Eusebius' Hist. Ecclesiastes, 6. 14) accounted for its peculiar diction by the supposition {483} that Paul furnished the thoughts, while they were reduced to form by the pen of some other person. Another opinion was that Paul wrote in Hebrew, and that our present canonical epistle is a translation into Greek (Eusebius' Hist. Ecclesiastes, 3. 38; Clement of Alexandria in Eusebius' Hist. Ecclesiastes, 6. 14). In the Western church Clement of Rome did indeed refer to the epistle as authoritative, but without naming the author. Yet its Pauline authorship was not generally admitted, nor was it received as a part of the sacred canon till the fourth century, when here too the opinion of the Eastern church was adopted. The Muratorian canon, which represents the belief of the Western church before the fourth century, omits this epistle. The Syriac Peshito, on the other hand, inserts it in accordance with its uniform reception by the Eastern church. This uniformity of belief in the Eastern church must have had for its starting point the Hebrews to whom the epistle was sent; and it is a strong argument for the supposition that it did originally come to them under the sanction of Paul's name and authority; whether dictated to an amanuensis, as were most of his epistles, or written with his knowledge and approbation by some inspired man among his attendants and fellow-laborers who was thoroughly conversant with his views on the subjects treated of in the epistle. This is as far as we have any occasion to go, since we know that the gift of inspiration was not confined to the circle of the apostles. As we cannot affirm that all who were associated with the apostles in the work of the ministry had the gifts needful for the composition of writings that should be given to the churches as the authoritative word of God, so neither can we deny to some the possession of these gifts, as is plain from the examples of Mark and Luke. When men who stood in the second grade of relation to Christ-apostolic men, as we may conveniently call them-composed their works, it is not necessary to assume that they wrote under a formal apostolic supervision. The "discerning of spirits" is a gift which we must concede to all of the apostles. If, then, an associate of one of the apostles had such relations to him and wrote in such circumstances that we cannot suppose it to have been done without his knowledge and approbation formal or implied, we have for his work all needful authority. What {484} further connection the apostle may have had with it in the way of suggestion or supervision is a question which we may well leave undetermined. In judging of this matter we consider first of all the testimony of the early churches, since they enjoyed the best means of ascertaining the origin of a writing; and then the character of the writing itself. Proceeding in this way we come to the full conviction of the canonical authority of the epistle to the Hebrews, whether we believe, with many, that Paul was its immediate author, or, with Origen, that "the ancients not without reason have handed it down as Paul's; but on the question who wrote the epistle God only knows the truth."

43. That the apostle wrote for the instruction of Jewish Christians is manifest. The uniform tenor of the epistle indicates, moreover, that they were Jewish Christians without any admixture of a Gentile element. The salutations at the end further imply that the epistle addresses not Hebrew Christians in general, but some particular community of them, which is most naturally to be sought in Palestine, perhaps in Jerusalem. As to the time of the epistle, the manner in which it refers to

the temple and its services makes it certain that the author wrote before the overthrow of Jerusalem, that is, before A.D. 70. The arguments adduced to show that Paul was its author, either immediately or virtually, carry it back beyond A.D. 67 or 68, when, according to ancient tradition, the apostle suffered martyrdom. It was probably written not many years before that event; but a more exact determination of the time is impossible. According to the most probable interpretation of chap. 13:24, the epistle was written from Italy. But that Timothy was not the bearer of it, as the subscription states, is plain from the preceding verse, in which he conditionally promises to come with Timothy at a future time. The references in the epistle to the Levitical priesthood and the temple services connected with it are in the present or perfect tenses-"is ordained," "is encompassed," "he ought," "taketh this honor," "have a commandment to take tithes" "receive tithes" "hath given attendance at the altar" (chap. 7:13), "have become" (chap. 7:21, 23), "maketh men high priests," "who serve," "hath made the first old" (the references in chap. 9:1-5 are to the ancient tabernacle), "enter always into the first tabernacle" (chap. 9:6), "which he offers" (verse 7), "the Holy Ghost this signifying that the {485} way into the holiest places has not yet been made manifest, while the first tabernacle is as yet standing" (verse 8), "gifts and sacrifices are offered" (verse 9), "sanctifieth," "are by the law purged," "can never," "standeth." It is to be regretted that our version has not in all cases observed this distinction of tenses.

44. The central theme of this book is the superiority of the Christian over the Mosaic dispensation considered on the side of its divine Mediator and High-priest. In unfolding this great theme the writer dwells on the glory and dignity of Christ’s person in contrast with the ancient prophets, with the angels, and with Moses, all of whom were connected with the first economy. He then proceeds to exhibit the divine efficacy of Christ’s priesthood. This is the substance, of which the Levitical priesthood, with its altar, its offerings and all the temple-services connected with it, was only the shadow. In no book of the New Testament is our Lord’s priestly office set forth with such fullness and rich variety of illustrations, always with reference to its divinely appointed type, the Levitical priesthood. This was especially needful to fortify the Hebrew Christians, who had been educated and lived under the constant impression of the splendid Mosaic ritual with its magnificent temple, against the danger of being turned from the simplicity of the gospel to reliance on the "carnal ordinances" of Judaism, which would have been virtual apostacy from Christ. This magnificent epistle constitutes in some sense a solemn requiem to the old temple service with its altar and priesthood, where the blood of bulls and goats that can never take away sin had flowed for so many centuries. This service had accomplished its end in prefiguring Christ the true "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," and it was destined soon to pass away forever "with tumult, with shouting, with the sound of the trumpet"-to pass away forever, that men might give their undivided faith to Christ, our great High-priest, who ministers for us in the heavenly tabernacle, presenting there before his Father’s throne his own blood shed on Calvary to make propitiation for the sins of the world.

{486} To the argumentative part of this epistle are appended exhortations (partly, indeed, anticipated in the preceding part) to constancy in the Christian profession, drawn from the awful doom that awaits apostates, from the examples of faith furnished by ancient worthies, and especially from the example of Christ himself and the glorious fellowship to which his gospel introduces us. To these are added some admonitions of a more special character. Thus the present epistle performs an office in the general system of revelation which is supplied by no other

book of the Old or New Testament. To the book of Leviticus it may be said to hold the relation of substance to shadow, and it is its divinely appointed expositor.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin] [BibleAuthenticity]

31. The Catholic Epistles

CHAPTER XXXI. THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES.

1. Seven epistles, that of James and the six that follow, are called Catholic, that is, general or universal, as not being directed to any particular church. They were not all, however, addressed originally to believers generally, but some of them to particular classes of believers, or even to individuals, as the introductory words show.

I. EPISTLE OFJames 2:1-26. The question respecting the person of James who wrote this epistle is one of great difficulty. That "James the Lord's brother," whom Paul names as one of the apostles (Galatians 1:19), is identical with the James mentioned by Luke in Acts 12:17; Acts 15:13; Acts 21:18, and is the author of the present epistle, is admitted by most writers, though not by all. That this James of Galatians 1:19 was the James who is named with Joses, Simon, and Judas, as one of our Lord's brethren (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3), must be received as certain. But whether he was identical with "James the son of Alpheus," who was one of the twelve (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13), is a question which has been much discussed and on which eminent biblical scholars are found arrayed on opposite sides. The question turns very much on the interpretation of the words "brother," and "brethren" and "sisters," in the passages above referred to. If we take them in their literal sense, as some do, then James the son of Alpheus and James the Lord's brother are different persons. But others understand them in the general sense of kindred or cousins, believing that our Saviour was the only child of Mary. A statement at length of the arguments {488} and objections that are urged on both sides does not come within the compass of the present work. Nor is it necessary. The author of the present epistle is beyond all reasonable doubt the James who gave the final opinion in the assembly of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem (Acts 15:13-21), whom Paul names with Cephas and John as one of the "pillars" there (Galatians 2:9), and who elsewhere appears as a man of commanding influence in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 21:18; Galatians 2:12). If any one doubts his identity with James the son of Alpheus, who was one of the twelve, this cannot affect the canonical authority of the epistle. The position of this James in the church at Jerusalem and his relation to the apostolic college is such that, even upon the supposition that he did not belong to the number of the twelve, his writings must have to us the full weight of apostolic authority. See above chap. 30, No. 42.

3. The place where this epistle was written was manifestly Jerusalem, where James always resided; and the persons addressed are "the twelve tribes who are in the dispersion" (chap. 1:1); that is, as the nature of the case and the tenor of the epistle make manifest, that part of them who had embraced Christianity. There is no allusion in the epistle to Gentile believers. The dispersion is a technical term for the Jews living out of Palestine among the Gentiles. We need not hesitate to understand it here literally. The apostle wrote to his Jewish brethren of the dispersion because he could not visit them and superintend their affairs as he could those of the Jewish Christians in and around Jerusalem. Some take the term in a wider sense of the Jewish Christians scattered abroad in and out of Palestine, but this is not necessary.

4. With regard to the date of this epistle also different opinions are held. Some place it early in the history of the church-earlier, in fact, than any other of the apostolic epistles-before the origin of the controversy respecting circumcision and the Mosaic law recorded in Acts, chap. 15; others quite late, not long before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. The latter view best agrees with the contents of the epistle. The {489} doctrine of justification by faith, for which Paul had contended, would naturally be abused precisely in the way here indicated, by the substitution of a barren speculative faith, for the true faith that works by love and purifies the heart and life from sin. The age preceding the destruction of Jerusalem was one of abounding wickedness, especially in the form of strife and faction. It had been predicted by our Lord that the effect of this would be to chill the love of many of his visible followers and withdraw them from his service. In truth the descriptions of these unworthy members of the Jewish Christian community which we find in this epistle, in the second of Peter, and in that of Jude, are but the realization, in most particulars, of the state of things foretold in the following remarkable words of the Saviour: "And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Matthew 24:10-13.

5. For the genuineness and canonical authority of the present epistle we have a very important testimony in the Old Syriac version (Peshito), which represents the judgment of the Eastern churches where the epistle was originally circulated. The remaining testimonies prior to the fourth century are scanty and some of them not very decisive. They may be all seen in Davidson’s Introduction to the New Testament, and in the critical commentaries generally.

It cannot be reasonably doubted that the words of Irenæus, "Abraham himself, without circumcision and without the observance of Sabbaths, believed in God, and it was counted to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God" (Against Heresies, 4.30), refer to James 2:23. Origen quotes the epistle as "current under the name of James," and intimates that some did not acknowledge its apostolic authority. But he elsewhere cites it as that of "James the Lord’s brother," "the apostle James," "the apostle," and simply "James." See in Kirchhofer Quellensamlung, pp. 263, 264. Eusebius reckons the epistle among the books that were "disputed, but known nevertheless to many." Hist. Ecclesiastes, 3, 25. Elsewhere he says: "It is regarded as spurious; at least not many of the ancients {490} have made mention of it." Hist. Ecclesiastes, 2. 23. But these words cannot be regarded as expressing Eusebius’ own opinion; for he himself quotes him as "the holy apostle," and his words as "Scripture." See in Davidson’s Introduction to the New Testament, vol. 3, p. 336; Kirchhofer Quellensamlung, p. 264. In the course of the fourth century the canonical authority of this epistle was gradually more and more acknowledged, and in the fifth its reception in the churches of both the East and the West became universal.

"This is just what we might expect: a writing little known at first, obtains a more general circulation, and the knowledge of the writing and its reception go almost together. The contents entirely befit the antiquity which the writing claims; no evidence could be given for rejecting it; it differs in its whole nature from the foolish and spurious writings put forth in the name of this James; and thus its gradual reception is to be accounted for from its having, from early times, been known by some to be genuine (as shown by the Syraic version), and this knowledge being afterwards spread more widely." Tregelles in Horne, vol. 4, chap. 25. Davidson suggests that differences of opinion and

perplexities respecting the number of the persons called James in the apostolic period, and the relation they bore to one another, and also the fact that the epistle was addressed solely to Jewish Christians, may have made its early circulation comparatively limited. Perhaps we may also add, as he does, its apparent contrariety to the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith, but this is by no means certain.

6. This epistle is eminently practical. If any part of it can be called argumentative, it is that in which the apostle shows that "faith without works is dead." Chap. 2:14-26. The sins which he rebukes with such graphic vividness and power were all preëminently the sins of his countrymen at that age-hearing God's word without doing it, resting in an empty faith that does not influence the life, inordinate love of worldly possessions and a self-confident spirit in the pursuit of them, wanton revelling in worldly pleasures, partiality towards the rich and contempt of the poor, defrauding the poor of their wages, ambition to assume the office of teaching, censoriousness, a lawless and slanderous tongue, bitter envying and strife, mutual grudging and murmuring, wars and fightings; all these with an {491} unbelieving and complaining spirit towards God. But these are not merely Jewish vices. They are deeply rooted in man's fallen nature, and many a nominal Christian community of our day may see its own image by looking into the mirror of this epistle. The alleged disagreement between Paul and James is unfounded. Paul's object is to show that the ground of men's justification is faith in Christ, and not the merit of their good works. The object of James is to show that faith without good works, like the body without the spirit, is dead. Paul argues against dead works; James against dead faith. Here we have no contradiction, but only two different views of truth that are in entire harmony with each other, and both of which are essential to true godliness.

II. EPISTLES OF PETER.

7. The First Epistle of Peter was unanimously received by the primitive church as the genuine work of the man whose name it bears. Polycarp, in his epistle to the Philippians, made numerous citations from it. It was also referred to by Papias, according to the testimony of Eusebius. Hist. Ecclesiastes 3. 39. Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, etc. all quote it expressly. It is found in the Syriac Peshito version which contains but three of the catholic epistles. It is wanting in the Muratorian canon, but to this circumstance much weight cannot be attached when we consider how dark and confused is the passage referring to the catholic epistles.

8. The readers addressed in the epistle are "the elect sojourners of the dispersion, of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," all provinces of Asia Minor. The words "sojourners"-or "strangers" as rendered in our English version-and "dispersion" are both the appropriate terms for the Jews living in dispersion. That the apostle, in an introduction of this kind, should have used the word "sojourners" in a simply figurative sense, to describe Christians as "pilgrims and strangers on the earth," is very improbable, especially in immediate {492} connection with the word "dispersion," which must be understood literally. We must rather understand the apostle as recognizing in the Christian churches scattered throughout the world the true "Israel of God," having for its framework the believing portion of the covenant people, into which the Gentile Christians had been introduced through faith, and thus made the children of Abraham. Compare Romans 4:12-17; Galatians 3:7-9; and especially Romans 11:17-24. Hence it comes to pass that while Peter addresses them as the ancient people of God, he yet includes Gentile Christians in his exhortations, as is manifest from

various passages, especially from chap. 4:3.

9. According to chap. 5:13 the place from which this epistle was written was Babylon. No valid reason exists why we should not understand here the literal Babylon. The old opinion that the apostle used the word enigmatically to signify Rome is nothing more than a conjecture in itself improbable. It has been urged not without reason that Peter names the provinces of Asia Minor in the order which would be natural to one writing from Babylon; naming Pontus first, which lay nearest to Babylon, and Asia and Bithynia, which were the most remote, last. The question of the date of this epistle is connected with that of its occasion. This seems to have been a "fiery trial" of persecution that had already begun to come upon the Christians of the provinces named in the introductory address. Chaps. 1:6, 7; 2:12, 19, 20; 3:14, 16, 17; 4:1, 12-19; 5:9, 10. The exact date and character of this persecution cannot be determined. The majority of commentators assign it to the latter years of Nero's reign, which ended A.D. 68. The second epistle of Peter was written not long before the apostle's death, and after the epistles of Paul had become generally known in Asia Minor. As we cannot reasonably separate the two epistles by a great space of time (see below, No. 11), we infer that the first was written after Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, say somewhere between A.D. 63 and 67.

10. The general tone of the first epistle is in harmony with its occasion. The apostle seeks to animate and strengthen his {493} brethren in view of the "fiery trial" of persecution that had already begun to come upon them. To this end he sets before them in glowing language the greatness and glory of the heavenly inheritance in reserve for them, which was purchased by the precious blood of Christ, and the dignity and blessedness of suffering for Christ's sake, with the assurance of God's faithful presence and protection. With these encouragements he intermingles admonitions suited to their circumstances. He exhorts them as strangers and pilgrims to abstain from fleshly lusts and all the other vices of their former life in ignorance; to commend their religion by a holy deportment which shall put to shame the calumnies of their adversaries; to perform faithfully all the duties of their several stations in life; to be humble, sober, vigilant, and ready always to give a reason of their Christian hope; and above all things to have fervent charity among themselves. The fervent spirit of the great apostle of the circumcision, chastened and mellowed by age, shines forth conspicuously in this epistle. The closing chapter, where he addresses first the elders, then the younger, then the whole body of believers, charms the reader by the holy tranquillity which pervades it throughout-a tranquillity deeply grounded in that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

11. The second epistle of Peter. The address of this epistle is general (chap. 1:1); yet the reference which it contains to the first (chap. 3:1) shows that the apostle had in mind primarily the same circle of churches. The character of this reference-"This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you, in which [two epistles] I stir up your pure minds by way of reminding [you]"-indicates that the second was not separated from the first by a very great space of time, certainly not many years. The apostle wrote with the conviction that his decease was near at hand (chap. 1:13-15). There is a tradition, the correctness of which, however, is doubted by many, that he suffered martyrdom at Rome under the persecution raised by Nero against the Christians. This would be about {494} A.D. 67. As to the place from which the epistle was written we have no information.

12. The present epistle is one of the disputed books. Chap. 5, No. 7, and Chap. 6. The question respecting its genuineness may be conveniently considered under the two heads of external and internal evidence. The external testimony to the present epistle is scanty. Passing by some doubtful references we come first to Origen who says (in Eusebius, Hist. Ecclesiastes, 6. 25): "But Peter, upon whom is built the church of Christ, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, has left one acknowledged epistle; a second also, if you will, for it is doubted of." In those of his works which are extant only in the Latin version of Rufinus, Origen in a number of passages quotes the present epistle as Scripture. It has been suspected that these passages were interpolated by Rufinus, who took many liberties with the text of Origen; but one of them, which occurs at the beginning of his seventh homily on Joshua, is so peculiar that we cannot well doubt that Origen himself was its author. In allusion to the procession of priests blowing with trumpets when the Israelites compassed the walls of Jericho (Josh. chap. 6), he compares the writers of the New Testament to so many sacerdotal trumpeters, assigning to them trumpets for each book, and mentioning every book, as well the disputed as the acknowledged: "First Matthew in his gospel, gave a blast with his sacerdotal trumpet. Mark also, Luke, and John, sounded with their single sacerdotal trumpets. Peter also sounds aloud with the two trumpets of his epistles; James also, and Jude. But John adds yet again to blow with the trumpet through his epistles and Apocalypse; Luke, also, narrating the Acts of the Apostles. But last of all that man came, who said: 'I think that God has set forth us apostles last,' and thundering with the fourteen trumpets of his epistles, overthrew to their foundations the walls of Jericho, and all the engines of idolatry and dogmas of philosophers." The "epistles" through which the apostle John sounds are obviously his three epistles. The "fourteen trumpets" upon which Paul blows include the epistle to the Hebrews. In this remarkable passage, then, we have an exhaustive list of our present canonical books; and there is no ground for imputing any interpolation to the translator. It may be said, indeed, that this enumeration of the books of the New Testament is made in a popular way, and does not imply Origen's deliberate judgment that they were all of apostolic authority. If this be granted, it still remains evident from the form of the passage that all the books of our present canon were in current ecclesiastical use in Origen's day, whatever doubts he may have had respecting some of them, and that they constituted, along with the writings of the Old Testament, that whole {495} of divine revelation which the Christian churches employed in assaulting the kingdom of Satan. The testimony of Eusebius himself is of the same general import as that of Origen-that the first epistle of Peter has been universally acknowledged; but that the one current as the second has not been received as a part of the New Testament; but yet, appearing useful to many, has been studied with the other Scriptures (Hist. Ecclesiastes, 3. 3); that among the writings which are disputed, yet known to many, are the epistles current as those of James and Jude, and the second epistle of Peter (Hist. Ecclesiastes, 3. 25).

Jerome says that Peter "wrote two epistles that are called catholic, of which the second is denied by most persons on account of its disagreement in style with the first." Scrip. Ecclesiastes 1:1-18. But he himself received the epistle, and explained the difference in style and character and structure of words by the assumption that Peter used different interpreters in the composition of the two epistles (Epist. 120 ad Hedib., chap. 11); and from his time onward the epistle was generally regarded as a part of the New Testament. The reader who wishes to investigate farther the question of external testimonies will find them all given in Davidson's Introduct. to New Test.; and Alford's Commentary, Introduction to 2 Peter. We simply repeat the remark already made

(Chap. 6, No. 3) that although the universal and undisputed reception of a book by all the early churches cannot be explained except on the assumption of its genuineness, its non-reception by some is no conclusive argument against it. It may have remained (as seems to have been peculiarly the case with some of the catholic epistles) for a considerable period in obscurity. When it began to be more extensively known, the general reception and use of it would be a slow process both from the difficulty of communication in ancient as compared with modern times, and especially from the slowness and hesitancy with which the churches of one region received anything new that came from another region. Chap. 2, No. 5. Jerome does indeed mention the objection from the difference of style between this epistle and the first of Peter; but it is doubtful whether in this matter he speaks for the early churches generally. The obscurity in which the epistle had remained, partly at least because it was not addressed to the guardianship of any particular church, seems to have been the chief ground of doubt. The internal testimony for and against the genuineness of this epistle has been discussed at great length by many writers. The reader will find good summaries of them in the two works above referred to, also in the critical commentaries generally and the modern Bible dictionaries. If one would come to true results in this field of investigation it is important that he begin with true principles. There are what may be called staple peculiarities, {496} which mark the style of one writer as compared with that of another-that of John, for example, in contrast with that of Paul. We cannot conceive of these as being wanting. But then we must allow to one and the same writer a considerable range of variation in style and diction, dependent partly on difference of subject matter, and partly on varying frames of mind of which no definite account can be given. If one would be convinced of this, he has only to read side by side the epistle of Paul to the Romans and his second to the Corinthians. Reserving now the second chapter of the present epistle for separate consideration, we do not find in the two remaining chapters, as compared with the first epistle, any such fundamental differences of style and diction as can constitute a just ground for denying the common authorship of the two epistles. For the particulars, as well as for the examination of other objections of an internal character, the reader must be referred to the sources above named. It is certainly remarkable that Peter should refer to the writings of Paul in such terms as to class them with the "Scriptures" of the Old Testament. Chap. 3:16. But, as Alford remarks, this implies not that the canon of the New Testament had been settled when the present epistle was written, but only that "there were certain writings by Christian teachers, which were reckoned on a level with the Old Testament Scriptures, and called by the same name. And that that was not the case, even in the traditional lifetime of Peter, it would be surely unreasonable to deny." We close this part of the discussion with the following words from the same author: "Our general conclusion from all that has preceded must be in favor of the genuineness and canonicity of this second epistle; acknowledging at the same time, that the subject is not without considerable difficulty. That difficulty however is lightened for us by observing that on the one hand, it is common to this epistle with some others of those called catholic, and several of the later writings of the New Testament; and on the other, that no difference can be imagined more markedly distinctive, than that which separates all those writings from even the earliest and best of the post-apostolic period. Our epistle is one of those latter fruits of the great outpouring of the Spirit on the apostles, which, not being intrusted to the custody of any one church or individual, required some considerable time to become generally known; which when known, were suspected, bearing, as they necessarily did traces of their late origin, and notes of polemical argument; but of which as apostolic and inspired writings, there never was, when

once they became known, any general doubt; and which, as the sacred canon became fixed, acquired, and have since maintained, their due and providential place among the books of the New Testament."

13. The object of the present epistle is to warn believers against being led away with the error of the wicked so as to {497} fall from their own steadfastness. Chap. 3:17. It contains accordingly extended notices of the gross errors in doctrine and morals which, as we know from the New Testament, abounded in the Christian church near the close of the apostolic period. The second chapter, which is occupied with a vivid description of the false teachers that had "crept in unawares" (chap. 2:1; Jude 1:4), is very peculiar in its contents; and its agreement with the epistle of Jude is of such a character as leads to the inference that the two writings are somehow connected with each other. It has been supposed that both writers drew from a common source unknown to us. More probable is the opinion that one of them had in view the words of the other. A comparison of the two writings will perhaps lead to the belief that Jude’s was the original, though on this point biblical scholars differ. It matters not to us whether, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Peter employed, in a free and independent way, the words of Jude, or Jude those of Peter. Upon either supposition his writing is as much inspired as if he had written independently. The most prominent idea of Peter’s first epistle is patience and steadfastness in the endurance of suffering for Christ’s sake; that of this second epistle is caution against the seductions of false teachers. Thus each epistle fills an important place in the entire economy of revelation.

III. EPISTLES OFJohn 14:1-31. The first epistle of John bears throughout the impress of its authorship. That it was written by the same man who wrote the fourth gospel is too evident to be reasonably controverted. On this ground alone its genuineness and authenticity may be regarded as established on a firm basis. But the external testimonies to its authorship are also abundant from Polycarp, the disciple of the apostle, and onward. It is unnecessary to enumerate them. In respect to the date of this epistle we have no certain knowledge. The common opinion is that it was written after the gospel, and towards the close of the first century. With this supposition the contents agree. It contains {498} the affectionate counsel of an aged apostle to his younger brethren, whom he addresses as his "little children." He writes, moreover, in "the last time," when, according to the prediction of our Lord and his apostles, many antichrists and false prophets are abroad in the world (chaps. 2:18; 4:1-3), and there are some who deny that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh (chap. 4:2, 3). As to the place of the apostle’s writing, if we follow ancient tradition, which makes Ephesus his home in his old age, we may well believe that he wrote from that city, and that the epistle was addressed primarily to the circle of churches which had Ephesus for a centre.

Some of the ancients refer to the present epistle as written to the Parthians. But this is a very improbable assumption, and rests apparently on some mistake. The apostle evidently writes to those who are under his spiritual care; and these are not the Parthians, but the Christians of Asia, to whom also the seven letters of the Apocalypse are addressed.

15. The epistle has unity throughout, but not the unity of systematic logical arrangement. Its unity consists rather in the fact that all its thoughts revolve around one great central truth, the incarnation of the Son of God in the person of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world. With this truth he begins, and he affirms it authoritatively, as one of the primitive apostolic witnesses: "That

which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." Chaps. 1:3; 4:6. He guards it also against perversion, when he insists upon the reality of our Lord's incarnation: "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God" (chap. 4:2, 3), words which are with good reason understood as referring to a very ancient form of error, that of the Docet[oe], who maintained that the Son of God had not a real, but only an apparent body. The reception through faith of this great truth, that the Son of God has come in the flesh for man's salvation, brings us into blissful union and communion with the Father and the Son, and thus into the possession of sonship and eternal life. Chaps. 1:3; 3:1, 2; 4:15; 5:1, 13, 20. The rejection {499} of this truth is the rejection of God's own testimony concerning his Son (chaps. 2:22; 5:9, 10), and thus the rejection of eternal life; for out of Christ, the Son of God, there is no life (chap. 5:11, 12). But this reception of Christ is not a matter of mere theoretic belief. It is a practical coming to the Father and the Son, and a holy union with them. The proof of such union with God and Christ is likeness to God and obedience to God's commandments. They who profess to know God and to be in him, while they walk in darkness and allow themselves in sin, are liars and the truth is not in them. Chaps. 1:5-7; 2:4-6; 3:5-10, 24; 5:4, 5, 18. The sum of all God's attributes is love; and the sum of Christian character is love also. Chap. 4:16. But there can be no true love towards God where there is none towards the brethren; and such love must manifest itself "not in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." Chaps. 3:11-18; 4:7-11, 20, 21; 5:1. He that loves his brother abides in the light; but he that hates him abides in darkness and death. Chaps. 2:9-11; 3:14, 15. All believers have an abiding unction of the Spirit, which enables them to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and keeps them from the seductions of the many antichrists that are abroad. Chap. 2:18-27. Such true believers, whose hearts are filled with love, are raised above fear, and have confidence in prayer, and may look forward with joyful confidence to the day of judgment. Chaps. 2:28; 3:18-20; 4:17, 18; 5:14, 15. These fundamental truths the apostle reiterates in various forms and connections, intermingling with them various admonitions and promises of a more particular character. He dwells with especial fulness on the evidences of discipleship as manifested in the daily spirit and life. There is perhaps no part of God's word so directly available to the anxious inquirer who wishes to know what true religion is, and whether he possesses it. He who, in humble reliance on the illumination of the divine Spirit, applies to himself this touchstone of Christian character, will know whether he is of God, or of the world that lies in wickedness.

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16. Second and third epistles of John. These two short epistles are so closely related to each other in style and manner that they have always been regarded as written by one and the same person. In considering, therefore, the question of their authorship we take them both together. Though reckoned by Origen (in Eusebius' Hist. Ecclesiastes, 6. 25) and by Eusebius himself (Hist. Ecclesiastes, 3. 25; Demonstratio Evangel. 3. 5) among the disputed writings, the external testimony to their apostolic authorship is upon the whole satisfactory, embracing the names of Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Dionysius of Alexandria, Jerome, etc. When we take into account the small extent of these epistles it is plain that no unfavorable inference can be drawn from the silence of Tertullian and others. Nor is there any internal evidence against them. That the man who, in his gospel, studiously avoids the mention of his own name, describing himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and, in his first epistle, simply classes himself with the other

apostles-"that which we have seen and heard," etc.-should in these epistles, where some designation of himself was necessary, speak of himself as "the elder" is not surprising. Compare 1 Peter 5:1.

17. Concerning the date of these two epistles we know nothing. The object of the first seems to have been to set before the lady to whom it was addressed the importance of a discriminating love, which distinguishes between truth and falsehood, and does not allow itself to aid and abet error by misplaced kindness towards its teachers. In the second the apostle, writing to Gaius, commends to his hospitality, certain missionary brethren, who were strangers in the place where this disciple lived. It would seem that the design of these brethren was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles without charge; that he had in a former letter, commended them to the church where Gaius resided; but that Diotrephes had hindered their reception, and persecuted those who favored them.

Short as these epistles are, then, each of them contains {501} weighty instruction-the first, in reference to ill-timed kindness and liberality towards the teachers of error; the second, concerning the character and conduct of those who love to have the preeminence, and the abhorrence in which they ought to be held by all who love the purity and peace of the churches.

IV. EPISTLE OFJude 1:18. The writer of this epistle styles himself "the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James." Chap. 1:1. This James is undoubtedly the same man who held so conspicuous a place in the church at Jerusalem, and was the author of the epistle which bears his name. Whether Jude was an apostle, or an apostolic man, like Mark and Luke, depends upon the question respecting the relation which his brother James held to Christ, concerning which see the introduction to the epistle of James. In either case the canonical authority of the epistle holds good. The close relation between this epistle and the second chapter of Peter’s second epistle has already been noticed. See above, No. 13. It was probably anterior in time to that epistle, but not separated from it by a great number of years. If we may infer anything from the abundant use made by the writer of Jewish history and tradition, the persons addressed are Jewish Christians.

19. Eusebius classes this epistle also among the disputed writings (Hist. Ecclesiastes, 2. 23; 3. 25), yet the testimonies to its genuineness are ample-the Muratorian canon, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Jerome, etc.

It was objected to this epistle in ancient times that the writer quotes from the apocryphal book of Enoch (verses 14, 15). To this it may be answered-(1) that, if this be the case, Jude does not sanction the book of Enoch as a whole, but only this particular tradition embodied in it; (2) that the writer of the book of Enoch manifestly made use of a current tradition, and that, for anything that appears to the contrary, Jude may have availed himself of the same tradition, independently of the book of Enoch. That an inspired writer should refer to a traditional history not recorded in the Old Testament ought not to give offence. The apostle Paul does the same (2 Timothy 3:8-9); and Jude himself in another passage (verse 9).

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20. The design of the epistle Jude himself gives in explicit terms (verses 3, 4). It is to guard believers against the seductions of false teachers, corrupt in practice as well as doctrine; whose selfishness, sensuality, and avarice; whose vain-glorious, abusive, and schismatic spirit, he

describes in vivid language, denouncing upon them at the same time the awful judgment of God. The apostolic portraiture has not yet become antiquated in the history of Christ’s church.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin] [BibleAuthenticity]

32. The Apocalypse

CHAPTER XXXII. THE APOCALYPSE.

1. The word Apocalypse (Greek Apokalupsis) signifies Revelation, the title given to the book in our English version as well from its opening word as from its contents. Of all the writings of the New Testament that are classed by Eusebius among the disputed books (Antilegomena, chap. 5. 6), the apostolic authorship of this is sustained by the greatest amount of external evidence; so much so that Eusebius acknowledges it as doubtful whether it should be classed among the acknowledged or the disputed books.

It was known to Papias, to Melito bishop of Sardis, and to Theophilus of Antioch; is quoted as a part of Scripture by the churches of Vienne and Lyons in the last quarter of the second century; and is expressly ascribed to the apostle John by Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, the Muratorian canon, Hippolytus, Origen, Jerome, etc. The testimonies may be seen in Davidson's Introduction to the New Test., in Alford, and in the other works already frequently referred to. Eusebius, after giving a list of the acknowledged books, adds: "After these should be placed, if it be thought proper, the Revelation of John, concerning which we shall give the opinions at the proper time." Then, at the end of a list of the disputed and rejected books he adds: "And moreover, as I said, the Revelation of John, if it be thought proper, which some, as I said, reject, but others reckon among the acknowledged books" (Hist. Ecclesiastes, 3. 25); and again, after mentioning with approbation the account of those who said that there were at Ephesus two who bore the name of John (John the apostle, and the so-called presbyter John), he adds: "For it is probable that the second, if any one be not willing to allow that it was the first, saw the Revelation current under the name of John" (Hist. Ecclesiastes, 3. 39). Those who denied the apostolic authorship of the book generally referred it to this latter, John the presbyter. So Dionysius of Alexandria and others. But for this they adduced no historic proof. Their arguments were drawn wholly from considerations relating to its internal character, especially in the case of some, its supposed millenarian views. Upon any fair principle of {504} judging, we must concede that the apostolic authorship of this book is sustained by a mass of ancient testimony not rebutted by any contrary testimony which rests on a historic basis.

2. In modern, as in ancient times, the main arguments against the apostolic authorship of the Apocalypse have been drawn from its internal character, especially as contrasted with that of the fourth gospel and the first epistle of John. On this ground the assaults upon the book have been many and strong, and they have been met with vigorous resistance. To review the arguments on both sides would exceed our limits. Many of them, moreover, presuppose a knowledge of the original languages of both the Old and the New Testament. We can only indicate some considerations of a general nature.

(1.) No valid argument against the apostolic authorship of this book can be drawn from the fact that the writer specifies his name in the introduction and elsewhere. Chaps. 1:1, 4, 9; 21:2; 22:8. It may surprise us that the man who studiously avoids mentioning his name in the fourth gospel, and

who describes himself in his second and third epistles as "the elder," should here directly introduce his name at the beginning and in the progress of the book. But for this difference he may have had a good reason, whether we can discover it or not. The direct command, addressed to him personally, that he should write down his visions and send them to the seven churches of Asia would seem to imply the propriety, if not the necessity, of his connecting his own name with the record of them. He addressed the churches immediately and authoritatively in the name of the risen and glorified Saviour. What more natural and proper than that he should inform them directly who he was that had received this heavenly message.

(2.) The doctrinal views of the Apocalypse afford no argument against its apostolic authorship. The writer, it is true, moves to a great extent in a new and peculiar sphere of truth; but there is nothing in it contradictory to the teachings of John's gospel and epistles. On the contrary, the great central truths that relate to Christ's person and office are in perfect harmony with those teachings.

(3.) The spirit of the Apocalypse is not contradictory to that of the gospel and epistles. A writer in Alexander's Kitto says: "Quiet contemplation has full scope in the evangelist; mildness and love find utterance in affectionate discourse. But the spirit of the apocalyptist is stern and revengeful, with cutting reproofs, calls to repentance, commands and threatenings." The answer to all this is that, just as the human body has bones and muscles as well as fluids and soft tissues, so the mediatorial government {505} of Christ has a stern as well as a mild side; and that the very nature of the visions contained in the apocalypse gives prominence to this side.

(4.) The main objections are based on diversity of style and diction. Notwithstanding all the true points of resemblance in this respect that have been adduced by various writers, the difference between the Apocalypse, on the one hand, and the gospel and epistles of John, on the other, is very striking. But here we must take into account, first of all, the great difference in the subject-matter, which naturally brings a corresponding difference of language. Next, the difference in the mode of divine communication. The gospel and epistles were written under that constant tranquil illumination of the Holy Spirit which all the apostles enjoyed. The subject-matter of the Apocalypse was given in direct vision-much of it, moreover, through the medium of oral address. To one who believes in the reality of the revelations here recorded it is vain that an opponent urge the difference in style between the first epistle of John and the epistles to the seven churches of Asia; since these latter are expressed in the very words of Christ. Inseparably connected with the peculiar mode of revelation in the Apocalypse are the peculiar mental state and circumstances in which the apostle wrote. He composed the gospel and epistles in the calmness of tranquil contemplation and reminiscences of the past. The visions of the Apocalypse he received "in the Spirit" (chap. 1:10; 4:2); that is, in a state of ecstacy; and, according to the plain language of the book, he wrote them down at the time, beginning, as we must suppose, with the second chapter, the introductory chapter and some closing remarks having been added afterwards. The direction: "What thou seest write in a book" (chap. 1:11, 19), does not indeed imply that he should write upon the spot; but that he did so is plainly indicated elsewhere: "When the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not" (chap. 10:4). In entire harmony with this is another passage: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth," etc. (chap. 14:13); that is, "Write down now these words of comfort." The apostle, therefore, wrote down his visions one after another immediately

after they were received. When he wrote he was not in a state of unconsciousness, but of mental and spiritual exaltation above his ordinary condition. To affirm that he could not have received this series of visions without being deprived of the capacity to record them at the time, would be to limit the modes of divine revelation by our ignorance. If we cannot understand how the apostle could hear "in the Spirit" the voices of the seven thunders, and immediately prepare to write down their utterances, we ought, at least, reverently to receive the fact as stated by him. To expect from one writing in such circumstances careful attention to the rules {506} of Greek syntax and the idioms of the Greek language would be absurd. Undoubtedly Plato in a like situation would have written pure Attic Greek, because that would have been to him the most natural mode of writing. But the Galilean fisherman, a Jew by birth and education, fell back upon the Hebrew idioms with which he was so familiar. Finally we must remember that, after the analogy of the Old Testament prophecies, this prophetic book is expressed in poetic diction. It is full of images borrowed from the old Hebrew prophets, often spiritualized and applied in a higher sense. Looking to the imagery alone, one may well call this book a grand anthology of the old Hebrew poets. But the poetic diction of one and the same writer may differ widely from his prose style, as we see in the case of Moses, Isaiah, and Jeremiah.

If the above considerations do not wholly remove the difficulty under consideration they greatly relieve it. The apostolic authorship of the fourth gospel and the first epistle of John is sustained by a mass of evidence that cannot be set aside. That the same John also wrote the visions of the Apocalypse is attested, as we have seen, by the almost unanimous voice of antiquity. Far greater difficulties are involved in the denial of the ancient tradition of the church than in the admission of it.

3. The date of the Apocalypse has been a matter of much discussion, the great question being whether it was written before or after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. The external testimony strongly preponderates on the side of a late date; for the great body of this tradition represents the banishment of the apostle to the isle of Patmos as having taken place under Domitian who succeeded Titus, and reigned from A.D. 81 to 96. This supposition also agrees with the fact that the recipients of our Lord’s seven messages (chaps. 2, 3) are the seven churches of Proconsular Asia, among whom, according to the unanimous testimony of the primitive church, the apostle spent the latter years of his life. The hypothesis of an earlier date is but feebly supported by external testimony. It rests mainly on the alleged reference of the writer to the overthrow of Jerusalem as an event yet future, and as being the main subject of the prophesies contained in the book. But this reference has never been clearly established, and is contradicted by the general analogy of prophecy, by the contents of the book, and by its manifest relation to the prophecies of Daniel. A {507} few only of the briefer prophetic books, as those of Jonah and Nahum, confine themselves to one particular event lying in the near future. All the more extended among them, and many of the shorter, look forward undeniably to the distant future. The book of Daniel can be interpreted only as containing a great scheme of prophecy stretching forward into the distant future, and with this the revelation of John has the closest connection. The place where the revelation was received was the isle of Patmos, one of the group called Sporades in the Ægean sea off the southwestern corner of Asia Minor, where the apostle represents himself to have been "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (chap. 1:9): that is, in accordance with ancient tradition, banished to that isle on account of the gospel.

4. For the interpretation of this book many and very discordant plans have been proposed. Setting aside at the outset all those schemes which do not find in the Apocalypse a view of the conflicts of Christ's people to the end of time and their final victory over their enemies, there remain two general principles of interpretation. The first may be called the generic principle. Those who adopt it inquire only after the general import of the symbols employed, without attempting any particular application of them to the history of the church in connection with that of the world. Thus, the white horse of the first seal (chap. 6:2) denotes in general the conquests of Christ through his gospel; the red horse of the second seal (chap 6:4), war and carnage, as accompanying the progress of the truth; and so on throughout the other symbols of the book. But when we come to the most important part of the prophecies, those concerning the two beasts (chap. 13), and that concerning the woman riding on the scarlet-colored beast (chap. 17), this principle utterly fails. It cannot be that so many specific and very peculiar marks mean only persecuting powers in general. They point with wonderful clearness and precision to that grand combination of the civil with the ecclesiastical power of which papal Rome has ever been the chief representative.

We come, then, for the true key to the Apocalypse, to the {508} other principle, which may be called the historic. This seeks in the history of the church and of the world for the great events foretold in this book. It is no valid objection to this principle, that in the attempt to apply it interpreters find great, and in many cases insuperable difficulties. The mystery of God is not yet finished. It may be that the mighty events of the future can alone throw a clear light on the entire plan of the book. Meanwhile we must wait in reverential expectation, having in the plain fulfilment of that part of its prophecies which describes the rise and character of the combined ecclesiastical and political power which, under the name of Christianity, persecutes the true servants of Christ, a certain pledge that all the rest will be accomplished in due season. Expositors are agreed that the predictions of the book do not run on in chronological order from beginning to end. Most find in chaps. 6:1-11:18 (with an episode, chaps. 10:1-11:13) one series relating more to the outward history of the world in its relations to God's people; while in chap. 12 the writer returns to the primitive days of Christianity, and gives a more interior and spiritual view of the conflicts of God's people along the track of ages and their final triumph, adding at the close various supplementary views of the same mighty struggle and victory.

5. On the symbolic import of the numbers in the Apocalypse a few words may be added.

Seven is the well known symbol of completeness, and this is the most prominent number in the book. Thus we have the seven churches of Asia represented by the seven golden candlesticks, and their seven angels represented by seven stars (chap. 1:4, 12, 16, 20); the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne which are the seven spirits of God (chap. 4:5); the seven seals (chap. 5:1); the seven trumpets (chap. 8:2); the seven thunders (chap. 10:4); the seven last plagues (chap. 15:1); to which may be added the seven ascriptions of praise-power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, blessing (chap. 5:12), blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, might (chap. 7:12). Lastly, we have the seven heads of the persecuting beast in all {509} its various forms. Chaps. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3. So far as the number seven has its fulfilment in the history of the world, we are at liberty to suppose that this is accomplished, in part at least, by the manner in which the wisdom of God has been pleased to group together the events of prophecy-a grouping which is always appropriate, but might have been different had the plan of representation so required. The final judgments which precede the millennium, for example, which in chaps. 15

and 16 are set forth under the figure of seven vials full of the wrath of God, might have been, by another mode of distribution, represented under the number two. Many think they are thus represented in chap. 14:14-20. Another prophetic number, occurring in Daniel and the Apocalypse, always as a designation of time, is the half of seven. Thus we have "a time, and times, and half a time," that is, three years and a half (chap. 12:14); or in months, "forty and two months" (chaps. 11:2; 13:5); or in days, "a thousand two hundred and threescore days" (chaps. 11:3; 12:6). Compare Daniel 7:25. Again, answering to these three years and a half, we have the three days and a half during which the two witnesses lie dead. Chap. 11:9, 11. The number six, moreover, from its peculiar relation to seven, represents the preparation for the consummation of God's plans. Hence the sixth seal (chap. 6:12-17), the sixth trumpet (chap. 9:14-21), and the sixth vial (chap. 16:12-16) are each preëminent in the series to which they belong. They usher in the awful judgments of Heaven which destroy the wicked. Here, perhaps, we have the key to the symbolic import of the number of the beast, 666. While it represents, according to the principles of Greek numeration, the number of a man, it seems to indicate that upon him fall all the judgments of the sixth seal, the sixth trumpet, and the sixth vial.

Four is the natural symbol for universality. Thus we have the four living creatures round about the throne (chap. 4:6), perhaps as symbols of the agencies by which God administers his universal providential government (chaps. 6:1, 3, 5, 7; 15:7); the four angels standing on the four corners of the earth {510} and holding the four winds (chap. 7:1); and the four angels bound in the river Euphrates (chap. 9:14). So also in the fourfold enumeration, "kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation," or its equivalent. Chaps. 5:9; 10:11; 11:9; 14:6; 17:15. A third and a fourth part, on the contrary, represent what is partial. Chaps. 6:8; 8:12; 9:18.

Twelve is the well-known signature of God's people. Compare the twelve tribes of the Old Testament and the twelve apostles of the New; the woman with a crown of twelve stars (chap. 12:1); the twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem, the twelve times twelve cubits of its wall, and its tree of life that yields twelve harvests a year (chaps. 21:12, 14; 22:2). We have also the same number combined with a thousand, the general symbol for a great number. From each of the twelve tribes of Israel are sealed twelve thousand (chap. 7:4-8), making for the symbolical number of the redeemed twelve times twelve thousand (chap. 14:1, 3); and the walls of the New Jerusalem are in every direction twelve thousand furlongs (chap. 21:16).

Ten is possibly only a symbol of diversity, as in the case of the ten horns of the beast (chaps. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3); though some take a literal view of it.

6. Dark as are many parts of the Apocalypse and difficult of interpretation, the book as a whole is radiant with the promise to God's people of a final and complete victory in their conflict with the kingdom of Satan. Though long delayed, as we mortals reckon time, it shall come at last with a splendor above the brightness of the sun, and the earth be lighted from pole to pole with its glory. "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus"!

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin] [BibleAuthenticity]

32b. Appendix: Writings of Apostolic Fathers

APPENDIX TO PART III.

WRITINGS OF THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS, WITH SOME NOTICES OF THE APOCRYPHAL NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS.

1. A wide distinction should be made between the writings of the apostolic fathers which are acknowledged to be genuine, or the genuineness of which may be maintained on more or less probable grounds, and the large mass of spurious works afterwards palmed upon the Christian world as the productions of apostles or their contemporaries. The latter constitute properly the New Testament Apocrypha, though the term is sometimes applied in a loose way to both classes of writings. The writings of the apostolic fathers, though possessing no divine authority, are valuable as showing the state of the Christian churches at the time when they were composed in respect to both doctrine and discipline, as well as the various errors and divisions by which they were troubled. Their testimonies to the genuineness of the New Testament have been already considered. Chap. 2, No. 10. Some of the apocryphal works also, worthless as they are for instruction in the doctrines and duties of Christianity, throw much light on the religious spirit, tendencies, and heretical sects of the times to which they belong. Others of these writings are unutterably absurd and puerile, worthy of notice only as showing the type of the puerilities current in the age of their composition.

I. WRITINGS OF CLEMENT.

2. Appended to the Alexandrine manuscript (Chap. 26, No. 5) is an epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, followed by part of a so-called second epistle to the same church. The first of these epistles is acknowledged to be genuine. It was known to the ancient fathers as the work of Clement of Rome, and highly commended by them. Their quotations from it agree with the contents of the epistle as we now have it, nor does it exhibit any marks of a later age; for the author’s reference to the well-known fable of the phoenix as a type of the resurrection (chap. 25), constitutes no real difficulty. It may prove that he was credulous, but not that he belonged to a later than the apostolic age. The ancients represent this Clement to have been identical with Clement bishop of Rome. Whether he was also identical with the Clement named by the apostle Paul (Phil. {512} 4:3), is a question that we may well leave undecided. The epistle was written shortly after some persecution (chap. 1), which Grabe, Hefele, and others suppose to have been that under Nero; Lardner, Cotelerius, and others, that under Domitian. Upon the former supposition it was written about A.D. 68-a supposition apparently favored by the way in which he refers to the temple and service at Jerusalem as still in existence (chaps. Matthew, 41); upon the latter, about A.D. 96 or 97.

3. The occasion of the epistle, which Clement writes in the name of the church at Rome, is easily gathered from its contents. As in the days of Paul, so now, the Corinthian church was troubled by a "wicked and unholy sedition," fomented by "a few rash and self-willed men," who had proceeded

so far as to thrust out of their ministry some worthy men. Chap. 44. It would seem, also, from chaps. 24-27 that there were among them those who denied the doctrine of the resurrection. To restore in the Corinthian church the spirit of love and unity is the grand scope of the epistle. The author commends them for their orderly and holy deportment before their present quarrel arose, traces it to its true source in the pride gendered by the honor and enlargement granted them by God, and urges them to lay aside their contentions by every motive that the gospel offers-the mischiefs that strife occasions, the rules of their religion, the example of the Saviour and holy men of all ages, the relation of believers to God, his high value of the spirit of love and unity, the reward of obedience and punishment of disobedience, etc. Comparing the church to an army, he insists earnestly on the necessity of different ranks and orders, and the spirit of obedience. Comparing it again to the human body, he shows that all the particular members, each in his place, should conspire together for the preservation of the whole.

Clement's style has not the merit of compactness and conciseness. He is, on the contrary, diffuse and repetitious. But a thoroughly evangelical spirit pervades the present epistle, and it is, moreover, characterized by a noble fervor and simplicity. "It evinces the calm dignity and the practical executive wisdom of the Roman church in her original apostolic simplicity, without the slightest infusion of hierarchical arrogance." Schaff, Hist. Christ. Church, vol. 1, p. 460. In its internal character, as in the time of its composition, it approaches the canonical writings of the New Testament more nearly than any other remains of antiquity.

4. The second epistle ascribed to Clement is not mentioned by any of the fathers before Eusebius, who speaks of it doubtingiy: "But it should be known that there is said to be also a certain second epistle of Clement. But it is clear to us that this is not equally known with the first, for we know that the ancients have not made use of it." Hist. Ecclesiastes 3. 38. It is generally acknowledged to be spurious, and is, perhaps, as Hefele suggests, one of the homilies falsely ascribed to Clement. With this supposition {513} its contents well agree; for it does not seem to have, like the first, a definite end to accomplish. It opens with a general exhortation that the Corinthians should think worthily of Christ in view of the great work which he has wrought in their behalf, and urges upon them a steadfast confession of him before men, not by empty words, but by a life of holy obedience. It sets before them the incompatibility of the service of God and mammon, and dwells with especial earnestness on the high rewards of eternity in comparison with the pleasures and pains of the present life; as if the writer had in mind those who were exposed to the double peril of substituting an empty profession for the living spirit of obedience, and of apostatizing from Christ through fear of persecution and martyrdom.

5. Besides the above, there is a mass of writings current in ancient days under the name of Clement which are acknowledged by all to be spurious. Among these are: The Recognitions of Clement; The Clementines, or, according to the Greek title, Clement's Epitome of Peter's Discourses in Travel; Clement's Epitome concerning the Acts and Discourses of Peter in Travel-three forms of substantially the same work. It will be sufficient to give a brief notice of the Recognitions. The author, apparently a Jew by birth and a philosopher of the Alexandrine school, has embraced a form of Christianity mixed up with the dogmas of his philosophy. For the purpose of attacking and overthrowing the false religious notions of his age, he invents an ingenious historic plot. Clement, a Roman citizen, who, as appears in the sequel, has been separated in early life from his father, mother, and two brothers, whom he supposes to be dead, is introduced

as sending to James, who presides over the church at Jerusalem, with an accompanying letter, an account of his early education; his acquaintance with the apostle Peter, who chooses him to be his companion in travel; Peter's conversations with himself and the rest of the company; his public addresses and acts; especially his famous encounters with Simon Magus, whom he overthrows and puts to public shame. In the course of their journeying they visit a certain island, where they meet with a poor woman begging alms, who is found, upon the relation of her history, to be the mother of Clement. Upon farther inquiry it appears that two of Peter's company, Nicetus and Aquila, are her sons and the brothers of Clement. Finally, Peter encounters on the sea-shore, whither he had gone to perform for the newly discovered mother and sons the rite of baptism, an old man who is found to be the long lost husband and father. From these recognitions the work receives its title. But this historic plot is only the occasion of introducing the writer's theological and philosophical opinions, with especial reference to the prevailing errors of his day. Any page of the work is sufficient to show that Peter and Clement had nothing to do with its composition. It cannot be placed earlier than the close of the second or the {514} beginning of the third century. Prefixed to these Clementine writings, and having reference to them, are two spurious epistles, one from Peter to James, president of the church at Jerusalem, with the proceedings of James consequent upon the reception of it, and one from Clement to James. These it is not necessary to notice. The so-called Constitutions of Clement in eight books, embracing, as their name indicates, a system of rules pertaining to church order and discipline, were certainly not the work of Clement. It is not certain that they had their origin as a whole in the same age; but the judgment of learned men is that no part of them is older than the second half of the third century. The eighty-five so-called Apostolic Canons have prefixed to them the spurious title: "Ecclesiastical Rules of the Holy Apostles promulgated by Clement High Priest (Pontifex) of the Church of Rome." The origin of these canons is uncertain. They first appear as a collection with the above title in the latter part of the fifth century. How much older some of them may be cannot be determined with certainty.

II. THE EPISTLES OF IGNATIUS.

6. Ignatius was bishop of the church at Antioch, and suffered martyrdom at Rome by exposure to wild beasts A.D. 107, or according to some accounts, A.D. 116. Of the fifteen epistles ascribed to him, it is agreed among biblical scholars that eight are spurious and of later origin. The remaining seven are generally regarded as genuine, but the text of these, as of all the rest, is in a very unsatisfactory condition. There are two Greek recensions, a longer and a shorter, the latter containing approximately the true text, though not without the suspicion of interpolations. There is a Syriac version containing but three of Ignatius' epistles, and these in a much reduced form (which some are inclined to regard as the only genuine epistles); also an Armenian version containing thirteen epistles. See further Schaff, Hist. Chris. Church, vol. 1, pp. 469-471. As the question now stands, we may with good reason receive as genuine the seven mentioned by Eusebius (Hist. Ecclesiastes 3. 36) and Jerome (De Viris illust. 16). They were all written on his last journey to Rome; four from Smyrna, where Polycarp was the bishop, to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, and Romans; three after his departure from Smyrna, to the churches of Philadelphia and Smyrna, and to Polycarp bishop of Smyrna. The native vigor and energy of Ignatius, as also the depth and sincerity of his piety, shine forth conspicuously in these letters; but they differ from the epistle of Clement in the manifestation of an intense ecclesiastical spirit, by which, indeed, they are marked as belonging to a later era of the church. If we except the epistle to

the Romans, they all abound in exhortations to render implicit obedience to their spiritual rulers as to Christ himself. To {515} these precepts he adds exhortations to maintain unity, and to avoid false doctrines, specifying particularly Judaizing teachers and such as deny our Lord's proper humanity.

We cannot read his letter to the Romans, among whom he expected shortly to lay down his life for Christ's sake, without deep interest. But it is marred by the manifestation of an undue desire to obtain the crown of martyrdom, which leads him to protest against any interposition of the Roman brethren in his behalf. "I beseech you," says he, "show no unseasonable good-will towards me. Suffer me to be the food of wild beasts, by means of which I may attain to God. I am the wheat of God, and am ground by the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of God." Chap. 4. His letter to Polycarp, a fellow bishop, abounds in precepts for the right discharge of his duties. It is interesting as showing Ignatius' idea, on the one side, of the office with its high responsibilities, and, on the other, of the duties which the churches owe to those who are set over them in the Lord.

7. There are some spurious epistles ascribed to Ignatius which it is sufficient simply to name. These are: A letter to one Maria a proselyte of Cilicia in answer to her request that certain young men might be sent to her people as their spiritual guides; epistles to the church of Tarsus, of Antioch, and of Philippi-theological dissertations mostly made up of texts of Scripture; a letter to Hero a deacon, containing precepts for the right discharge of his office, and abounding, like those just named, in quotations from Scripture: two pretended letters of Ignatius to the apostle John; one to the Virgin Mary, with her reply.

Finally, there are some fragments of Ignatius' writings preserved to us in the quotations of the ancients, which it is not necessary to notice.

III. THE EPISTLE OF POLYCARP.

8. Polycarp was a disciple of the apostle John, and presided over the church in Smyrna. He suffered martyrdom about the year 166. Of his writings only one short epistle remains, addressed by him to the Philippians soon after the martyrdom of Ignatius, who passed through Smyrna on his way to Rome. This we gather from the letter itself; for in this he assumes that Ignatius has already suffered (chap. 9), and yet he has not heard the particulars concerning his fate and that of his companions. Chap. 14. This brief epistle is marked by a fervor and simplicity worthy of an apostolic man. The writer commends the Philippians for the love manifested by them towards the suffering servants of Christ, exhorts them to steadfastness, reminds them of Paul's precepts in his epistle to them, {516} and proceeds to unfold and inculcate the duties belonging to the officers and several classes of members in the church. The immediate occasion of the letter seems to have been his transmission to the Philippians, in compliance with their request, of Ignatius' epistle to himself, with such others of his epistles as had come into his hands. Chap. 13. The preservation of the present epistle is probably due to this its connection with the epistles of Ignatius forwarded by him to the Philippians.

IV. THE WRITINGS OF BARNABAS AND HERMAS.

9. The writings current under the names of Barnabas and Hermas have by no means the outward testimony in their favor by which the preceding epistles of Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp are

supported; nor the inward evidence arising from the consideration of their contents. We will consider them briefly in the order abovenamed.

10. Until recently the first part of the Epistle of Barnabas existed only in a Latin version. But in 1859 Tischendorf discovered at Mount Sinai the Sinai Codex (Chap. 26, No. 5), which contains the entire epistle in the original Greek. That the writer was the Barnabas mentioned in the New Testament as the companion of Paul in preaching the gospel, cannot be maintained on any firm basis of evidence. As to the date of its composition learned men differ. Hefele places it between the years 107 and 120. Apostolic Fathers, Prolegomena, p. 15. The writer was apparently a Hellenistic Jew of the Alexandrine school, and he wrote for the purpose of convincing his brethren, mainly from the Old Testament, that Jesus is the Messiah, and that in him the rites of the Mosaic law are done away. His quotations from the Old Testament are numerous, and his method of interpretation is allegorical and sometimes very fanciful, as in the following passage, for the right understanding of which the reader should know that the two Greek letters [Greek: IÊ], which stand first in the name [Greek: IÊSOUS], JESUS, and represent that name by abbreviation, signify as numerals, the first ten, the second, eight; also that the Greek letter [Greek: T] (the sign of the cross) denotes as a numeral, three hundred. "The Scripture says," argues Barnabas, "that Abraham circumcised of his house three hundred and eighteen men. What was the knowledge communicated to him [in this fact]? Learn first the meaning of the eighteen, then of the three hundred. Now the numeral letters [Greek: I], ten, [Greek: Ê], eight, make eighteen. Here you have Jesus (Greek [Greek: IÊSOUN], of which the abbreviation is [Greek: IÊ]). And because the cross, which lies in the letter [Greek: T], was that which should bring grace, he says also three hundred." Chap. 9. The Rabbinic system of interpretation in which the writer was educated furnishes an explanation, indeed, of this and other like puerilities, but no vindication of them.

11. The Shepherd of Hermas, as the work current under the name of {517} Hermas is called, consists of three books-his Visions, his Commands, and his Similitudes. The four visions are received through the ministry of an aged woman, who is the church of Christ. The twelve commands and ten similitudes are received from one who appears to him "in the habit of a shepherd, clothed with a white cloak, having his bag upon his back, and his staff in his hand," whence the title The Shepherd of Hermas. All these are intended to unfold the truths of Christianity with its doctrines and duties. The writer has a most luxuriant imagination. In reading his books, particularly the first and the third, one sometimes finds himself bewildered in a thicket of images and similitudes, some of them grotesque and not altogether congruous. Yet the work throws much light on the religious ideas and tendencies of its age. The ancients speak doubtingly of the authority of this work. Origen, whom Eusebius and Jerome follow, ascribes it to the Hermas mentioned in the epistle to the Romans (chap. 16:14); though it does not appear that he had any other ground for this than the identity of the name. The Muratorian canon names as its author Hermas the brother of Pius bishop of Rome. According to this, which is the more probable view, the date of its composition would be about the middle of the second century.

V. THE APOSTLES' CREED.

12. We put this among the remains of the apostolic fathers, not because there is any doubt as to its containing the substance of the doctrines taught by the apostles, but because, as is generally admitted, it did not receive its present form at their hand. "Though not traceable in its present

shape before the third century, and found in the second in different longer or shorter forms, it is in substance altogether apostolic, and exhibits an incomparable summary of the leading facts in the revelation of the triune God from the creation of the world to the resurrection of the body; and that in a form intelligible to all, and admirably suited for public worship and catechetical use." Schaff, Hist. Chris. Church, pp. 121, 122.

VI. APOCRYPHAL GOSPELS ANDActs 13:1-52. These are very numerous. Under the head of Apocryphal Gospels. Tischendorf has published twenty-two works; under that of Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, thirteen. To the student of church history they are not without value; for they illustrate the origin of many ancient traditions and some ritual observances. But if we look to their intrinsic character, they may be described as a mass of worthless legends abounding in absurd and puerile stories. The contrast between the miracles which they relate and the true miracles recorded in the canonical gospels and Acts is {518} immense, and such as makes the darkness of these spurious writings more visible. The miracles of the canonical books have always a worthy occasion, and are connected with the Saviour’s work of redemption. But the pretended miracles of the apocryphal writings are, as a general rule, wrought on trivial occasions, with either no end in view but the display of supernatural power, or with a positively unlawful end, whence it not unfrequently happens that their impiety rivals their absurdity. Many samples of both these characters could be given, but the general reader may well remain ignorant of them.

TAGS: [Canon] [Bible] [Bibleorigin] [BibleAuthenticity] [Apocrypha]

33. Principles of Biblical Interpretation - Introduction

PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

1. The term Hermeneutics (Greek, hermeneuo, to interpret) is commonly employed to denote the principles of scriptural interpretation. The Greek word exegesis-that is, exposition-denotes the actual work of interpretation. Hermeneutics is, therefore, the science of interpretation; Exegesis, the application of this science to the word of God. The hermeneutical writer lays down general principles of interpretation; the exegetical writer uses these principles in the exposition of Scripture. The terms epexegesis and epexegetical are used by expositors in a special sense to denote something explanatory of the immediate context.

2. The expositor’s office is, to ascertain and unfold the true meaning of the inspired writers, without adding to it, subtracting from it, or changing it in any way. Here we may draw an instructive parallel between his work and that of the textual critic. The textual critic aims to give, not what some one might think the inspired penman should have written, but what he actually did write. So the true expositor, taking the very words of Scripture, seeks not to force upon them a meaning in harmony with his preconceived opinions, but to take from them the very ideas which the writer intended to express. It is pertinent, therefore, to consider at the outset the qualifications which belong to the biblical interpreter. These include high moral and intellectual qualities, as well as varied and extensive acquirements.

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3. Foremost among the qualities that belong to the interpreter is a supreme regard for truth. A general conviction and acknowledgment of the duty of truthfulness will not be sufficient to guard him against all the seductive influences that beset his path. Though he may be a sincere Christian, he will still be in danger of being misled by the power of preconceived opinions and party connections. He will need a constant and vivid apprehension of the sacredness of all truth, more especially of scriptural truth, which God has revealed for the sanctification and salvation of men. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." These words of the Saviour he will do well to ponder night and day, till they become a part of his spiritual life; and to remember always that, if such be the divine origin and high office of scriptural truth, God will not hold guiltless any who tamper with it in the interest of preconceived human opinions, thus substituting the folly of man for the wisdom of God.

4. The interpreter further needs a sound judgment, combined with the power of vivid conception. These two qualities are named together, because they mutually supplement each other. A large part of the Bible is occupied with description. Here the interpreter needs the power of conception, that he may bring before his mind a vivid picture of the scenes described, with the relations of their

several parts to each other. Another large part of the Bible contains the language of poetry and impassioned feeling. In the interpretation of this, the faculty of conception is especially necessary, that we may place ourselves as fully as possible in the circumstances of the writers, and form a true idea of the emotions which filled their minds and gave form and complexion to their utterances. Pure cold logic, with the addition of any amount of human learning, will not enable us to comprehend and expound aright the forty-second Psalm. By the power of imagination, we must go with the poet, in his exile from the sanctuary at Jerusalem, across the Jordan to the land of the Hermonites; must see his distressed and forsaken condition; must hear the bitter taunts of his enemies; {523} must witness the inward tempest of his feelings-a continual conflict between nature and faith-before we can have a true understanding of his words. The same might be said of innumerable other passages of Scripture. But this power of vivid conception, when not held in check by a sound judgment, will lead the expositor of Scripture into the wildest vagaries of fancy. Disregarding the plainest rules of interpretation, he will cover up the obvious sense of Scripture with a mass of allegorical expositions, under color of educing from the words of inspiration a higher and more edifying meaning. That high natural endowments, united with varied and solid learning and indefatigable zeal for the gospel, do not of themselves constitute a safeguard against this error, we learn from the example of Origen and many others. Not content to let the simple narratives of Scripture speak for themselves and convey their proper lessons of instruction, these allegorical expositors force upon them a higher spiritual sense. In so doing, they unsettle the very principles by which the spiritual doctrines of Scripture are established.

Origen, for example, in commenting on the meeting between Abraham’s servant and Rebecca at the well in Haran, says: "Rebecca came every day to the wells. Therefore she could be found by Abraham’s servant, and joined in marriage with Isaac." Thus he gives the literal meaning of this transaction. But he then goes on to show, among other things, that Rebecca represents the human soul, which Christ wishes to betroth to himself, while Abraham’s servant is "the prophetic word, which unless you first receive, you cannot be married to Christ." See in Davidson’s Sacred Hermeneutics, pp. 103, 104.

5. Another indispensable qualification of scriptural interpretation is sympathy with divine truth; in other words, that harmony of spirit with the truths of revelation which comes from a hearty reception of them, and a subjection of the whole life, inward and outward, to their control. "If any man," said our Saviour, "will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." John 7:17. In these words our Lord proposed to the unbelieving {524} Jews the true remedy for their ignorance and error respecting his person and office, which had their ground not in the want of evidence, but in their perverse and guilty rejection of evidence. Their moral state was one of habitual rebellion against the truth of God; and they could not, therefore, have sympathy with the Saviour’s doctrine. They hated the light, and would not come to the light, because their deeds were evil. John 3:20. What they needed was not more light, but that obedient spirit which loves the light, and allows it to shine through the soul. The man who would be a successful interpreter of God’s word must begin where the Saviour directed these Jews to begin. So far as he knows the truth, he must give it a hearty reception not in theory alone, but in daily practice. Then he will be prepared to make further progress in the knowledge of it, and to unfold its heavenly treasures to his fellow-men. But if he comes to the study of God’s word with a heart habitually at variance with its holy precepts, and an understanding darkened by the power of sinful

affections, no amount of scholarship or critical sagacity will avail to make him a true expositor of its contents. Having no sympathy with the great foundation doctrines of the gospel, but regarding them with positive aversion, he will neither be able to apprehend them in their true light, nor to explain them aright to his fellow-men. In the work of interpretation, a good heart-good in the scriptural sense-is not less important than a clear understanding and well-furnished mind.

6. How extensive and varied should be the acquirements of the able interpreter will be manifest to any one who considers the extent and variety of the fields of knowledge covered by the Holy Scriptures. The languages in which they are written are no longer spoken. The knowledge of them, like that of all dead languages, is locked up in books-grammars, lexicons, ancient versions, and various subsidiary helps-and can be mastered only by severe and protracted study. It is not indeed necessary that the great body of Christians, or even all preachers of the gospel, {525} should be able to read the Bible in the original languages. But it is a principle of Protestantism, the soundness of which has been confirmed by the experience of centuries, that there should always be in the churches a body of men able to go behind the current versions of Scripture to the original tongues from which these versions were executed. The commentator, at least, must not take his expositions at second hand; and a healthy tone of feeling in regard to the sacredness and supreme authority of the inspired word will always demand that there should be a goodly number of scholars scattered through the churches who can judge from the primitive sources of the correctness of his interpretations. The Scriptures are crowded with references to the cities, mountains, plains, deserts, rivers, and seas of Palestine and the surrounding regions; to their climate, soil, animals, and plants; to their agricultural products and mineral treasures; to the course of travel and commerce between the different nations; in a word, to those numerous particulars which come under the head of geography and natural history. The extended investigations of modern times in these departments of knowledge have shed a great light over the pages of inspiration, which no expositor who is worthy of the name will venture to neglect. And if one collect and illustrate the various allusions of Scripture to the manners and customs of the ancient Hebrews, to their civil institutions and their religious rites and ceremonies, he will compose a volume on biblical antiquities. The connection, moreover, which the covenant people had with the surrounding nations, especially the great monarchies which successively held sway over the civilized world-Egypt, Assyria, Chaldea, Greece, Rome-requires an extended knowledge of ancient history, and, as inseparably connected with this, of ancient chronology. Biblical chronology constitutes, indeed, a science of itself, embracing some very perplexed and difficult questions, the solution of which has an important bearing upon the passages of Scripture to which they have reference.

7. We do not affirm that all the above-named qualifications {526} are necessary to a saving knowledge of God’s word. Its great essential doctrines and precepts are so plain that the unlettered reader, who brings to the work an honest heart, cannot fail to understand them. In this respect God has made the vision so plain "that he may run that readeth it;" and the road to heaven so direct that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." But the interpreter of Scripture is expected to unfold the meaning of the difficult passages also, as far as human investigation will enable him to do so. They are a part of "all Scripture given by inspiration of God," which the apostle affirms to be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." He should spare no effort, therefore, to ascertain their exact sense, and to

expound this sense to others with all possible fidelity and clearness.

8. There is a human and a divine side to biblical interpretation-a human side, because the Scriptures address men in human language, and according to human modes of thinking and speaking; a divine side, because they contain a true revelation from God to men, and differ in this respect from all other writings. The neglect of the human side leads to visionary schemes of interpretation, in which the writer's fancy is substituted for the sober rules of criticism, and the word of God accommodated to his preconceived opinions. The rejection, open or covert, of the divine side, manifests itself in a cold, skeptical criticism, which denies or explains away all that is supernatural in the Bible; which, instead of seeking to discover and unfold that unity of plan and harmony of parts which belong to every work of God, delights rather in exaggerating the supposed inconsistencies and contradictions of the sacred writers, and in arraying one part of Scripture against another; and which, having no faith itself in the Bible as containing a revelation from God, infuses doubts respecting its divine origin into the mind of the reader. It is only by keeping steadily in view these two sides of revelation, which mutually supplement each other, that we can attain to a true knowledge of the inspired word.

TAGS: [Bible] [Interpretation]

34. General Principles of Interpretation

FIRST DIVISION.

INTERPRETATION VIEWED ON THE HUMAN SIDE.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION.

1. Since the Bible addresses men in human language, and according to human modes of thinking and speaking, the interpreter’s first work is to ascertain the meaning of the terms employed. Here he must proceed as in the case of other writings, seeking by the aid of grammars, lexicons, cognate languages, ancient versions, ancient interpreters, and whatever other outward helps are available, to gain a thorough knowledge of the language employed by the Holy Spirit in his revelations to men. To these external sources of knowledge he will add all the internal light which comes from a careful consideration of the context, of the author’s known use of terms, of parallel passages, etc. In the case of the New Testament, a knowledge of classical Greek will not be sufficient. The interpreter must superadd a thorough acquaintance with the peculiar dialect of the New Testament (Chap. 24, No. 5), and also the special usages of particular writers. The apostle John, to adduce a single instance, applies the term Logos, Word, to the Son of God. But we cannot argue from this for a like usage by other writers; as, for example, in the well-known passage: "The word of God is quick and powerful," etc. Hebrews 4:12.

Usage alone is often insufficient to determine the meaning of a word in a particular passage; for (1) the term may occur nowhere else, (2) it may have in current usage two or more different significations. In the former case, the interpreter must avail himself of all the external helps above specified, {528} and especially of the light shed upon the meaning of the term in question by the context. In the latter case, the context must be his chief guide. The same Greek word, for example, signifies stature (Luke 19:3) and age (Hebrews 11:11). In the interpretation of Matthew 6:27, where our version reads: "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" the question may naturally enough arise in which of these two senses the Saviour employed it. Whatever may be the decision, it must have for its basis not simple usage, which is ambiguous, but the connection of the word in the context. Many like examples might be adduced.

It has been already remarked (Chap. 24, No. 5) that in New Testament usage many words have a technical and therefore peculiar meaning. We are not at liberty, however, to determine such technical meanings at random, or in accordance with any preconceived opinions. It can only be done, as in the case of all other writings, in accordance with the acknowledged laws of interpretation. The general result, then, at which we arrive is, that in determining the meaning of scriptural terms we must be guided by the same rules which we follow in the interpretation of other writings.

2. From the signification of particular words we proceed to the consideration of the sense embodied in the language of the sacred writers. A knowledge of the words which enter into the composition of a sentence does not of itself give us a true apprehension of the sense which the writer seeks to convey. We must know the writer's aim, the shape and course of his argument, the ideas which he is combating as well as those which he seeks to establish, the emphatic words of the sentence, whether he wishes to be understood literally or figuratively, and various other particulars; all which are to be ascertained by the same rules which we employ in the interpretation of language generally.

3. The scope or design of the inspired writer may be general or special; the former being his design in writing the whole work in question, the latter, his design in particular sections of it. "The scope," it has been well observed, "is the soul or spirit of a book; and, that being once ascertained, every argument and every word appears in its right place, and is perfectly intelligible; but if the scope be not duly considered, every thing becomes obscure, however clear and obvious its meaning may really be." Horne's Introduct., vol. 2, p. 265, edit. of 1860. {529} This language is not too strong. It is by a neglect or perversion of the scope that the meaning of the inspired writers is perverted, and they are made to contradict one another. The apostle Paul says, for example: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Romans 3:28. The apostle James: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." James 2:24. If one insists on leaving out of account the separate and distinct design which each of these two writers had in view respectively, he can easily bring their words into contradiction. Had the scope of Paul's argument been to show that faith in Christ releases men from the obligation of obeying the divine law, and thus makes good works unnecessary; or had James been laboring to prove that good works are the meritorious ground of men's forgiveness, then the doctrines of the two apostles would have been irreconcilably at variance. But we know that neither of these suppositions is true. Paul was combating the error of the Pharisees "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous"-righteous on the ground of "the deeds of the law"-"and despised others." His aim was to show that men receive forgiveness and salvation neither wholly nor in part on the ground of the supposed merit of their good works, but wholly through faith in Christ; as he elsewhere argues that "if it be by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace." Romans 11:6. We know also, from the whole tenor of his writings, that he condemned as spurious that pretended faith which does not manifest itself in good works. In this very epistle, where the question is not concerning the meritorious ground of justification, but concerning that character which God will accept, the apostle lays down the great principle: "Unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honor, and peace to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God." Romans 2:8-11. If now we turn to the epistle of James, we find that the faith without works which he condemns as dead is one of mere empty notions-an inoperative belief about Christ instead of that hearty trust in him which brings the heart and life into subjection to his authority. In a word, Paul condemns, as dead, works without faith; James, faith without works. The one rejects dead works (Hebrews 9:14); the other, dead faith. Between these two judgments there is no contradiction. We have dwelt somewhat at large upon this example of alleged contradiction for the purpose of full illustration. The same mode of reasoning might be applied to many other passages, where a knowledge of the writer's design is

essential to the true apprehension of his meaning.

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Such being the importance of the scope, the question arises: How shall it be ascertained? Here mechanical rules will be of little avail. The attentive and judicious reader will be able, in general, to gather it from the various indications given by the writer himself, or from the known circumstances in which he wrote, just as in the case of other writings.

Sometimes an author directly states his general end, or his design in writing a particular section of his work. An example of the former kind is John 20:31 : "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name;" of the latter kind, 1 Corinthians 7:1 : "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me," etc.; whence we learn that in this particular chapter the apostle's design is to answer certain inquiries of the Corinthian Christians in regard to the relation of marriage. More commonly the writer's scope is indicated indirectly by various inferential remarks, as in the passage already quoted: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," which is in fact a statement of the apostle's design in the preceding argument. See Horne's Introduct., vol. 2, pp. 266, 267, where the author follows Morus, Hermeneutica, 1.2.2.

Sometimes a clear light is shed upon the design of a writer or speaker by a knowledge of historical circumstances; especially, of his own position and that of his opponents. The twenty-third chapter of Matthew, in which the Saviour exposes the wickedness and doctrinal errors of the scribes and Pharisees, and denounces upon them the judgments of heaven, cannot be thoroughly understood without a knowledge of the system of Pharisaism, and the high position of authority and influence which the Pharisees held; sitting, as they did, in Moses' seat, imposing upon the people their human traditions in place of God's commandments, substituting a religion of outward forms for one of inward faith, love, and obedience, and thus taking away from the people the key of divine knowledge. It was necessary that the Son of God, to whom the church belonged, who came to shed his blood for her redemption, and to establish her in the principles of truth and holiness, should expose with unsparing severity the wickedness and ignorance of these scribes and Pharisees, for the instruction of his people in all coming ages. A knowledge of the same historical circumstances throws a strong light on the apostle's aim in writing to the Romans and Galatians. Had we fuller information respecting the false teachers referred to in the epistle to the Colossians and the pastoral epistles, we should understand more clearly the apostle's arguments against them. But the surest means of ascertaining a writer's scope is the repeated {531} and careful perusal of his words. The biblical student should early form the habit of reading over with earnest attention a whole book at a sitting-the epistle to the Romans, for example, or that to the Hebrews-without pausing to investigate particular questions; his aim being to throw himself as fully as possible into the general current of thought, and to be carried forward by it to the writer's final conclusions. When he has thus made himself familiar with the scope of the work as a whole, he will be better prepared for the examination of the particular difficulties that offer themselves in the course of the author's argument.

4. The word context (Latin, contextus) signifies literally a weaving together; and is appropriately used, therefore, to denote the web of a writer's discourse. The scope is the end which a writer proposes to accomplish: the context gives the form and manner of its accomplishment. With

reference to a given passage, the context has been loosely defined to be that which immediately precedes and follows. More accurately, it is the series of statements, arguments, and illustrations connected with the passage whose meaning is sought, including all the various connections of thought. The sober interpreter, then, must have constant reference to the context, as well for the signification of particular terms as for the general sense of the passage under consideration. To interpret without regard to the context is to interpret at random; to interpret contrary to the context is to teach falsehood for truth. The necessity of having constant reference to the context for the determination of the sense, as well as of the particular terms employed, admits of innumerable illustrations. From these we select a few examples: In Romans 14:23 the apostle lays down the following maxim: "He that doubteth is damned [literally, condemned] if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." The context relates not to the Lord's supper, but to scruples in respect to the use of particular kinds of food: "One believeth that he may eat all things; another who is weak"-over-scrupulous in respect to distinctions of food-"eateth herbs" (ver. 2). Consequently there is no reference here to the personal qualifications requisite for partaking of that ordinance, or to the consequence of eating unworthily. The apostle means to say that whoever has scruples about the lawfulness of using a particular article of food is condemned if he eat it, "because he eateth not of faith." He acts contrary to his persuasion of duty. Thus he violates, in this particular case, that general {532} law of faith which requires that in all things we keep a conscience void of offence towards God and man, subjecting ourselves in loving confidence to Christ's authority, and doing in all things what we believe to be right in his sight.

Again we read in Galatians 5:4 the words: "Ye are fallen from grace." Taken out of their connection, these words are ambiguous in their application. But the context makes all plain. The apostle is addressing those who are inclined to substitute a system of justification by works for the grace of the gospel: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace"-fallen away from grace, as the original word means. Ye have abandoned the system of grace revealed in the gospel for one of works. The psalmist says: "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" Psalms 42:2. Taken out of their connection, these words might be understood of his desire to enjoy the beatific vision of God in heaven. But the context shows that the writer had in mind God's earthly sanctuary, from which he was banished: "My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy-day" (ver. 3, 4).

Again the psalmist says: "The king's daughter is all glorious within" (Psalms 45:13); words that have more than once been applied directly to the inward spiritual beauty of the church, the bride of Christ. This is, indeed, the idea that we gain from a true interpretation of them. But it comes not directly, but through a beautiful figure. The primary meaning of the words is, that the royal bride appearing within the palace in raiment of wrought gold is all glorious to the beholder's view. Undoubtedly she represents the church espoused to Christ; dwelling, so to speak, in his kingly mansion, and gloriously adorned with his righteousness. Revelation 19:8. The question may naturally occur to the reader: Within what limits is the context to be consulted? The answer must be, that no definite limits can be prescribed. The entire web of discourse must be carefully studied, including the more remote as well as the nearer context; for the inspired writers do not, as a

general rule, proceed according to formal divisions and subdivisions. The train of argument is often interrupted by parenthetical remarks, particularly in the writings of the apostle Paul, or it is resumed in an informal way after extended digressions. The true connection of thought, then, is to be gathered not so much from our modern notions of what logical accuracy would require, as from the repeated and careful perusal of the writing in question. In this way alone can we place ourselves in the author's position, and look at the subject under discussion {533} from his point of view; that is to say, in this way alone can we enter into his modes of thinking and reasoning, and thus qualify ourselves to be the expounders of them to others. In some cases no context exists, and none is to be sought. In a large part of the book of Proverbs, for example, each separate aphorism shines by its own light. If it have any connection with what precedes or follows, it is only casual or superficial. In some books, again, like that of Ecclesiastes, the transitions are rapid, and often difficult to explain. Here we should be careful not to force upon the author a logical connection of which he never thought. Systematic arrangement is good in its place; but the Holy Spirit did not think it needful to secure it in the case of all who spake as he moved them.

Some religious teachers are fond of employing scriptural texts simply as mottoes, with little or no regard to their true connection. Thus they too often adapt them to their use by imparting to them a factitious sense foreign to their proper scope and meaning. The seeming gain in all such cases is more than counterbalanced by the loss and danger that attend the practice. It encourages the habit of interpreting Scripture in an arbitrary and fanciful way, and thus furnishes the teachers of error with their most effective weapon. The practice cannot be defended on any plea of necessity. The plain words of Scripture, legitimately interpreted according to their proper scope and context, contain a fulness and comprehensiveness of meaning sufficient for the wants of all men in all circumstances. That piety alone is robust and healthful which is fed, not by the fancies and speculations of the preacher who practically puts his own genius above the word of God, but by the pure doctrines and precepts of the Bible, unfolded in their true connection and meaning.

It is important to remark, however, that when the general principle contained in a given passage of Scripture has been once fairly explained, it admits of innumerable applications which are in the highest sense legitimate and proper. The principle, for example, that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin," which the apostle Paul announces in connection with the question of using or abstaining from particular kinds of food, may {534} be applied to the settlement of cases of conscience arising in widely different relations and spheres of action. The preacher's power lies very much in the ability of unfolding to the understanding and applying to the conscience the general principles involved in the passage of Scripture which he undertakes to expound.

5. We may next consider the help to be derived from parallel passages. The ordinary division of parallelisms is into verbal and real: verbal, where the same word or phrase occurs; real, where the same thought is expressed or the same subject discussed. Verbal parallelisms often shed much light on the meaning of particular words or phrases, because what is obscure in one passage is made plain in another by some explanatory addition. An example is the use of the expression my glory (English version, my honor), in Genesis 49:6 : "O my soul, come not thou into their secret" (their secret conclave); "unto their assembly, my glory, be not thou united." A comparison of the parallel passages, Psalms 7:5; Psalms 16:9; Psalms 30:12; Psalms 57:8; Psalms 108:1, leads to the conclusion that in such a connection the expression is substantially equivalent to my soul, the soul being made in the image of God, and thus the seat of man's glory. By a like process of

comparison, we arrive at the true signification of the phrase, "the righteousness of God," or more fully, "the righteousness which is of God by faith" when used with reference to the way of salvation through Christ; at the meaning of the Greek terms translated "propitiation," etc. In the same way, as already remarked (No. 1, above), the interpreter ascertains the different significations in which words are employed, and determines which of these is appropriate to any given passage.

Real parallelisms are subdivided, again, into doctrinal and historic; doctrinal, where the same truth is inculcated; historic, where the same event or series of events is recorded. The supreme importance of doctrinal parallelisms will appear most fully when we come to look at revelation on the divine side, as constituting a grand system of truth harmonious in all its parts. At present we regard them simply as among the means of ascertaining the sense of a given passage. Presuming that every author means to be self-consistent, it is our custom to {535} place side by side his different statements which relate to the same subject, that they may mutually explain each other. The same reasonable method should be pursued with the writings of Isaiah and Jeremiah in the Old Testament, and of Paul and John in the New. What is obscure is to be interpreted by what is clear; what is briefly hinted, by what is more fully expressed. Different writers, moreover, belonging to the same age, animated by the same spirit, and confessedly governed by the same general rules of faith and practice, mutually explain each other. Thus the prophets Isaiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, and Micah, who belong to the same century, and in a less degree Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the other prophets of a later age, shed each a light on the pages of all the rest. The same is true of all the epistolary writers of the New Testament, notwithstanding their marked differences of style, and the different aspects also in which they respectively contemplate Christian doctrine and duty. Our Saviour says of those who claimed to be, before his advent, the shepherds and leaders of God’s spiritual fold: "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them." John 10:8. Yet according to this same evangelist he honored Abraham, Moses, and the prophets, as true leaders and teachers of God’s people. Chaps. 8:39, Matthew, 56; 5:45-47; 12:38-41. We know, then, that the Saviour’s words must be restricted to such spiritual thieves and robbers as the scribes and Pharisees of his day, who under the leadership of Satan (chap. 8:41, 44) climbed up some other way into the fold. The apostle Paul says (Romans 2:7) that God shall render "to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life." We know at once, without reference to the context, that he does not mean, in opposition to the whole tenor of his epistles, to affirm that men can obtain eternal life by their own well-doing, without respect to "the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe." But if we examine the context, this shows that here the apostle is not speaking of the meritorious ground of justification, but of God’s impartial regard to a righteous character in both Jews and Gentiles.

Historical parallelisms hold of necessity a prominent place in the interpretation of both the Old and the New Testament. {536} In the Old Testament we have the two parallel histories of the Hebrew commonwealth, first in the books of Samuel and the Kings, then in the books of Chronicles. In the New, the four gospels are four parallel accounts of our Lord’s life and teachings. Then there are several parallelisms of less extent; as, for example, Isaiah’s account of Sennacherib’s war upon Hezekiah, and Hezekiah’s sickness (Isa. chaps. 36-39, compared with 2 Kings 18:13-37; 2 Kings 19:1-37; 2 Kings 20:1-21, and the briefer notice of 2 Chron. chap. 32); the three accounts of Paul’s conversion (Acts 9:1-22; Acts 22:1-21; Acts 26:1-20); and other passages which will readily occur

to the reader. To the work of comparing and harmonizing these parallel histories biblical students have with reason devoted much labor, since they mutually supplement and illustrate each other in many ways. We understand the books of Samuel and Kings more fully by comparison with the books of Chronicles, and the reverse. Each of the four gospels sheds light on the other three. It is by placing the three accounts of Paul's conversion side by side that we gain the most perfect knowledge of this event. The numerous coincidences between the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline epistles, give us a fuller idea of the apostle's inward life and outward labors than we could otherwise gain. Without the epistles the biographical notices of the Acts would be very incomplete; without the narrative of the Acts many references in the epistles would remain obscure.

Yet these same historic parallelisms, which are the source of so much light, are the occasion of difficulties also, which require for their adjustment a comprehensive view of the spirit of inspiration. In respect to all essential matters of faith and practice, a divine unity pervades the Holy Scriptures. But this essential unity does not exclude diversity of conception and representation. Though all the "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," it pleased the divine Spirit to leave them free to speak each in accordance with his individual peculiarities of thought and language. A page from the writings of the apostle John, taken anywhere at random, can be at once distinguished from a page of Paul or Luke. In {537} relating the same transaction, two inspired writers often select different materials, or handle them in a different way. The narrative of each is truthful, but not exhaustive. It gives a correct view of the thing related, but not all the particulars connected with it. The omission from two or more parallel narratives of concomitant circumstances, or the neglect of exact chronological order, sometimes makes the work of harmonizing them a very difficult matter. We feel confident that each separate narrative is correct, and that, had we all the accompanying circumstances in the true order of time, we could see how they are consistent with each other; but for want of this light the exact mode of reconciliation remains doubtful. Such difficulties are incident to all parallel histories. Had the Holy Spirit seen good, he could have excluded them from the pages of inspiration; but herein he chose to deal with us not as children, but rather as men "of full age, even those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." It is worthy of special notice, that where two or more evangelists record the same words of our Saviour, they are solicitous only about their substance. In the three parallel accounts of the storm on the sea of Galilee, the disciples say according to Matthew (8:25): "Lord save us, we perish;" according to Mark (4:38): "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" according to Luke (8:24): "Master, master, we perish." And the Lord answers according to Matthew (v. 26): "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" according to Mark (v. 40): "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" according to Luke (v. 25): "Where is your faith?" On the variations in the words of the disciples Augustine well remarks (and the same remarks hold good of our Lord's answer): "The disciples have one and the same meaning in thus awaking the Lord and desiring salvation. Nor is it necessary to inquire which of these addresses, rather than the others, contains the exact words spoken to him. For whether they uttered one of the three, or other words which no one of the evangelists has mentioned, which yet have the same force in respect to the truth of the thought, what matters it?" Harmony of the Gospels 2.24, quoted by Alford on Matthew 8:25. On the relation of the books of Chronicles to those of Kings and the difficulties connected with them, see Chap. 20, Nos. 21, 22. On the relation {538} of the four gospels to each other, see Chap. 29, Nos. 4-10. We cannot here go into particulars. It must suffice to indicate the general principle by which the harmonist must be guided.

6. The external acquirements necessary to constitute the well-furnished expositor of God’s word-the "scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven"-have been already briefly noticed. Chap. 33, No. 6. Not only are the Scriptures in their original form locked up in dead languages which the interpreter must thoroughly master, but they are, so to speak, embedded in ancient history, chronology, and archæology.

Illustrations of this point are so numerous that the only difficulty is in the selection. The servitude of the Israelites under the Egyptians, their captivity in Babylon, their deliverance under Cyrus, and their subsequent history till the time of our Lord’s advent, connect themselves immediately, as all know, with the general history of the ancient heathen world. But there are many illustrations of a more special character. The difficulty of the position in which our Lord was placed by the ensnaring question of the Pharisees and Herodians respecting the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar, and the divine wisdom of his answer (Matthew 22:15-22 : Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26) cannot be perfectly understood without a knowledge, on the one hand, of the political condition and feeling of the Jews as subjected to the dominion of the Romans, which they thoroughly detested, and of which dominion the tribute money daily reminded them; and, on the other, of the hatred which both Pharisees and Herodians bore towards Christ, and their anxiety to find a pretext for accusing him to the people or before this same Roman government. To apprehend the force of our Lord’s argument from the Pentateuch against the error of the Pharisees: "Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:31-32), we must understand the form in which the Sadducees denied the doctrine of the resurrection. They denied, namely, the existence of spirits separated from bodies. Acts 23:8. To them, consequently, the death of the body was the annihilation of the whole man, which made the very idea of a future resurrection an absurdity. Our Saviour showed from the writings of Moses, whose authority they acknowledged, the error of their assumption that the spirit dies with the body. Thus he demolished the ground on which their denial of a future resurrection rested. The psalmist says of those who hate Zion: "Let them be as the grass {539} upon the house-tops, which withereth before one plucketh it" (Eng. version, "before it groweth up"): "wherewith the mower filleth not his hand, nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom." Psalms 129:6-7. For the illustration of these words we need a double reference, (1) to the oriental custom of constructing flat roofs covered with earth, on which grass readily springs up; (2) to the division of the year into two seasons, the rainy and the dry, upon the commencement of which latter such grass speedily withers. Another reference to the same oriental roofs we have in the words of Solomon: "The contentions of a wife are a continual dropping;" "a continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike" (chaps. 19:13; 27:15), where we are to understand a continual dropping through of water from the roof, which makes every thing within uncomfortable. Our Lord’s parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) requires for its illustration a knowledge of the oriental customs connected with marriage: the transaction recorded by Luke, where a woman came behind Jesus as he reclined at the table, washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair (Luke 7:37-38), and the position of John when at the last supper he leaned on Jesus’ bosom (John 13:23; John 13:25), cannot be made intelligible without a knowledge of the reclining posture in which meals were then taken: one familiar only with the use of glass or earthen bottles cannot comprehend the force of our Lord’s maxim respecting the necessity of putting new wine into new bottles (Matthew 9:17), till he is informed that oriental bottles are made of leather. We might go on multiplying illustrations

indefinitely, but the above must suffice. We may affirm, without fear of contradiction, that the study of the Holy Scriptures has contributed more than all other causes to the diffusion among the masses of the community of a knowledge of ancient history and antiquities. To say that a congregation has a thorough knowledge of the Bible is equivalent to affirming that it has an enlarged acquaintance with the ancient world in its spirit as well as in its outward institutions and forms.

7. That the interpreter may make a wise and effective use of all the helps that have been enumerated, he needs especially that sound and practical judgment which is called in ordinary discourse good sense. Investigations respecting the meaning of terms, inquiries concerning the scope, reasonings from the context, the comparison of parallel passages, the use of ancient history, chronology, and archæology-that any one or all of these processes combined may lead to valuable results they must be under the guidance of that sound judgment and practical tact by which the interpreter is enabled to seize the true {540} meaning of his author and unfold it with accuracy, or is at least kept from far-fetched and fanciful expositions where the author's real sense is involved in obscurity.

(1.) This quality of sound judgment will preserve the interpreter from inept expositions for which a plausible reason many be assigned.

Thus, when the Saviour says to Martha, who "was cumbered about much serving:" "One thing is needful," these words have been interpreted to mean one dish-not many and elaborate preparations, but a single dish. A sound judgment rejects at once this interpretation as below the dignity of the occasion, and not in agreement with what immediately follows: "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." The one thing needful is such a devotion of the soul to Christ as Mary manifested. So the words: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" (John 21:15), have been explained to mean: more than these fish, or the employment and furniture of a fisherman-an ingenious substitution, one must say, of a low and trivial meaning for the common interpretation: more than these thy fellow-disciples love me, which accords so perfectly with Peter's former profession: "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." Matthew 26:33; Mark 14:29.

Interpreters who ordinarily manifest sound judgment and skill are sometimes betrayed into inept expositions through the influence of some preconceived opinion. The psalmist says, for example (Psalms 17:15): "As for me, in righteousness shall I behold thy face: I shall be satisfied upon awaking with thy likeness;" that is, with the contemplation of thy likeness, with apparent reference to Numb. 12:8: "The likeness of the Lord shall he behold." This passage is ordinarily interpreted correctly of the vision of God upon awaking in the world to come. And this view is sustained by other like passages: "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalms 16:11); "Truly God shall redeem my soul from the power of Sheol; for he shall take me," (Psalms 49:15), where Tholuck well says: "He who took an Enoch and a Moses to himself, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, will also take me to himself;" "Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards take me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psalms 73:24-26)-words that are inexplicable except as containing the anticipation of a blessed immortality with God in heaven; "The wicked is driven

away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death" (Proverbs 14:32); {541} etc. But there is a class of interpreters who, having adopted the maxim that the Old Testament, at least in its earlier writings, contains no anticipations of a blessed life with God after death, are constrained to give to the passage in question the frigid meaning: I shall be satisfied with thy likeness when I awake to-morrow, as if the psalm were intended to be an evening song or prayer; or, whenever I awake, that is, from natural sleep.

(2.) A sound judgment will also keep the biblical scholar from interpretations that are contrary to the known nature of the subject. A familiar example is the declaration made by Moses of God's view of man's wickedness: "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Genesis 6:6. The robust common sense of any plain reader will at once adjust the interpretation of these words to God's known omniscience and immutability; just as he will the prayer of the psalmist: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalms 139:23-24. The immutable God does nothing which is not in accordance with his eternal counsels. The omniscient God, to whom all truth is ever present, does not literally institute a process of searching that he may know what is in man. But in these and numberless other passages, he condescends to speak according to human modes of thought and action. When it is said, again, that "the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh;" that "God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem" (Judges 9:23); that he sent a lying spirit to deceive Ahab through his prophets (1 Kings 22:21-23); that he sent Isaiah with the command: "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes" (Isaiah 6:10); that he made the covenant people to err from his ways, and hardened their heart from his fear (Isaiah 63:17), we instinctively interpret these and other like passages in harmony with the fundamental principle announced by the apostle: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." James 1:13-14. The Scriptures ascribe every actual event to God in such a sense that it comes into the plan of his universal providence; but they reject with abhorrence the idea that he can excite wicked thoughts in men, or prompt them to wicked deeds. When it is said, once more, that men are drawn to Christ (John 6:44), or driven to worship the heavenly bodies (Deuteronomy 4:19), we understand at once a drawing and a driving that are in accordance with their free intelligent and responsible nature. Other illustrations of this principle will be {542} given in the following chapter, which treats of the figurative language of Scripture.

(3.) The same quality of good sense will enable the interpreter to make those limitations in the language of the sacred writers which are common in popular discourse. In the language of daily life many statements are made in general terms that require for their exact truthfulness various qualifications which the readers or hearers can readily supply for themselves. Honest men, addressing honest men, are not in the habit of guarding their words against every possible misconstruction. It is enough if they speak so that all who will can understand them.

It is said, for example (Genesis 41:57), that "all countries (literally, all the earth) came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because the famine was sore in all the earth." It would be only trifling to ask whether "all the earth" included the people of Europe and India. The reader naturally understands all the lands around Egypt, since they only could come thither for corn. So when it is said in the account of the deluge that "all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were

covered" (Genesis 7:19), it is straining the sacred writer's words to give them a rigid geographical application, as if they must needs include the mountains about the North pole. "All the high hills under the whole heaven" were those where man dwelt, and which were consequently known to man. "The Holy Ghost," says John, "was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." John 7:39. Yet David prayed ages before: "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me" (Psalms 51:11); Isaiah says of ancient Israel that "they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit" (Isaiah 63:10); the Saviour, long before his glorification, promised the Holy Spirit to all that should ask for him (Luke 11:13); and it is a fundamental article of our faith that from Abel to the archangel's trump all holiness is the fruit of the Spirit. But John's readers, who lived after the plenary gift of the Holy Spirit from the day of Pentecost and onward, could not fail to understand him as referring to the gift of the Spirit in that special sense. The apostle Paul says (1 Timothy 2:4) that God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Yet the same apostle teaches that some will remain in ignorance of the truth, and thus perish. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12. The reader's good sense readily reconciles the former with the latter passages. He understands God's will to have all men saved as the will of benevolent desire; just as God says of ancient Israel (Psalms 81:13). "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my {543} ways!" but because they would not do this, he "gave them up to their own heart's lust, and they walked in their own counsels" (ver. 12). Many like illustrations might be added.

(4.) Hence we readily infer the office of a sound judgment in reconciling apparent contradictions, since these arise mainly from the neglect, in one or both of the passages between which the contradiction is said to exist, of reasonable qualifications and limitations. A striking illustration of this is found in the two accounts of the creation. Gen. chaps. 1-2:3 and chap. 2:4-25. In the former narrative the order of time is an essential element. Not so in the latter, where man is the central object, and the different parts of creation are mentioned only as the writer has occasion to speak of them in connection with him. Hence we have in this latter passage the creation of the man (ver. 7), the planting of the garden for his use with its trees and rivers (ver. 8-14), the placing of the man in the garden and the law imposed upon him (ver. 15-17), the defective condition of the man (ver. 18), the notice in connection with this of the creation of beasts and fowls and their being brought to the man to receive names (ver. 19, 20), the creation of the woman and the primitive condition of the pair (ver. 21-25). This simple statement of the course of narration sufficiently refutes the allegation that the second account is inconsistent with the first. In the first account of Paul's conversion it is said that "the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no man." Acts 9:7. In the second Paul says: "They that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me." Acts 22:9. There is no valid ground for doubting that the first narrative, as well as the other two, came from the lips of the apostle himself, and the assumption of any essential contradiction is unreasonable and unnecessary. In regard to the light, it is certain that Paul saw the person of the Saviour, and was made blind by the glory of the vision (Acts 9:17; Acts 9:27; Acts 22:14; 1 Corinthians 9:1), while his companions saw only the light that shone around them, which did not make them blind. In regard to the voice, it is a fair interpretation that they heard a voice only, but no intelligible words. How this difference of perception between Paul and his companions in regard to both the light and the voice was effected we do not know, nor is it necessary that we should. The first account, again, represents Paul's companions as having "stood speechless," while in the third the apostle says:

"When we were all fallen to the earth," Acts 26:14. The most natural explanation here is that the third narrative gives the posture with accuracy, while the first lays stress only upon the amazement {544} which fixed them in a motionless attitude. The apparent discrepancies in these three parallel histories are peculiarly instructive, because they all proceed from the pen of the same author, and must all have been derived from the same source. Such circumstantial differences have the stamp of reality. Instead of throwing any discredit upon the transaction, they only establish its truth upon a firmer basis. Many like illustrations might be added.

(5.) Finally, where the means of reconciling discrepancies are not apparent, the same quality of a sound judgment will keep us from the two extremes of seeking, on the one hand, forced and unnatural explanations, and, on the other, of discrediting well-attested transactions on account of these discrepancies. In the scriptural narratives there are some difficulties (relating mostly to numbers, dates, and the chronological order of events) which we find ourselves unable, with our present means of knowledge, to solve in a satisfactory way. It is the part of sober reason to reserve these difficulties for further light, not to set aside, in view of them, facts attested by irrefragable proof.

Nothing in the evangelic record is more certain, for example, than the fact of our Lord's resurrection. Yet to harmonize the four accounts which we have of it in all their details is a work of extreme difficulty. "Supposing us to be acquainted with every thing said and done, in its order and exactness, we should doubtless be able to reconcile, or account for, the present forms of the narratives; but not having this key to the harmonizing of them, attempts to do so in minute particulars carry no certainty with them." Alford on Matthew 28:1-10. The same general principle applies to other difficulties-in the Old Testament, that respecting the duration of the sojourn in Egypt, and other chronological questions; in the New, that of the two genealogies given of our Lord by Matthew and Luke, that of the day when our Lord ate the passover with his disciples, etc. See further in Chaps. 19, Nos. 6 and 8; 20, No. 22; 29, Nos. 8-10.

8. In bringing this chapter to a conclusion, we add a few words on the office of reason in the interpretation of Scripture. It is admitted by all that we have certain primitive intuitions which lie at the foundation of all knowledge. That an immutable obligation, for example, rests on all men to be truthful, {545} just, benevolent, and grateful, is a truth which we see by the direct light of conscience. There are certain moral axioms, also, outside of the direct sphere of conscience, which shine by their own light. Such is that fundamental truth of theology thus announced by the apostle John: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5); where light and darkness are both taken in a moral sense, as the context shows; and thus by the apostle James: "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (James 1:13); and thus, ages before, by Moses: "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deuteronomy 32:4); and still earlier by Abraham: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25). We are sure that no declaration of God's word, properly interpreted, will contradict these necessary and universal convictions. But there are many weighty truths that lie wholly above the sphere of our direct intuitions on which the infinite understanding of God is alone competent to pass an infallible judgment. Such are the following: If it be God's will to create a race of intelligent beings, what shall be the compass of their faculties, moral, intellectual, and physical? In what circumstances and relations shall he place them, to what probation shall he subject them, and what scope shall he allow to their finite freedom? If they sin,

what plan shall he devise for their redemption, and by what processes shall he reveal and execute this plan? These, and many other questions involving man's highest interests, lie above the sphere of simple intuition. God alone, who looks through eternity at a glance, can fully comprehend them, for they are all constituent parts of his eternal plan. That human reason, which cannot see the whole of truth, should affect to sit in judgment upon them, and to pronounce authoritatively what God may, and what he may not do, is the height of presumption and folly.

TAGS: [Bible] [Interpretation]

35. The Figurative Language of Scripture

CHAPTER XXXV. THE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE.

1. When the psalmist says: "The Lord God is a sun and shield" (Psalms 84:11), he means that God is to all his creatures the source of life and blessedness, and their almighty protector; but this meaning he conveys under the figure of a sun and a shield. When, again, the apostle James says that Moses is read in the synagogues every Sabbath-day (Acts 15:21), he signifies the writings of Moses under the figure of his name. In these examples the figure lies in particular words. But it may be embodied in a sentence, thus: "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (Acts 26:14), where Saul's conduct in persecuting Christ's disciples is represented under the form of an ox kicking against the ploughman's goad only to make the wounds it inflicts deeper. Figurative language, then, is that in which one thing is said under the form or figure of another thing. In the case of allegories and parables, it may take the form, as we shall hereafter see, of continuous discourse. A large proportion of the words in all languages, in truth all that express intellectual and moral ideas, were originally figurative, the universal law being to represent immaterial by material objects. Examples are the words exist, existence, emotion, affliction, anguish, etc. But in these, and innumerable other words, the primitive physical meaning has become obsolete, and thus the secondary spiritual meaning is to us literal. Or, what often happens, while the original physical signification is retained, a secondary figurative meaning of the word has become so common that its use hardly recalls the physical meaning, and it may therefore be regarded as literal; as in the words hard, harsh, rough, when applied to character. In the first of the above examples: "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," the transfer of the word hard from what is physically hard to what is painful or difficult, is so common that it can hardly be regarded as figurative. But the expression that follows is figurative in the fullest sense of the word.

Rhetoricians divide figures into two general classes, figures of words, {547} and figures of thought, and they give elaborate definitions, classifications, and rules for their use. The interpreter of Scripture, however, need not encumber himself with any rhetorical system. The general rules of interpretation already considered will be, for the most part, a sufficient guide to the meaning of the rich variety of figures contained in the Bible, especially in its poetical parts. It is only necessary to add a few words in reference to the ascertaining of figurative language; the most prominent classes of figures; and some principles to be observed in their interpretation.

2. The question may arise whether a writer is to be understood literally or figuratively. For the ascertaining of figurative language, a few simple rules will be, in general, sufficient.

(1.) Multitudes of cases can be decided at once by considering the nature of the subject.

Thus, when the apostle calls Jesus Christ a "foundation," and speaks of building upon this foundation "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble," adding that "every man's work shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is;" and, further, that "if any man's work abide" this fire, "he shall receive a reward," but "if any man's work be burned he

shall suffer loss" (1 Corinthians 3:11-15), we know at once, from the nature of the subject, that he speaks figuratively. He compares the church of God to a temple, of which Jesus Christ is the foundation, while her teachers and preachers are the builders. The "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble," represent primarily the materials with which they build; that is, the character of their doctrines and precepts, and secondarily, the character of those whom they bring into the Christian fold. The "fire," again, is the trial and judgment of the last day. The apostle says of the ancient Israelites that "they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." 1 Corinthians 10:4. So also Christ is called to believers "a chief corner-stone, elect, precious;" but to unbelievers "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence" (1 Peter 2:6-8); "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" (Revelation 5:5); "the Lamb of God" and simply "the Lamb" (John 1:29; John 1:36; Revelation 5:12; Revelation 6:1; etc.); "the door of the sheep" (John 10:7; John 10:9); "the true vine" (John 15:1); and "the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:51). He himself says: "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:54. There is no more ground for understanding the last of these passages literally than the preceding, that is, there is no ground whatever. The dogma of the Romish church, which teaches that {548} the consecrated bread and wine are literally converted into the body and blood of Jesus, violates alike sound reason and every sound principle of interpretation. "As the words, 'This is my body,' and 'This is my blood,' were spoken before Christ's body was broken upon the cross, and before his blood was shed, he could not pronounce them with the intention that they should be taken and interpreted literally by his disciples. He could not take his body in his hands, nor offer them his blood in the cup; for it had not yet been shed." Horne, vol. 2, p. 319.

(2.) In ascertaining figurative language, the interpreter will naturally take into account the scope, the context, and the general analogy of scriptural teaching. If the literal sense, though possible in the nature of things, is inept or contrary to the general tenor of Scripture, it must be rejected. The prophet Isaiah tells us that, under the future reign of the Messiah, the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard lie down with the kid, the lion eat straw like the ox, and the child play with impunity on the hole of the asp. Isaiah 11:6-8. It is possible to conceive of this state of things as effected by a change in the physical nature of all noxious animals. But the writer immediately adds: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (ver. 9). Since then the change is effected by the universal diffusion of "the knowledge of the Lord," it must be a moral change-a transformation of the character of wicked men figuratively described as wolves, leopards, bears, lions, and vipers. The general analogy of prophetic language, which, as will be hereafter shown, abounds in figurative forms of representation, strengthens this conclusion. By the prophet Haggai, again, God says: "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land." Chap. 2:6. The key to the meaning of these words is given in the following verse: "And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." In such a connection, and with such a result, nothing could be more vapid than to understand this shaking of heaven and earth, sea and land, in a physical sense. It is the mighty overturnings among the nations, social, moral, and political, that are here predicted, as Jehovah says by Ezekiel: "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is, and I will give it to him." Chap. 21:27. Compare Isaiah 13:13; Jeremiah 4:24; Ezekiel 38:20; Joel 3:16. So when God announces that he "will cause the sun to go down at

noon, and darken the earth in the clear day" (Amos 8:9), we understand at once that under this figure he forewarns the covenant people of the sudden {549} approach of great calamity. Compare Deuteronomy 28:29; Job 5:14; Isaiah 13:10; Jeremiah 4:23-28; Ezekiel 32:7-8; Joel 2:31; Joel 3:15; etc. This subject will be further discussed under the head of the interpretation of prophecy. In the sermon on the mount, the Saviour says: "Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:39); but the preceding context gives the scope of this and the other particular precepts that follow, which is that Christ's followers should "resist not evil," that is, by rendering evil for evil. It is the spirit of meekness and forbearance that he inculcates, not a slavish regard to this and that particular form of manifesting it. So when he says: "Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (ver. 42), he cannot mean, consistently with the scope of the passage and his teachings elsewhere, that we should stultify ourselves by literally giving to every asker and borrower, without regard to his necessities, real or alleged. He means rather to inculcate that liberal spirit which never withholds such help as it is able to give from those who need it. When the Saviour says again: "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee," etc., both the preceding context and the general tenor of the Scriptures teach us that he means what is expressed by the apostle in another form: "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth." Colossians 3:5. To mortify is to deprive of life, make dead. We mortify our members which would seduce us into sin, not by destroying them, but by keeping them in subjection to "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus."

(3.) If the interpreter is liable to err by taking figurative language in a literal sense, so is he also by regarding as figurative what should be understood literally. A favorite expedient with those who deny the supernatural character of revelation is to explain the miraculous transactions recorded in the Bible as figurative or mythical. When David says that in answer to his prayer "the earth shook and trembled, the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth;" that God "bowed the heavens also and came down, and darkness was under his feet;" that "the Lord thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice, hailstones and coals of fire;" that "he sent out his arrows and scattered them, and he shot out lightnings and discomfited them," all acknowledge that the language is to be figuratively taken. Why then, an objector might ask, not understand the account {550} of the giving of the law on Sinai amid thunderings and lightnings as figurative also? The answer of every plain reader would be-and it is the answer of unsophisticated common sense-that the former passage occurs in a lyric poem, where such figurative descriptions are entirely in place; the latter in a plain narrative, which professes to give throughout historic facts with names and dates; that no reader, who had not a preconceived opinion to maintain, ever did or could think of interpreting the passage in Exodus in any other than a literal way, while every reader understands at once that the poetic description in the eighteenth psalm is to be taken figuratively. The attempt has been made to interpret the gospel history as a myth-the embodiment of a system of pure ideas in the garb of history. It is difficult to refute an assumption which has no foundation to rest upon. This mythical theory may, nevertheless, be disposed of in a very short and simple way. The great central truth of the gospel history is the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. If any one would know how the apostle Paul regarded this, let him read the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, where he pledges his veracity as a witness on its historic reality (ver. 15). If, now, Paul so regarded it, Luke, his companion in travel and labor, cannot have taken a different view of it, nor any other of the evangelists. But if the death and resurrection of Jesus are recorded as true historic events, the whole mythical theory vanishes at once into thin air.

(4.) In regard to those prophecies which relate to the distant future, it may sometimes be difficult to determine whether we are to look for a literal or a figurative fulfilment of them. But this subject will come up for consideration in another place.

3. In regard to the different kinds of figures a few words may be in place.

(1.) The term trope (Greek, tropos, a turn) is applied, in a general sense, to figures of words and speech of every variety; but, in stricter usage, to a word or sentence turned from its literal {551} signification to a figurative sense. Quintilian adds (Inst. Orator. 8. 6. 1) that this must be with good effect (cum virtute); that is, it must add clearness, force, or beauty to the thought. The principal varieties of the trope are the metonymy and the metaphor. The metonymy is founded on the relation of one thing to another. Thus when Abraham says to the rich man: "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them" (Luke 16:29), Moses and the prophets are put for their writings; that is, the authors for their works. "A soft tongue," says the wise man, "breaketh the bone." Proverbs 25:15. Here the word tongue is put for speech, the instrument for the thing effected, and this metonymy is joined with a metaphor. (See below.) The synecdoche, in which a part is put for the whole, as the sword for war, is in its nature essentially a metonymy. Rhetoricians give elaborate classifications of metonymies, but they are of little value to the scriptural student, since all are interpreted according to the few simple principles given in the preceding chapter. The metaphor is founded on the resemblance of one thing to another; as in the examples already given: "The Lord God is a sun and shield" (Psalms 84:11); "I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman." John 15:1. It may lie not in a single word, but in an entire expression, thus: "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (Acts 26:14); "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." Revelation 3:18. The metaphor and metonymy may be joined, as in the words already quoted: "A soft tongue breaketh the bone;" or they may blend themselves with each other, as when Nahum says of the princes of Nineveh: "The sword shall devour thy young lions." Chap. 2:13. In this last example, as often elsewhere, personification, which is properly a figure of thought, is added, the sword being represented as a beast of prey. The grand and gorgeous personifications of Scripture naturally clothe themselves in tropical language of inimitable beauty and exhaustless variety. "O thou sword of the Lord," says Jeremiah, "how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still. How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea-shore? There hath he appointed it." Chap. 47:6, 7. The prophet Habakkuk represents God as coming forth in his glory for the salvation of his people: "The mountains saw thee," says he, "and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high: the sun and moon stood still in their habitation." Chap. 3:10, 11. God’s {552} promise to his redeemed is: "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." Isaiah 55:12. Metonymies, metaphors, and sometimes personifications-the books of the New Testament sparkle with these figures, and they are used always for effect, not empty show. They are like the flaming bolts of heaven, which rend and burn as well as shine. "Beware of false prophets," says the Saviour, "which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits: do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?" Matthew 7:15-16. How effectually does he by these

metaphors strip off the mask from false teachers! "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" 1 Corinthians 12:15-16. Here is personification without a trope. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55), here is a majestic personification in metaphorical form. As resemblance lies at the foundation of the metaphor, it may be called an abbreviated form of comparison, the thing with which the comparison is made being directly predicated of that which is compared. Thus, when we say: A sluggard is vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes of those who send him, we have a metaphor, the sluggard being directly called vinegar and smoke. But if we say: "As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him" (Proverbs 10:26), we have a comparison, and the language ceases to be tropical. The metaphor is thus a more vivid form of expression than the comparison. A common mode of comparison in the book of Proverbs is simply to put together the object compared and the thing or things with which it is compared, thus: "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back" (chap. 26:3); that is, As a whip is appropriate for, the horse, and a bridle for the ass, so is a rod for the fool's back. Again, "Where there is no wood the fire goeth out, and where there is no tale-bearer the strife ceaseth" (Proverbs 26:20); "Charcoal to live coals, and wood to fire; and a man of strife to kindle strife" (Proverbs 26:21); "Silver dross spread over an earthen sherd-burning lips [lips glowing with professions of love] and a wicked heart" (Proverbs 26:23); in all which cases our version has supplied particles of comparison.

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(2.) An allegory is the narrative of a spiritual transaction under the figure of something lower and earthly, the lower transaction representing directly the higher. We have in the eightieth Psalm an exquisite example of the allegory: "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it," etc. (ver. 8-16); where the transfer of the Israelitish people from Egypt to the land of Canaan, with their subsequent history, is described under the figure of a vine. The metaphor and allegory have this in common, that the foundation of both is resemblance, and in both the lower object is put directly for the higher. Yet the metaphor cannot be properly called a condensed allegory, nor the allegory an extended metaphor; for it is essential to the allegory that it have the form of a narrative, and that it contain real history-in the case of prophecy it may be future history-under a figure. Hence it admits of indefinite extension, as in the "Pilgrim's Progress;" and we may add the Canticles, which the Christian church from the earliest times has regarded as an allegory of which the subject is, in Old Testament language, God and his covenant people, but, according to the representation of the New Testament, Christ and his church.

We must carefully distinguish between true allegory and the allegorical or mystical application of real history. In the former case it is not the literal meaning, but the higher sense represented by it, which constitutes the historic truth. God, for example, never transferred a vine from Egypt to Palestine, but he did the covenant people. The story of Sarai and Hagar, on the contrary (Gen., chap. 16), is true history. The apostle Paul makes an allegorical application of it to the two covenants, that on Sinai and that in Christ, which is very beautiful and appropriate; yet the story itself is not allegory, but plain history. See further, in Chap. 37, No. 4.

(3.) A parable is the narrative of a supposed event for the purpose of illustrating a spiritual truth or principle. The office of the narrative is to embody the principle. It should, therefore, be natural and probable; but its literal truth is of no consequence. In our Lord's parable of the unjust steward, for example (Luke 16:1-9), the incidents of the narrative may or {554} may not have been historically true; but either way the great principle which it illustrates (ver. 10) remains the same.

Allegories and parables pass into each other by insensible degrees. Some of our Lord's so-called parables are rather allegories; as that of the vineyard let out to husbandmen (Matthew 21:33-41), which is founded on the beautiful allegory of Isaiah (chap. 5:1-7); so also that of the good shepherd (John 10:1-18). In their pure form, however, the allegory and the parable are easily distinguished from each other. In the allegory, the figure represents directly the higher transaction. Hence the incidents introduced in the figure-at least all the main incidents-must have something corresponding to them in the spiritual transaction which the figure represents. The case of the parable is different. Here the spiritual truth is not directly described in terms of the figure, but simply illustrated from it. The incidents and characters of the story are separable from the general principle which it inculcates, and are sometimes formally separated by the speaker himself; as when our Lord says: "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field," etc. Matthew 13:24. For this reason they may belong more or less to the mere drapery of the parable, so that to press them in its interpretation would lead to error instead of truth. See further below, No. 7.

(4.) The fable is related to the parable, but it differs from it in two respects. First, it moves in a worldly sphere, having to do with prudential maxims rather than spiritual truth. Secondly, it allows, in harmony with this its lower nature, irrational objects as speakers and actors, which would be contrary to the dignity of the parable. Our Lord never employed fables as vehicles of instruction. There are two examples of them in the Old Testament; neither of them, however, coming from the lips of prophetical men. The first is that of Jotham: "The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive-tree, Reign thou over us," etc. Judges 9:8-15. The second is that of Jehoash: "The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle." 2 Kings 14:9.

(5.) A symbol is a material object, a transaction in the material world, or sometimes a number, to represent some higher spiritual truth. {555} Ritual symbols, like the ark of the covenant, the high-priest's dress, the sacrifices, and, in general, the whole tabernacle and temple service, will be considered hereafter under the head of types. We speak of symbols now, only so far as they belong to the human side of interpretation. We have a beautiful example of a symbolic transaction in the seventeenth chapter of the book of Numbers, where the princes of Israel, by God's direction, take twelve rods, write each man his name upon his rod, and lay them up in the tabernacle before the Lord, whereupon Aaron's rod "budded, and brought forth buds, and blossomed blossoms, and yielded almonds;" a symbol that God would make the priesthood to flourish in his family.

Scriptural symbols exhibit a wonderful variety. Sometimes they are seen in dreams, as in Jacob's dream of a ladder reaching to heaven (Genesis 28:12-15); Pharaoh's two dreams of the fat and lean kine, and the good and thin ears (Genesis 41:1-7); or in prophetic vision, like Jeremiah's vision of a seething pot with the face towards the north (Jeremiah 1:13); Ezekiel's vision of the

cherubim (chap. 1); and Amos' vision of a basket of summer fruit (chap. 8:2). At other times they are actual transactions. So the false prophet Zedekiah "made him horns of iron: and he said, Thus saith the Lord, with these shalt thou push the Syrians till thou have consumed them" (1 Kings 22:11); the true prophet Jeremiah wore a yoke upon his neck as a sign that God would subject the nations to Nebuchadnezzar's power, and the false prophet Hananiah broke it, that he might thus signify the deliverance of the people from Nebuchadnezzar's rule. Jeremiah 27:1-8, compared with 28:10, 11.

(6.) A proverb is a short maxim relating to practical life. It may be expressed literally or figuratively, but in either case it must contain a general truth. "A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him; neither will he go unto the wise" (Proverbs 15:12), is a proverb expressed in plain language. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Proverbs 18:10), is a proverb under a beautiful figure. The foolish young men counselled Rehoboam to say to the Israelites: "My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins." 1 Kings 12:10. This is not a proverb, because it contains {556} only the figurative statement of a particular fact. But if we change the form, and say: The little finger of a foolish ruler is thicker than the loins of a wise king, we make it general, and thus it becomes a proverb. The Hebrew word for a proverb (mashal) denotes a similitude, this being one of its most common forms. Examples occur in abundance in the book of Proverbs. We have them in the form of direct comparison: "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (chap. 27:19); "A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike" (chap. 27:15); "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith" (chap. 15:17). We have them also in the form of metaphor: "The contentions of a wife are a continual dropping" (chap. 19:13); "The lips of knowledge are a precious jewel" (chap. 20:15). But most frequently the comparison appears in the form of contrast, thus: "A wise son heareth his father's instruction; but a scorner heareth not rebuke" (chap. 13:1); "A faithful witness will not lie; but a false witness will utter lies" (chap. 14:5). The signification of the word proverb is then extended to short sententious maxims of every form, even where comparison is excluded, thus: "A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment" (chap. 17:23).

(7.) The word myth (Greek muthos) was applied by the Greeks to a legend or story of early times, then to a fable, like those of Æsop. In modern usage it is defined to be a story in which "there is an unconscious blending of the deeper meaning with the outward symbol, the two being separate and separable in the parable." "The mythic narrative presents itself not merely as the vehicle of the truth, but as itself being the truth; while in the parable there is a perfect consciousness in all minds of the distinctness between form and essence, shell and kernel, the precious vessel and yet more precious wine that it contains." Trench, Notes on the Parables, chap. 1. A good illustration of this we have in the tales of Grecian mythology, once received by the masses of the people as literally true; but which "a later and more reflective age than that in which the mythus had birth" learned to regard as only the vehicle of certain ideas respecting deity. The myth, as thus defined, does not come within the sphere of biblical interpretation. {557} The historic events recorded in the Old Testament may, and often do, shadow forth something higher. In that case they are not myths, but typical history. Chap. 37, No. 4. All the scriptural narratives, on the contrary, which are true, not in their literal meaning, but in a higher sense, come under the head of allegories, parables, or symbolic representations.

4. In the interpretation of figurative language we must be guided, in general, by the principles considered in the preceding chapter. To lay down special rules for the interpretation of the rich and endlessly varied figures which adorn the pages of Holy Writ would be as impracticable as useless. The history of Biblical exegesis, however, shows that some general cautions are much needed.

5. The youthful student of Scripture should be reminded, first of all, that its figurative language is no less certain and truthful than its plain and literal declarations. The figures of the Bible are employed not simply to please the imagination and excite the feelings, but to teach eternal verities. The Lord Jesus, "the faithful and true Witness," said: "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away." Mark 13:31. Yet there is a class of interpreters who seem to think that if they can show in any given case that his language is figurative, its meaning is well nigh divested of all certainty and reality. Thrice in immediate succession did he solemnly warn his hearers to cut off an offending hand or foot, and to pluck out an offending eye, rather than be cast with the whole body into hell, "into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Mark 9:43-48. But, says one of this class of expositors, the maiming of the body is figurative language, and so is the representation of the worm that never dies. Undoubtedly the maiming of the body is so; and how far the unquenchable fire may also be a figure for the dread reality that awaits the incorrigibly impenitent in the world to come we pretend not to know. But in the lips of Jesus figures teach truth, not fiction. The unhappy sinner who despises the grace of the gospel will find the reality not {558} less terrible than the figures by which Christ has represented it. The story of the rich man and Lazarus is a parable; but we cannot on this ground set aside the solemn lessons which it inculcates. What these lessons are, it requires only candor and faith to receive. They teach us that God’s suffering children go immediately, upon death, to a state of conscious blessedness; and "the men of the world, which have their portion in this life," to a place of unmitigated suffering. Whatever be the comprehension of the word Hades (rendered in our version by the word hell), there is an impassable gulf between Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom and the rich man in torment. The "great gulf fixed" may be a figure; but it represents an awful reality; and that reality is, that there is no transition from the one state to the other.

6. In the allegory the higher spiritual transaction is, as we have seen, directly represented by the lower. When we know, therefore, what the allegory represents, we have the key to its interpretation, and all its incidents fall naturally into place. If the sphere of the allegory be the outward history of God’s people, all its incidents-at least all its main incidents-ought to have a significance. If its sphere be that of inward spiritual experience, as in the Song of Solomon, more latitude must be allowed for the drapery of the story; yet here also the essential parts will each correspond to something in the higher object represented. An example of pure historic allegory is that of the vine transplanted from Egypt (Psalms 80:1-19), where the higher object, which gives the key to the meaning, is God’s covenant people. The casting out of the heathen (ver. 8), is literally expressed, but in the verses following, the figure is beautifully carried out. This vine takes deep root and fills the land; the hills are covered with its shadow, and its boughs are like the goodly cedar; it sends out its boughs to the sea, and its branches to the river (ver. 9-11). Here we have one main incident, the increase of the people in the land of Canaan. Then God breaks down its hedges, so that every passer-by plucks it; the boar out of the wood wastes it, and the wild beast of the field devours it (ver. 12, 13). This is another main incident, the withdrawal of God’s protection from his people, and their oppression by their heathen neighbors. The prayer that

follows in behalf of this vine (ver. 14-16) {559} represents the love which God's people bear to his church. All these parts of the allegory have their proper significance. The rest of the imagery-the hills overshadowed by it, the boughs like the goodly cedar, the wild boar wasting it, etc.-is but the drapery of the allegory; and an attempt to find a spiritual meaning for each of these particulars-the boar out of the wood, for example, and the beast of the field-would but mar its beauty and force.

We give from Ezekiel (chap. 17:3-10) another example of historic allegory, in which the essential parts can be readily distinguished from the luxuriant imagery of the prophet: "A great eagle with great wings, long-winged, full of feathers, which had divers colors [Nebuchadnezzar], came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar [Jehoiachin, whom Nebuchadnezzar dethroned and carried to Babylon. The cedar of Lebanon represents the royal family, and Jehoiachin, as the reigning monarch, its highest branch]: he cropped off the top of his young twigs [the same as: he took the highest branch of the cedar], and carried it into a land of traffic [Chaldea]; he set it in a city of merchants [Babylon]. He took also of the seed of the land [the king's seed, meaning Zedekiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar made king in the place of Jehoiachin], and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters, and set it as a willow-tree [established Zedekiah on the throne, and gave him the means of prosperity as his vassal]. And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature [not a lofty cedar, but a low vine; that is, a tributary king], whose branches turned towards him [towards Nebuchadnezzar, as dependent upon him], and the roots thereof were under him [under Nebuchadnezzar, as subject to his power]: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth twigs. There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers [Pharaoh, king of Egypt]: and behold this vine did bend her roots towards him [Zedekiah turned away his confidence from Nebuchadnezzar to Pharaoh], and shot forth her branches towards him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation. It was planted [had been planted by Nebuchadnezzar] in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine [fidelity to Nebuchadnezzar would have made Zedekiah prosperous]. Say thou, Thus saith the Lord God: Shall it prosper? [now that it bends towards the second eagle] shall he [Nebuchadnezzar] not pull up the roots thereof, that it wither? It shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof [the work of plucking it up will be easy, not requiring a numerous force]. Yea, behold, being planted shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither when the east wind toucheth it? [a new figure to represent its destruction] it shall wither in the furrows where it grew."

There is a class of allegories in the Old Testament which represent the {560} relation of God to his people under the figure of husband and wife. Such are the Song of Solomon, and the two remarkable allegories in Ezekiel (chapters 16 and 23). The luxuriant fulness of imagery in these allegories does not admit of interpretation in detail. The general scope only of the images is to be taken into account, since this contains the essential idea. In the free style of the scriptural writers the allegory admits of the introduction of literal clauses ("Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it," Psalms 80:8), and also of explanatory clauses, though not so readily as the parable. See examples in Isaiah 5:7; John 10:9; John 10:11; John 10:14.

7. The scriptural parables have a rich variety of form, sometimes approaching to that of the allegory, when the interpretation must be upon the same general principle. In its pure form, however, the parable does not, like the allegory, represent directly the higher spiritual truth, but is simply a narrative to illustrate it. It may be introduced in the absolute form, like the parable of the

barren fig-tree (Luke 13:6-9); or, more commonly, in the shape of a similitude, thus: "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field" (Matthew 13:24); "Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?" Mark 4:30. It may be left without explanation, but more commonly an explanatory remark is added. So to the parable of the two sons whom the father asked to work in his vineyard is added the application: "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" (Matthew 21:28-31); and the parable of the Pharisee and publican is both introduced and followed by an explanatory clause (Luke 18:9-14). All such clauses are of the highest importance for the interpretation of the parables to which they are annexed. In the interpretation of a parable, the first and most important thing is to ascertain the spiritual truth which it is intended to inculcate. How far a spiritual significance is to be sought for the particular incidents of parables is a question to be determined separately for each, according to its nature. In the parable of the sower, which our Lord himself interpreted (Matthew 13:3-8; Matthew 13:19-23), all the parts are essential, since the four different kinds of {561} soil represent four different classes of hearers. So in the parable of the tares in the field (Matthew 13:24-30; Matthew 13:37-43), the good seed sown by the owner of the field, the tares sown by his enemy, the separation, at the time of harvest, of the tares from the wheat, the burning of the tares, and the gathering of the wheat into the barn, are all main incidents in its spiritual application. Not so in the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), of which our Lord himself has given the scope, and, so far as we can see the only scope: "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." If we go farther, and inquire what is the spiritual meaning of the lamps and oil-vessels, of the equal division of the virgins into five wise and five foolish, of the request of the foolish virgins that the wise would give them oil, and the answer of the wise virgins, we run into useless speculations. All these particulars belong to the drapery of the parable, and are intended to make the story natural and probable. In the pure form of the parable, the personages introduced to illustrate God’s ways of providence and grace do not, as in the allegory, directly represent God himself. It is not necessary, therefore, that there be in all cases a correspondence between their character and that of the holy God. It is sufficient if the words and deeds ascribed to them truly illustrate the spiritual principle in question. In the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:23-35), his lord "commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made" (ver. 25); and afterwards he "was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him" (ver. 34). We need not trouble ourselves about the reasonableness of these acts on the part of an earthly lord. It is sufficient for the end of the parable that they were in accordance with the usages of the age, and thus illustrated the great truth which the parable was intended to enforce: "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (ver. 35). We have still more forcible illustrations of this principle in such parables as those of the importunate friend (Luke 11:5-8), the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-8), and the unfaithful steward (Luke 16:1-9). The Saviour does not compare God to an indolent friend, who will not arise to accommodate his neighbor with bread till he is forced to do so by his importunity; nor to an unjust judge, who fears not God nor regards men. But he draws illustrations from their conduct of the efficacy of importunate prayer; adding, at the conclusion of each parable, its scope: "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke 11:9); "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?" Luke 18:7. In the parable of the unfaithful steward, our

Lord introduces a fraudulent transaction-a transaction so {562} manifestly fraudulent that there is no danger of our thinking that it could have his approbation-that he may thus illustrate the importance of prudent provision for the future. By allowing each of his lord's debtors to diminish the amount due from him, he gains their favor, that in time of need he may be received into their houses. For the right apprehension of the parable, the words of the eighth verse are of primary importance: "And the lord [the master of the steward] commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely" [prudently, as the Greek word means]. Unjust as the steward's conduct was, he could not but commend it as a prudent transaction for the end which he had in view. Our Saviour adds: "For the children of this world are in their generation [more exactly, towards or in respect to their own generation; that is, in dealing with men of their own sort] wiser than the children of light." The steward and his lord's debtors were all "children of this world," and the transaction between them was conducted upon worldly principles. Our Saviour would have "the children of light"-God's holy children, who live and act in the sphere of heavenly light-provident of their everlasting welfare in the use which they make of this world's goods, as this steward was of his earthly welfare when he should be put out of his stewardship. He accordingly adds, as the scope of the parable (ver. 9): "Make to yourselves friends of [by the right use of] the mammon of unrighteousness [so called as being with unrighteous men the great object of pursuit, and too commonly sought, moreover, by unrighteous means]; that when ye fail [are discharged from your stewardship by death], they may receive you [that is, the friends whom ye have made by bestowing your earthly riches in deeds of love and mercy] into everlasting habitations." Our Lord uses the words, "they may receive you," in allusion to the steward's language: "they may receive me into their houses." They do not receive us by any right or authority of their own, for this belongs to Christ alone; but they receive us in the sense that they bear witness before the throne of Christ to our deeds of love and mercy, by which is manifested the reality of our faith, and thus our title, through grace, to everlasting habitations. Compare the remarkable passage in Matthew 25:34-46, which furnishes a true key to the present parable.

8. To determine whether a symbol is a real transaction or seen only in vision, we must consider both its nature and the context. When Ezekiel, at God's command, visits the temple-court, digs in its wall, and sees the abominations practised there (chap. 8), we know from his own words (ver. 3) that the whole transaction was "in the visions of God." So also the remarkable vision of dry bones. Chap. 37:1-14. But the symbolical action that {563} follows-the joining of two sticks into one-seems to be represented as real; for the people ask concerning it: "Wilt thou not tell us what thou meanest by these?" (ver. 18), and the two sticks are in the prophet's hand "before their eyes" (ver. 20). The nature of the symbolical transaction recorded in Jeremiah 32:6-12 -the purchase of Hanameel's field-with the accompanying historical circumstances, shows that it was real. From the nature of the vision of the chariot of God, on the contrary, which Ezekiel saw (chap. 1:10), as well as from the accompanying notices (chaps. 1:1; 8:1-4), we know that it was represented to the prophet's inner sense, not seen with his outward eyes. The moral character of the transactions recorded by Hosea (chaps. 1-3) has led commentators to decide against their literal occurrence. In some cases we must remain in doubt whether the symbolical transactions are real or seen in vision. How are we to understand, for example, the transactions recorded in Isa. chap. 20; in Jer. chap. 13:1-11; in Ezek. chap. 4? Concerning such examples expositors will judge differently; but in either way of understanding them, their meaning and the instructions which they furnish are the same. The subject of symbols will come up again in connection with that of prophecy. At present we consider

simply the general principles upon which they are to be interpreted. Here we are to be guided first of all by the writer's own explanations. Where these are wanting we must carefully study the nature of the figures used, and the connections in which they occur. The sacred writers very commonly indicate the meaning of the symbols which they employ. Thus the prophet Isaiah is directed to loose the sackcloth from his loins, and put off his shoe from his foot, walking naked and barefoot. Chap. 20:2. Then follows the explanation of this symbolical transaction: "Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and Ethiopia; so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot," etc. (ver. 3, 4). For other examples see the symbol of the girdle (Jeremiah 13:1-7 compared with ver. 8-11); of the purchase of Hanameel's field (Jeremiah 32:6-12 compared with ver. 13-15); of the removal of household stuff (Ezekiel 12:3-7 compared {564} with ver. 8-12); of the plumb-line (Amos 7:7-8); of the four horns and four smiths (Zechariah 1:18-21); and many other symbolical transactions which will readily occur to the student of Scripture. But sometimes the symbol is given without an explanation, or with only an obscure intimation of its meaning. The prophet Amos has a vision of grasshoppers, and afterwards of a devouring fire, with only a general intimation that they denote heavy calamities, which the Lord in his pity will avert in answer to prayer. Amos 7:1-6. Here the nature of the symbols, in connection with the known situation of the Israelitish people, shows that they represent the general desolation of the land by foreign enemies. The prophet Ezekiel adds no interpretation to his vision of the Lord enthroned in glory upon the firmament above the chariot with four cherubim and four living wheels full of eyes, in the midst of which a bright fire glows and lightnings blaze. Chaps. 1, 10. From a careful study of the nature of this magnificent imagery we may infer with probability that the cherubim with their wheels, moving every way with the rapidity of a flash of lightning, denote all the agencies and instrumentalities by which God administers his government over the world, which are absolutely at his command, and execute with unerring certainty all his high purposes. The four faces of the cherubim, moreover, which answer to the four principal divisions of living beings among the Hebrews, seem to represent the fulness of their endowments. The meaning of Ezekiel's vision of a New Jerusalem, with its temple and altar, comes more properly under the head of prophecy. Some of the symbols in the book of Zechariah are expounded with beautiful clearness, as that of the two olive-trees. Chap. 4:1-10. Of others the meaning is only hinted at in an enigmatical way; so that their interpretation is a matter of great difficulty and uncertainty. As examples we may refer to the symbol of the ephah (chap. 5:5-11); of the four chariots coming out from between two mountains of brass with horses of different colors (chap. 6:1-9); of the two staves, Beauty and Bands, with which the prophet in vision is commanded to feed "the flock of the slaughter," and which he is afterwards to break (chap. 11:4-14). For the details in the interpretation of these and other difficult symbols the reader must be referred to the commentaries. Our limits will only allow us to indicate the general principles upon which the expositor must proceed.

9. There is a class of scriptural symbols which may be called numerical. Thus seven is the well-known symbol of completeness, four of universality, twelve of God's people. See Chap. 32, No. 5. Under this head fall also those passages in which a day is put for a year, or for an indefinitely long period of time. One of the most certain examples is Daniel's prophecy {565} of the seventy weeks that were to precede the death of the Messiah (chap. 9:24-27), for the details of which the reader is referred to the commentators. Upon the same principle we must, in all probability, interpret the "time and times and dividing of time," that is, three and a half years

(Daniel 7:25); the "forty and two months" (Revelation 11:2; Revelation 13:5); and the "thousand two hundred and threescore days" (Revelation 11:3; Revelation 12:6). Compare Ezekiel 4:4-8, in which symbolical transaction a day is expressly put as the symbol of a year. On the symbolical interpretation of the six days of creation, see in Chap. 19, No. 6.

TAGS: [Bible] [Interpretation]

36. The Unity of Revelation

SECOND DIVISION.

INTERPRETATION VIEWED ON THE DIVINE SIDE

CHAPTER XXXVI. THE UNITY OFRevelation 1:1-20. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world;" and therefore they constitute together a self-consistent whole. To receive the Holy Scriptures as containing a revelation from God is to acknowledge that they possess an essential and all-pervading unity. Whoever speaks timidly and hesitatingly of the essential harmony between the Old Testament and the New, either refuses to acknowledge both as given by inspiration of God, or he apprehends this great fundamental truth only in a confused and imperfect manner. If God spake by Moses and the prophets, as well as by Christ and his apostles, it is vain to allege any contradiction in doctrine or spirit between the former and the latter. So absolutely certain is it that the Saviour and his apostles built on the foundation of the Old Testament, that to deny its divine authority is to deny that of the New Testament also.

2. But the unity of revelation, like that which pervades all the other works of God, is a unity in the midst of diversity-diversity in its contemporaneous parts, but especially in its progress. Illustrations without number are at hand. The history of a plant of wheat, from the time when the kernel is sown in the earth to the harvest, has perfect unity of plan. But how unlike in outward form are the tender blade, the green stalk, and the ripened ear! The year constitutes a self-consistent whole. But can any thing be more dissimilar in form than {567} spring and autumn? Yet no one thinks of finding a want of harmony between the fragrant blossoms of the former, and the ripened fruit of the latter. The path to the harvest lies through the blossoms. Geologists dwell at great length on the varied conditions through which our planet has passed, and the wonderfully diversified forms of vegetable and animal life corresponding to these several conditions. Yet in this endless diversity of outward form they recognize from first to last a deep underlying unity of plan. We might, then, reasonably infer beforehand that if God should make a revelation of himself to men, it would have not only unity but diversity of outward form, especially diversity of progress. The fact that the revelation contained in the Bible has such diversity is one of the seals of its genuineness.

3. We may consider this unity in diversity in respect to the form of God’s kingdom. From Adam to Abraham God administered the affairs of the human family as a whole, without any visible organization of a church as distinct from the world at large. From Abraham to Moses his church-using the term church in a general sense-existed in a patriarchal form. With the beginning of the Mosaic dispensation he put it into the form of a state, of which he was the supreme head and lawgiver, while its earthly rulers exercised under him all the functions of civil offices, the bearing of the sword included. When Christ came, he separated the church from the state, and gave it its present spiritual and universal organization. In all this diversity of outward form we recognize the progress of one grand self-consistent plan.

4. We may now go back again to the beginning, and consider the diversity in the forms of public worship-the simple offering of Abel, who "brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof," the altars of the patriarchs, the gorgeous ceremonial of the Mosaic economy with its priesthood and sacrifices, "the service of song in the house of the Lord" added by David, the synagogue service of later times, and, finally, the spiritual priesthood of believers under the New Testament, {568} whose office is "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5); and show that through all this variety of outward form the essence of God's service has ever remained unchanged, so that the example of primitive believers is a model for our imitation. Heb. chap. 11.

5. We may show, again, that the same manifoldness belongs to the forms of labor devolved on God's servants in different ages. The work assigned to Noah was not that of Abraham; nor was Abraham's work that of Moses; nor the work of Moses that of David; nor David's work that of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; nor did any one of the Old Testament believers receive the broad commission: "Go ye into all the world; and preach the gospel to every creature." They could not receive such a commission, for the way was not yet prepared. Abraham must sojourn in the land of promise "as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob" (Hebrews 11:9); Moses must lead Israel out of Egypt, and be God's mediator for the law given on Sinai; Joshua must take possession of the land of promise and David maintain it, sword in hand; the prophets must foretell the future glories of Christ's kingdom, not preach it, as did the apostles, to all nations. But in the divine plan this manifoldness of service constitutes a self-consistent and harmonious whole.

6. The same unity in diversity belongs to the spirit of revelation. Failing to apprehend the character of God in its entireness, Marcion rent the seamless garment of divine perfection into two parts, the one consisting of justice, which he assigned to the "Demiurge" of the Old Testament, the other of goodness, as the attribute of the supreme God of the New Testament. He did not see that God's character is alike infinite on both sides; that his justice is a justice of infinite goodness, and his goodness a goodness of infinite justice. Hence he arrayed in opposition to each other two caricatures of deity, the one drawn from the Old Testament, the other from the New; an error in which he has had too many imitators in modern times. To see the harmony of the spirit that pervades the Holy Scriptures {569} from beginning to end in respect to the Divine character, we should take a comprehensive instead of a partial view of their representations. It is true that the Old Testament describes God as infinite in holiness and inflexibly just. But it also describes him as "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." It is true that God's covenant under the Old Testament was restricted to a single nation; but this was, as has been heretofore shown, preparatory to a universal dispensation of mercy, as when a general seizes one strong position with a view to the conquest of an entire region. Chap. 18. It is true, on the other hand, that the New Testament is, in a peculiar sense, a revelation of God's mercy through Jesus Christ. But it is a discriminating mercy, through which God's awful holiness and justice shine with dazzling brightness. It is a mercy shown not at the expense of justice, but in perfect harmony with it; a mercy sternly restricted, moreover, to those who comply with the conditions on which it is offered. The gospel is a plan of salvation, not of condemnation; "for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." John 3:17. Yet it brings

condemnation to those who reject it; for the Saviour immediately adds (ver. 18): "He that believeth on him, is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." It is in the New Testament, not in the Old, that we find the most awful declarations of God's wrath against the finally impenitent, some of them proceeding, too, from the lips of the compassionate Saviour: "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:9); "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God {570} abideth on him" (John 3:36); "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:46).

7. The same harmony of spirit pervades both Testaments in respect to the way of salvation. On this momentous question the teachings of the New Testament are fuller than those of the Old, but never in contradiction with them. The Old Testament teaches that men are saved, not from the merit of their good works, but from God's mercy: the New Testament adds a glorious revelation respecting the ground of this mercy in Jesus Christ. To exhibit in a clear light the reality of this harmony, let us take a passage of the New Testament which embodies in itself the substance of the way of salvation, and compare with it the declarations of the Old Testament. The following will be appropriate: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Titus 3:5. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us. "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 7:7-8); "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great" (Psalms 25:11); "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions" (Psalms 51:1); "I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen whither ye went" (Ezekiel 36:22); "We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies" (Daniel 9:18). By the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. {571} "Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me" (Psalms 51:6-7; Psalms 51:10-11); "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33); "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

8. The stern character of the Mosaic dispensation is freely admitted. As a preparatory dispensation, severity belonged appropriately to it. "The law," says Paul, "was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Galatians 3:24. Its office was to educate the human conscience to such a point that it should be prepared for the full revelation of God's mercy in Christ. We may concede the prominence of God's justice in the Old Testament, and his mercy in the New; but we must never forget that neither part of divine revelation is complete in itself. It is only when we view them in their connection with each other, as parts of one great whole, that we discern in them an all-pervading unity and harmony of spirit. From the unity of revelation some inferences may be drawn of a very practical character, especially in reference to the interpretation of the Old Testament.

9. Each particular communication from God to man must be, in its place and measure, perfect. For it proceeded from the infinite {572} mind of God, who understood at the beginning the whole plan of redemption, and who, when he made the first revelation concerning it, knew all that was afterwards to follow, and said and did, in the most perfect way, what was proper to be said and done at the time. The revelations of the Holy Spirit, therefore, admit of a stupendous development, but no rectification or improvement. The very earliest of them contain the germs of all that is to follow without any admixture of falsehood. There is a holding back of the full light reserved for future ages, but no mist of error-nothing which, fairly interpreted, will ever need to be retracted. For this reason the very earliest of God's communications to men retain for us, who live in these latter days, their pristine freshness and power. Take, for example, the great primitive prophecy: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Genesis 3:15. We can find no words more pertinent to describe the mighty conflict now going on between the kingdom of God and that of Satan. What are they but a condensation into one sentence of the history of redemption-a flash of light from the third heavens, which discloses at a glance man's destiny from Eden to the trump of the archangel? And so is it also with the later prophecies concerning Christ and his kingdom. What is true of the revelations of the Old Testament holds good of all its institutions. In their place, and with reference to the end which they proposed to accomplish, they were all perfect; were the best that could be given under existing circumstances. At the foundation of all our reasonings concerning the appointments of the Old Testament must lie the axiom: "As for God his way is perfect."

10. The later revelations must he taken as the true exponents of the earlier. This is but saying that the Holy Spirit is the true and proper expositor of his own communications to men. Since, as we have seen, the first revelations were made in full view of all that was to follow, the later revelations must be considered not as a mass of foreign and heterogeneous materials {573} superadded to the original prophecies, but as a true expansion of the earlier prophecies out of their own proper substance. For example, the promise made to Abraham: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18), is not so much a new promise as a further unfolding of the original one: "It shall bruise thy head." A further development of the same promise we have in Nathan's words to David: "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee, thy throne shall be established for ever;" and in all the bright train of prophecies in which the glory and universal dominion of the Messiah's kingdom are foretold down to the day of Gabriel's announcement to Mary: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of

Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Luke 1:32-33. And since the manifestation of God in the flesh is the culminating point of revelation, it follows that the Lord Jesus and his apostles, whom he authoritatively commissioned to unfold the doctrines of the gospel, must be, in a special sense, the expositors of the Old Testament, from whose interpretations, when once fairly ascertained, there is no appeal. The attempt of some to make a distinction between Christ's authority and that of his apostles is nugatory. As it is certain that our Lord himself could not have been in error, so it is certain also that he would not have commanded his apostles to teach all nations concerning himself and his doctrines, and have further given them, in the possession of miraculous powers, the broad seal of their commission, only to leave them subject to the common prejudices and errors of their age. See further in Chap. 7, Nos. 3, 4.

11. The extent of meaning contained in a given revelation must be that which the Holy Spirit intended. It is not to be limited, then, by the apprehension of those to whom it was originally made. Earlier prophecy is, at least in many cases, framed with a view to the subsequent development of its meaning. Until {574} such development is made by God himself, either in the way of further revelations, or indirectly by the course of his providence, men's apprehension of its meaning, though it may be true as far as it goes, must yet be inadequate. To cite a single passage from one of the Old Testament prophecies: "It hath pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." Isaiah 53:10. No one will maintain that the Jews before our Lord's advent (all carnal prejudices aside) could have had that apprehension of its deep meaning which it is our privilege to enjoy. This meaning was contained in the promise from the first, but in an undeveloped form. Accordingly the prophets themselves "inquired and searched diligently" concerning the import of their utterances and the time of their fulfilment. 1 Peter 1:11. They who deny the reality of prophetic inspiration are necessitated, for consistency's sake, to deny also the principle now laid down. But if revelation be a true communication from God to men, it is reasonable to believe that it should have contained from the beginning the germs of mighty events in the distant future, the realization of which in history should be, in connection with further revelations from God, its true expositor.

12. The more obscure declarations of Scripture are to be interpreted from the clearer. A single passage of God's word occasionally gives us a glimpse of some great truth nowhere else referred to in Scripture. Of this we have a remarkable example in what the apostle says of Christ's delivering up the kingdom to the Father upon the completion of the work of redemption. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. But no great truth relating to the way of salvation through Christ is thus taught obscurely and in some single passage of Scripture. Every such truth pervades the broad current of revelation, and shines forth from its pages so clearly that no candid inquirer can fail to apprehend its true meaning. If, then, we find in the Bible dark and difficult passages, they must, if interpreted at all, be explained, not {575} in contradiction with what is clearly and fully taught, but in harmony with it. This is but saying that, instead of using what is obscure to darken what is clearly revealed, we should, as far as possible, illustrate that which is dark by that which is clear. The Scriptures teach, for example, with abundant clearness, that Christ is the only foundation on which the church can rest. Isaiah 28:16; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephes. 2:20; 1 Peter 2:6. This is, indeed, an office which plainly requires for its exercise that omnipotence, and that supreme power in heaven and earth which are expressly ascribed to him. Matthew 11:27; Matthew 28:18; John 5:19-30;

John 17:2; 1 Corinthians 15:1-58; 24-28; Ephes. 1:20-23; Php 2:9-11; Colossians 1:15-19; Hebrews 1:3. When, therefore, our Lord says to Peter: "Thou art Peter [that is, as the word Peter means in the original, Thou art Rock], and upon this rock will I build my church" (Matthew 16:18), to understand Peter, or any pretended successor of Peter, as a rock in any other sense than as an eminent instrument in Christ's hand for the establishment of his church, is absurd and blasphemous.

Again: Christ gives to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven, with power to bind and loose (Matthew 16:19), and elsewhere the same power is conferred upon all the apostles (Matthew 18:18). That Peter and his associates in the apostleship had the keys of the kingdom of heaven in any such sense as that in which Christ has them (Revelation 3:7); that is, that they had authoritative power to admit their fellow-sinners to heaven, or exclude them from heaven, is contrary to the whole tenor of the New Testament, which everywhere represents Christ as the supreme Judge, upon whose decision depends the everlasting destiny of every child of Adam. Matthew 7:21-22; Matthew 16:27; Matthew 25:31-46; John 17:2; Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10. Christ's words concerning the keys may be best understood of the special authority which he bestowed on the apostles, as inspired teachers and guides of his primitive church, to settle all questions respecting her. For eminent examples of the exercise of this power, see the decisions concerning Gentile converts, Acts 11:1-18; Acts 15:1-29. In this sense the gift of the keys ceased with that of inspiration. But if, as some think, the words may be understood of the common power conferred by Christ on his churches to regulate their own affairs, to administer discipline, and to admit or exclude from their communion, the power continues in this sense in the visible church, and is valid so far as it is exercised in accordance with God's word. So also must we interpret the words of Christ recorded by the apostle John: "And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." {576} Chap. 20:22, 23. The authoritative forgiveness of sin is a prerogative of God alone, the exercise of which implies omniscience as well as supreme authority in heaven and earth. The prerogative of remitting and retaining men's sins here conferred on the apostles is part of the general power of binding and loosing already considered. It was exercised in the sphere of the visible church on earth. As it respects the actual forgiveness of sin and consequent admission of the soul to communion with God here and eternal life hereafter, God's ministers can only declare the terms of salvation as they are set forth in the gospel. The same general principle is applicable to the interpretation of all passages containing "things hard to be understood." The "unlearned and unstable" wrest them, by taking them out of their connection and in contradiction to the general tenor of God's word. But the candid student of Scripture never uses that which is difficult in revelation to obscure that which is plain. He seeks, on the contrary, to illumine what is dark by that which shines with a clear and steady light.

13. As a fitting close to this part of our subject we add some remarks on the analogy of faith. "We may define it to be that general rule of doctrine which is deduced, not from two or three parallel passages, but from the harmony of all parts of Scripture in the fundamental points of faith and practice." Horne's Introduct., vol. 1. p. 269, edit. 1860. It is based on two fundamental principles; first, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and therefore constitutes a self-consistent whole, no part of which may be interpreted in contradiction with the rest; secondly, that the truths to which God's word gives the greatest prominence, and which it inculcates in the greatest variety

of forms, must be those of primary importance. Thus understood, the analogy of faith is a sure guide to the meaning of the inspired volume. He who follows it will diligently and prayerfully study the whole word of God, not certain selected parts of it; since it is from the whole Bible that we gather the system of divine revelation in its fulness and just proportions. "If we come to the Scriptures with any preconceived opinions, and are more desirous to put that sense upon the text which coincides with our sentiments rather than with the truth, it then becomes the analogy of our faith rather than that of the whole system." Horne, ubi supra. In this substitution {577} of "the analogy of our faith" for the analogy of Scripture lies the foundation of sectarian controversy.

Again; he who follows the true analogy of faith will not allow a doctrine which runs through the whole tenor of divine revelation to be weakened or set aside in the interest of some other scriptural doctrine. The Scriptures teach, for example, with great frequency and clearness that men are saved, not from the merit of their good works, but solely by God's free grace through faith in Jesus Christ. They teach also with equal frequency and clearness that without repentance and obedience to the divine law there is no salvation. These two deductions are not contradictory, but supplementary to each other. They present two sides of one and the same way of salvation. Yet it may happen that a Biblical student will find himself unable to reconcile in a logical way two such deductions as the following: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28); "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). What then shall we counsel him to do? Plainly it is his duty, first of all, to receive and hold both doctrines. Afterwards he may properly seek to reconcile them with each other in a logical way; but if he fails to accomplish this task to his satisfaction, he must not deny one truth, or sink its importance, in the interest of the other. The same general principle applies to various other doctrinal difficulties, which need not be here specified.

Finally, a true regard to the analogy of faith will make our system of belief and practice entire and well proportioned in all its parts. Every declaration of God's word is to be received in a reverent and obedient spirit. But inasmuch as the Scriptures insist much more earnestly and fully on some things than on others, it is our wisdom to follow, in this respect, the leadings of the Holy Spirit. It will be the aim of the enlightened believer to give to each doctrine and precept of revelation the place and prominence assigned to it in the Bible. Especially will he be careful that no obscure or doubtful passage of Scripture be allowed to contradict the plain teachings of inspiration. The practical study of the Bible, that is, the study of it as "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," resolves itself in a great measure into the comparison of Scripture with {578} Scripture, especially the comparison of doctrinal parallelisms. All that the Bible teaches from Genesis to Revelation concerning God's being and attributes, his providential government over man, the person and offices of Christ and the way of salvation through him, and the final destiny of the righteous and the wicked, should be diligently compared, that from the whole we may gather a full and well-proportioned system of faith and practice as it is contained in the pages of inspiration. So far as we fail to do this our view of divine truth is defective and disproportioned. The solemn warning in respect to the last book of revelation applies with equal force to revelation as a whole: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from

the things that are written in this book." Revelation 22:18-19.

TAGS: [Bible] [BibleRevelation]

37. Scriptural Types

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SCRIPTURAL TYPES.

1. The material world is full of analogies adapted to the illustration of spiritual things. No teacher ever drew from this inexhaustible storehouse such a rich variety of examples as our Saviour. His disciples are the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and a city set on a hill. From the ravens which God feeds and the lilies which God clothes, he teaches the unreasonableness of worldly anxiety. The kingdom of heaven is like seed sown in different soils, like a field of wheat and tares growing together, and like seed that springs up and grows the sower knows not how. Again it is like a net cast into the sea, like a grain of mustard seed, and like leaven hid in three measures of meal. When the Saviour opens his lips the whole world of nature stands ready to furnish him with arguments and illustrations; as well it may, since the God of nature is also the God of revelation. The world of secular activity abounds in like analogies, on which another class of our Lord's parables is based; like that of the vineyard let out to husbandmen, the servants intrusted with different talents, the ten virgins, the importunate friend, the unjust judge, the unfaithful steward, the prodigal son, and others that need not be enumerated. Analogies like these, however, do not properly constitute types. Types rest on a foundation of analogy, but do not consist in analogy alone.

2. In the history of God's people, moreover, as well as of the world which he governs with reference to them, the present is continually foreshadowing something higher in the future. This must be so, because the train of events in their history constitutes, in the plan of God, neither a loose and disconnected series nor a confused jumble of incidents, like a heap of stones thrown together without order or design, but a well-ordered {580} whole. It is a building, in which the parts now in progress indicate what is to follow. It is the development of a plant, in which "the blade" foreshadows "the ear," and the ear, "the full corn in the ear." The primal murder, when "Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him," "because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous," was the inauguration of the great conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent-the forerunner of the higher struggle in Egypt between Pharaoh on the side of the devil, and the covenant people on the side of the seed of the woman. This struggle in Egypt, again, foreshadowed the still higher contest between truth and error in the land of Canaan-a contest which endured through so many centuries, and enlisted on both sides so many kings and mighty men; and which, in its turn, ushered in the grand conflict between the kingdom of Christ and that of Satan, a conflict that began on the day of Pentecost, and is yet in progress. This continual foreshadowing of the future by the present is essentially of a typical nature, yet it does not constitute, in and of itself, what we understand by a type in the ordinary usage of the term.

3. A type is a symbol appointed by God to adumbrate something higher in the future, which is called the antitype. This definition includes three particulars: (1.) The type must be a true adumbration of the thing typified, though, from the very nature of the case, the adumbration must

be inadequate-a shadow only of the antitype, and not its substance. Thus the paschal lamb was a type of Christ, though there is infinitely more in the antitype than in the type. (2.) The symbol must be of divine appointment, and as such, designed by God to represent the antitype. We must carefully remember, however, that, from the very nature of the case, the divine intention cannot be clearly announced when the type is instituted. The paschal lamb typified "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;" but it was not till centuries after the institution of the passover that God began to intimate by the prophets the approaching sacrifice of the great Antitype (Isa. chap. 53; {581} Zechariah 13:7), and the full import of the type was revealed only when the sacrifice of "Christ our passover" had been accomplished on Calvary. (3.) Since the type is "a shadow of good things to come," it follows that the antitype must belong to the future. A pure symbol may belong to the present or the near future. It may represent something that now exists, or is coming into existence, in respect to which concealment is not necessary. Hence we find the sacred writers freely explaining the meaning of the symbols which they employ (Numb. chap. 17; Joshua 4:1-7; 1 Samuel 7:12; 1 Samuel 10:1, and the same symbol of anointing often elsewhere; 1 Kings 11:29-39; 1 Kings 22:11, where a false prophet uses a symbol; Isa. chap. 20; Jeremiah 1:11-14; Jeremiah 13:1-11, and elsewhere; Ezek. chap. 3, and in many other passages; Amos 7:1-9; Amos 8:1-3; Zechariah 1:8-11, and elsewhere). The true type, on the contrary, reckoned from the time of its institution, looks forward to the distant future. The high reality which it foreshadows may be intimated by the prophets "as in a glass darkly," but the appearance of the antitype can alone furnish a full explanation of its meaning. The types of the Old Testament have been variously classified. We propose to consider them under the two divisions of historical and ritual types.

I. HISTORICAL TYPES.

4. The extravagance of a class of Biblical expositors in converting the Old Testament history into allegory typical of persons and events under the gospel dispensation has produced a strong reaction, leading some to deny altogether the existence of historical types. But this is going to the other extreme of error. No man who acknowledges the writers of the New Testament to be true expositors of the meaning of the Old can consistently deny the existence in the Old Testament of such types, for they interpret portions of its history in a typical way. But it is of the highest importance that we understand, in respect to such history, that it has a true and proper significance of its own, without respect to its typical import. It is not allegory, {582} which has, literally taken, no substance. It is not mere type, like the rites of the Mosaic law, the meaning of which is exhausted in their office of foreshadowing the antitype. It is veritable history, valid for the men of its own day, fulfilling its office in the plan of God’s providence, and containing, when we look at it simply as history, its own lessons of instruction. We call it typical history because, following the guidance of the New Testament writers, we are constrained to regard it as so ordered and shaped by God’s providence as to prefigure something higher in the Christian dispensation. No careful student of the New Testament can for a moment doubt that David’s kingdom typified the kingdom of Christ. There is, indeed, a very important sense in which David’s kingdom was identical with that of Christ; for its main element was the visible church of God, founded on the covenant made with Abraham, and therefore in all ages one and indivisible. Romans 11:17-24; Galatians 3:14-18; Ephes. 2:20. But we now speak of David’s kingdom in its outward form, which was temporary and typical of something higher. In this sense it is manifest that God appointed it to

foreshadow that of the Messiah. David's headship adumbrated the higher headship of the Redeemer; his conflicts with the enemies of God's people and his final triumph over them, Christ's conflicts and victories. The same thing was true of Solomon, and in a measure of all the kings of David's line, so far as they were true to their office as the divinely appointed leaders of the covenant people. Unless we adopt this principle, the view which the New Testament takes of a large number of Psalms-the so-called Messianic psalms-becomes utterly visionary. But neither David's kingdom nor his headship over it was mere type. The nation over which he presided was a historic reality, a true power among the other nations of the earth. His leadership also, with its conflicts and triumphs, belongs to true history. It brought to the people of his own day true deliverance from the power of their enemies; and it contains, when we study it without reference to its typical character, true lessons of instruction for all ages. The declarations of Scripture in respect to the typical nature of the prophetical office are not so numerous and decisive as those which relate to the kingly office. There is, however, a remarkable passage in the book of Deuteronomy, from which we may legitimately infer that it was truly typical of Christ. When God had addressed the people directly from the midst of the cloud and fire on Sinai, unable to endure this mode of communication between God and man, they besought God that he would {583} henceforth address them through the ministry of Moses: "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die." Exodus 20:19. With reference to this request, God said to Moses: "They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth: and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." Deuteronomy 18:17-19. The essential points of this promise are, that the promised prophet shall be like Moses, one whose words shall be invested with supreme authority; and, especially, that he shall be raised up from among their brethren, and shall therefore be a man like themselves. The promise was manifestly intended to meet the wants of the covenant people from that day and onward. Yet the great Prophet in whom it was fulfilled did not appear till after the lapse of fifteen centuries or more. But in the mean time the promise was truly fulfilled to God's people in a typical way through the succession of prophets, who spake in God's name, and who were men like their brethren to whom they were sent. In these two essential particulars the prophetical office truly prefigured Christ, its great Antitype. The Old Testament contains not only typical orders of men, but typical transactions also; that is, transactions which, while they had their own proper significance as a part of the history of God's church, were yet so ordered by God as to shadow forth with remarkable clearness and force the higher truths of Christ's kingdom. Such are the transactions between Melchizedek and Abraham recorded in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis. Considered simply in itself, Melchizedek's priesthood belongs to the class of ritual types. But in the record of his intercourse with Abraham there is an accumulation of historic circumstances arranged by God's providence to shadow forth the higher priesthood of Christ. (1.) He united in his person the kingly and priestly offices, as does the Messiah. In the hundred and tenth Psalm it is, in like manner, a king invested by God with universal sovereignty, to whom the declaration is made: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek." (2.) In official dignity he was higher than Abraham, and thus higher than any of Abraham's descendants by natural generation; for Abraham paid tithes to him, and received from him the priestly blessing (Genesis 14:19-20); "And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better." Hebrews 7:7. (3.) His

priesthood was without limitation, and had thus the attribute of universality. It was not restricted in its exercise by nationality, for Abraham was not one of his people. (4.) He did not belong to a line of priests, who transmitted their office from father to son. He was, so far as we know from the record, without predecessors, and had no successor in his priesthood. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews {584} describes him as one who is "without father, without mother, without pedigree" (marginal rendering), "having neither beginning of days nor end of life: but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually." Hebrews 7:3. In the interpretation of this difficult passage, we must begin with the axiomatic principle that Melchizedek was a human being. He could not have been, as some have thought, the Son of God himself; for how could the Son of God be "made like unto the Son of God?" Nor could he have been an angel; for angels are not partakers of human nature, and cannot therefore typify him who came in human nature to deliver those who are "partakers of flesh and blood." Hebrews 2:14-18; Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 5:1-2. And if he was a proper man, then he was "without father, without mother, without pedigree," not in an absolute sense, but with reference to his priesthood. He was a priest whose genealogy is not mentioned, because his priesthood was not restricted, like that of the Levitical priests, to any particular line of descent. He held his priesthood from God, without predecessors or successors. The words that follow-"having neither beginning of days nor end of life: but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually"-are more difficult. It is certain, however, that they cannot be understood absolutely. They are commonly interpreted upon the same principle as the preceding words; namely, that in omitting from the inspired record every limitation of Melchizedek’s life as well as descent, it was God’s purpose to shadow forth the unlimited nature of Christ’s priesthood; that, in truth, the apostle describes Melchizedek, the type, in terms which hold good in their full meaning only of Christ the great Antitype. They who, admitting that Melchizedek was a human being, find the interpretation unsatisfactory, must leave the apostle’s words shrouded in mystery. But whatever obscurity there is in the scriptural notices of Melchizedek, they abundantly affirm the typical nature of his priesthood as distinguished from that of the Levitical priests. He was a type of Christ not simply as a priest, but also in the peculiar character of his priesthood. He united with his priesthood the kingly office; was superior in dignity to Abraham himself, and thus to the Levitical priests; and his priesthood had the attribute of universality. Here, then, we have an undoubted example of a historic type.

It is not without reason that the deliverance of the covenant people from Egypt, their journey through the wilderness of Arabia under God’s guidance, and their final settlement in the land of promise, have been regarded as typical of the higher redemption, guidance, and salvation received through Christ. From the earliest ages of the Christian church this wonderful history has been an inexhaustible storehouse of analogies for the illustration of Christian experience. In his pilgrimage through this vale of tears, the believer instinctively turns to it for instruction and {585} encouragement. The mighty interposition of God when the Israelites were "yet without strength" in their bondage; their protection through the blood of the paschal lamb sprinkled on the doors of their houses when the destroyer passed through Egypt; the opening of a way through the Red sea when all human means of escape failed them; the journey through the wilderness; the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night to guide, the water from the rock to refresh, the manna from heaven morning by morning to feed them; God’s faithful discipline in contrast with human unbelief, waywardness, and folly; the final preparation for the conquest of Canaan and its successful accomplishment-this whole series of events is wonderfully adapted to illustrate the course of

Christian experience, and who shall say that God did not order it with a view to this end? We do not resolve it into mere type. We acknowledge it to be true history, valid to the men of that age-a true earthly deliverance, guidance, and sustenance in the wilderness, conducting to the possession of a true earthly inheritance. But we say that it is a history so ordered by God as to typify the higher pilgrimage of the believer to the heavenly Canaan. It is undeniable that the writer to the Hebrews regards the rest of the covenant people in the land of promise as a type of the rest of heaven. Hebrews 3:7-19; Hebrews 4:1-11. And if that part of the history was typical, it is reasonable to infer that the whole was typical. It belongs to the nature of a type that it should, on the one hand, come short of the fulness of meaning that belongs to the antitype, and, on the other, should contain some things which find no correspondence in that which it adumbrates. The priesthood of the sons of Aaron, as we shall see, typified Christ's priesthood, but only inadequately, as a shadow represents the substance; while sinfulness, which belonged to all the priests of Aaron's line, not only did not correspond to the character of the Antitype, but was in contradiction with it. So is it also with the historical types that have been under consideration. They represent the antitype inadequately, and only in certain respects.

II. RITUAL TYPES.

5. The sacrifices were the central part of the Jewish ritual. But sacrifices imply offerers, a personal God to whom the offering is made, and a priesthood through which it is presented. In the primitive ages of the world, men offered sacrifices in their own behalf and that of their household in whatever place it was their chance to sojourn. Genesis 4:4; Genesis 8:20; Genesis 12:7-8; Genesis 31:54; Genesis 33:20; Genesis 35:1; Genesis 35:7; Genesis 46:1; Job 1:5; Job 42:8. But upon the establishment of the Mosaic economy, the priestly office was restricted to the family of Aaron. Thenceforward all who wished to {586} offer sacrifices must bring them through the mediation of the priests of Aaron's line. It belonged to the nature of the Mosaic economy, that God should have a visible dwelling-place among the Israelites. The directions for the construction of the tabernacle with its furniture are introduced by the words: "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." Exodus 25:8. The material sanctuary, then, was God's visible dwelling-place, where he manifested himself to his people, and received their worship according to the rites of his own appointment; the whole being, as we shall see, typical of higher realities pertaining to our redemption through Christ. And as this earthly sanctuary was God's chosen dwelling-place, it followed, as a necessary consequence, that after its erection all the sacrifices must be brought to its altar, and presented there to God through the priesthood of his appointment.

6. The Mosaic tabernacle was a movable structure very simple in its plan. Its frame-work on three sides consisted of upright boards, or rather timbers (for, according to the unanimous representation of the Jewish rabbins, they were a cubit in thickness), standing side by side, and kept in position by transverse bars passing through golden rings. Thus was formed an enclosure ten cubits in height, thirty cubits in length from east to west, and ten cubits in width; the eastern end, which constituted the front, having only a vail suspended from five pillars of shittim-wood. Over this enclosure, and hanging down on either side, was spread a rich covering formed by coupling together ten curtains of "fine-twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, with cherubim of cunning work." Over this was another covering, formed from the union of eleven curtains of goats' hair; and above two other coverings, the one of rams' skins dyed red, and the other, or outermost, of badgers' skins. Surrounding the tabernacle was a court one hundred cubits

long and fifty wide, enclosed by curtains of fine-twined linen supported on pillars five cubits high. The tabernacle itself was divided by a vail supported on four pillars into two parts; the inner sanctuary, or "holy of holies," ten cubits {587} every way, and the outer, or "holy place," twenty cubits long by ten in breadth and height. In a wider sense the whole movable structure within the court is called the tabernacle. But in a stricter sense the rich inner curtain is distinguished in the Mosaic description as the tabernacle, while the curtain of goats' hair is called the tent. Exodus 26:1; Exodus 26:7; Exodus 36:8; Exodus 36:14; Exodus 36:19. The true meaning of the word rendered in our version badgers is uncertain. Some think that the seal is referred to.

7. We have seen that the tabernacle was God's visible dwelling-place. But the palace of a king has its audience-rooms, where he receives his subjects and attends to their petitions. In like manner the Mosaic tabernacle, and afterwards the temple, had its "holy of holies" and its "holy place," the former being in a special sense the abode of Israel's God. The tabernacle, with its furniture, priesthood, and services, is declared in the New Testament to have been "a shadow of good things to come." Hebrews 10:1, and elsewhere. Unless we understand this its typical character, we fail to gain any true apprehension of its meaning.

8. In contemplating the truths which the Mosaic tabernacle shadowed forth, we begin with the materials used in its construction. Here we notice two things; their preciousness, and the gradation observed in this respect.

(1.) Their preciousness. All the materials were of the most durable and costly character-gold, silver, fine-twined linen of blue and purple and scarlet, acacia-wood (the shittim-wood of our version), brass being allowed only in the external appointments. This obviously represented the glory and excellence of God's service, and the corresponding obligation on the part of the worshippers to give to God the best of all that they had.

(2.) The gradation in the preciousness of the materials had reference to the inner sanctuary, where, as will presently be shown, God dwelt between the cherubim that overshadowed the mercy-seat. The rule of gradation was this: the nearer to God's dwelling-place the greater the glory; and hence, as shadowing forth this glory, the more precious the materials. {588} The mercy-seat, where God dwelt between the cherubim, was accordingly of pure gold. All the woodwork pertaining to the tabernacle and its furniture was overlaid with gold. The inner or proper covering of the tabernacle, as also the vail that hung before the ark, separating the holy from the most holy place, was of "fine-twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, with cherubim of cunning work." The outer vail, at the entrance of the outer sanctuary, was of the same materials, but without the cherubim; while the curtains of the court were made simply of fine-twined linen, suspended from pillars of shittim-wood not overlaid with gold. The sockets, again, that supported the timbers of the tabernacle and the inner row of pillars before the ark were of silver; but those beneath the outer pillars of the sanctuary, and all the pillars of the court, were of brass.

9. Passing to the appointments of the tabernacle, we naturally begin with the inner sanctuary. Here between the wings of the cherubim that overshadowed the mercy-seat, or lid of the ark, was the Shekinah, or visible dwelling-place of Jehovah. In the ark beneath the mercy-seat were placed, by God's direction, the two tables of the law. Exodus 25:16 compared with 1 Kings 8:9. This was their appropriate place. It shadowed forth the great truth that God is the fountain of law, and that they who approach him must come in the spirit of true obedience. That God's dwelling-place was

between the cherubim we learn from the original direction for the construction of the ark: "And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." Exodus 25:21-22. In accordance with these words God repeatedly promised that he would meet with Moses at the mercy-seat (Exodus 30:36; Leviticus 16:2; Numb. 17:4); and after the dedication of the tabernacle and its altar, it is recorded that "when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with Him, then he heard the voice of one speaking unto {589} him from off the mercy-seat that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubim." Numb. 7:89. Hence Jehovah is described in the Old Testament as he that dwells between the cherubim. 1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Samuel 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; Psalms 80:1; Psalms 99:1; Isaiah 37:16.

10. In the outer sanctuary, before the vail that separated it from the holy of holies, stood, on the south side, the golden candlestick, with its seven lamps burning always before the Lord (Exodus 27:20; Exodus 40:24-38; Exodus 40:2554, 25; Leviticus 24:25), and on the north side the table of show-bread, with its twelve loaves renewed every week (Exodus 25:30; Exodus 40:22-38; Exodus 40:2332, 23; Leviticus 24:5-9). These typified the light and the life that come from God’s presence through the ordinances of his appointment; and since the end of these ordinances is Jesus Christ, they shadowed him forth as the light of the world and the bread of life. John 8:12; John 12:46; John 6:35-58; and especially John 1:4. Between the golden candlestick and the table of show-bread, consequently directly in front of the ark, and separated from it by the inner vail, was the golden altar of incense, on which the priests burned sweet incense every morning and evening before the Lord (Exodus 30:6-8; Exodus 40:26-38; Exodus 40:2776, 27), whereby was shadowed forth Christ’s intercession, through which the prayers of saints are made acceptable to God. In the book of Revelation an angel is represented as offering upon this golden altar much incense with the prayers of all saints. "And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand." Revelation 8:3-4. This passage seems to warrant the interpretation above given to this symbol; not that the ancient covenant people understood fully its meaning, or that of the other symbolic rites, but that such was the mind of the Spirit, to be made manifest in due time.

There is a view of the Mosaic ceremonial, which makes it simply a scenic representation of a king’s court; in which the tabernacle represents the royal palace, the incense the homage rendered to the monarch (compare Daniel 2:46), the sacrifices, show-bread, and other unbloody offerings the provision made for his table, the priests his ministering servants, etc.; by which the whole is reduced to the idea of service rendered to Jehovah as the national monarch, and all typical representation of the provision made by God for man’s spiritual wants is excluded. This interpretation {590} of the Mosaic ritual is as superficial as it is false. In this ritual, service is indeed rendered to God; but it is a service which typically shadows forth the provision which God makes for man’s wants as a fallen being-light for his darkened understanding, life for his spiritual nature dead in trespasses and sins, and reconciliation to God through the blood of Christ. This is the constant interpretation given in the New Testament of the "carnal ordinances" of the Old.

11. In the court before the tabernacle stood the brazen altar with its laver. Here the blood of the sacrifices flowed from age to age-a lamb every morning and evening, and on the Sabbath day two

lambs morning and evening, besides all the public sacrifices connected with the national festivals, and the private sacrifices of individuals. The New Testament teaches us that the Levitical priests who ministered at the Jewish altar typified Christ, our great High Priest. In the one hundred and tenth psalm, which the Saviour himself quotes as written by David "in spirit," and as referring to himself (Matthew 22:41-45; Mark 12:35-37) the Messiah is represented as uniting in himself the kingly and the priestly office. There is a remarkable symbolical transaction in Zechariah (chap. 6:9-14) which contains the same representation. The prophet is directed, in the presence of competent witnesses, to "take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua [the Hebrew word answering to the Greek Jesus, which stands in the Septuagint rendering of this passage] the son of Josedech, the high priest." In his office as high priest Joshua typifies Christ our great High Priest. By the symbolical act of crowning Joshua is typified the kingly office of Christ as united with the priestly. Hence the prophet is directed by God to add: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH" (compare chap. 3:8, and Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:4-6; Jeremiah 33:15-16); "and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." In accordance with these representations a large {591} part of the epistle to the Hebrews is occupied with a discussion of our Lord’s priestly office, in which, beyond contradiction, he is exhibited as the great antitype of both Melchizedec and the Levitical priests.

12. If the Levitical priests typified Christ, it follows that the sacrifices which they offered were also typical of Christ’s sacrifice for the sins of the world. So the epistle to the Hebrews argues: "Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer." Chap. 8:3. The Levitical priests stood "daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." Chap. 10:11. Their offerings were only typical of expiation, and needed therefore to be continually repeated till the Antitype itself should appear. But Christ offered his own blood on Calvary, by which he obtained eternal redemption for us, so that his sacrifice needs no repetition. He was "once offered to bear the sins of many;" and by this "one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Chaps. 9:11-14, 25, 26; 10:10-14. But this doctrine respecting the typical character of the Levitical sacrifices is not restricted to the epistle to the Hebrews. The New Testament is full of it. John the Baptist, the Saviour’s forerunner, announced him as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29. Whether we render, as in the margin of our version, "which beareth the sin of the world," or, as in the text, "which taketh away the sin of the world," the words contain the idea of a propitiatory sacrifice, or, which amounts to the same thing, an expiatory sacrifice; since it is by expiating our sin that Christ propitiates the Father. By bearing the sin of the world Christ expiates it, and thus takes it away. Thus he is "the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2:2. The Saviour himself announced his purpose to die for his people: "I lay down my life for the sheep." "Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life, that I might {592} take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." John 10:15; John 10:17-18. And lest any should think that he died simply in the character of a martyr, he elsewhere explains that "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"-more literally, "a ransom

instead of many" (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45), where the sacrificial and vicarious nature of our Lord's death is explicitly affirmed. But it was after our Lord's resurrection that the sacrificial and propitiatory character of his death was most fully revealed. We have seen the view taken of it in the epistle to the Hebrews. With this the other writers of the New Testament are in harmony. Jesus Christ is the great sufferer foretold in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, who "was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed;" upon whom the Lord "laid the iniquity of us all;" who was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth; whose soul God made "an offering for sin;" who "was numbered with the transgressors," and "bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." 1 Peter 2:24-25; Acts 8:32-35; Mark 15:28; Luke 22:37. He "hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18); He has redeemed us to God by his blood (Revelation 5:9); has "loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Revelation 1:5); and his redeemed "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14). To recite all the declarations of the apostle Paul on this great theme would be a superfluous work. It is not through Christ's example or teachings, but through his blood that we have "redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Ephes. 1:7. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13), words which teach as explicitly as {593} human language can, that Christ has delivered us from the penalty of the divine law, which is its curse, by bearing the curse in our behalf. This he did when he was hanged on the tree. His death on the cross was, then, vicarious, a death in our stead; and propitiatory, for in view of it God releases us from the curse of the law. This is what is meant by a propitiatory sacrifice. Finally, as if to cut off all ground for the assertion that the efficacy of Christ's death lies wholly in its moral influence upon the human heart-its humbling, softening, and winning power-the apostle teaches that God has set forth Christ Jesus as a propitiation through faith in his blood for a manifestation of his righteousness, "that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:25-26.

Every word of this weighty passage deserves serious consideration. We give by the side of the English version another translation, intended to be somewhat more literal: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the passing over [marginal rendering] of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Whom God hath set forth, a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, for the manifestation of his righteousness in respect to the overlooking of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God-a manifestation of his righteousness at the present time; in order that he may be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. From these words we learn: (1.) That God has publicly set forth Christ as a propitiatory sacrifice. The following paraphrase gives the probable connection of the words of the first clause: Whom God, by means of his blood, hath set forth as a propitiation through faith. But if we take the connection as given in our version, the propitiation is still through Christ's blood, and is thus a propitiatory or expiatory sacrifice. (2.) That the appropriation to individual sinners of this propitiation is conditioned on personal faith. Christ's propitiatory sacrifice does not, in and of itself, justify any man; but it provides a ground whereby all may be justified, if they will believe in Jesus. (3.) That through Christ's propitiatory sacrifice God makes a public manifestation of his righteousness in showing mercy to sinners. The phrase, "the righteousness of God," may mean, in the usage of Paul, {594} the righteousness-justification-which he gives

through faith. But in connection with the words that follow, "that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus," it can only mean righteousness as an attribute of God, his public justice, namely, as the lawgiver and governor of the world. (4.) That Christ's propitiatory sacrifice was necessary in order that God might show mercy to sinners consistently with the demands of his justice. For when the apostle says "that God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus," the words necessarily imply that, without this sacrifice, he could not have been just in justifying sinners. Christ's propitiation was not needed to make God more merciful in his nature; for in this respect he is unchangeably "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." But it opens a way by which he may show mercy consistently with his justice and the sanctity of his law. When we raise inquiries concerning the interior nature of the atonement, we meet with deep mysteries, some of which are, perhaps, above the comprehension of finite human understanding. But we can comprehend, and believe upon God's testimony, the great central fact of the gospel, that Christ offered himself to the Father to bear in human nature the curse of the divine law in behalf of sinners; and that God accepted this propitiatory offering as a satisfaction to his justice in such a sense that he can pardon all who believe in Christ without dishonor to himself or injury to his moral government.

13. We have considered Christ as the great Antitype of the Levitical priests and sacrifices. Let us now go back and consider the characteristics belonging to the types themselves, beginning with the priesthood.

(1.) The first point in which the Levitical priests typified Christ was in their possession of the same common human nature as those in whose behalf they acted. "For both he that sanctifieth [Christ] and they who are sanctified [believers] are all of one [one Father, having a common sonship as members of the same family of Adam]: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews 2:11); and again: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same" (ver. 14); and still further: "Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath {595} suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted" (ver. 17, 18; and compare 4:15). Accordingly the priests who typified Christ were taken from among men, not angels; and "able to have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way," being themselves "compassed with infirmity." Hebrews 5:1-2.

(2.) The Levitical priests, again, were appointed to their office by God: "And no man taketh this honor upon himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec." Hebrews 5:4-6.

(3.) The Levitical priests, once more, were mediators between God and the people. After the establishment of their priesthood, no Israelite or sojourner in the land could approach God with sacrifices and oblations in his own right, and be his own priest. He must come to God through the priesthood of his appointment-an expressive type of the great truth announced by Christ; "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." John 14:6.

(4.) Finally, the Levitical priests were not only mediators between God and men, but mediators through propitiatory sacrifices. They were ordained to "offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." Hebrews 5:1; Hebrews 8:3. "Wherefore," adds the writer, "it is of necessity that this man [Christ] have somewhat also to offer." Hebrews 8:3. They offered the blood of bulls and goats, which made expiation only in a typical way; he offered to God his own blood as a real propitiation for sin. Hebrews 7:27; Hebrews 9:12-28; Hebrews 10:10-14. The points of dissimilarity between the Levitical priests and Christ, as stated in the epistle to the Hebrews, all serve to illustrate the superior dignity and efficacy of his priesthood. They were sinful men, and as such needing to offer sacrifice first for their own sins (chap. 5:3); but he is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" {596} (chap. 7:26). They were many, "because they were not suffered to continue, by reason of death:" but he, "because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." Chap. 7:23, 24. Their offerings could not take away sin. They were only typical of expiation, and therefore needed to be continually repeated. But Christ has by his one offering "perfected for ever them that are sanctified"-perfected them in respect to the expiation of sin, which is the foundation on which the work of personal sanctification rests. Hebrews 10:11-12.

Mediatorship between God and man through propitiatory sacrifice constitutes the central idea of priesthood. The Levitical priests did indeed make intercession for the people in the burning of sweet incense (see above, No. 8), and in presenting to God their unbloody offerings, but all this was done through the blood of atonement. We see, then, how false and mischievous is the idea that there can be true mediating priests under the New Testament dispensation. Christ appeared once for all "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:25-28; Hebrews 10:10-12), since which no further sacrifice is needed, or can be lawfully offered. Christ also opened to all believers through his blood a new and living way of access to God, through which they can come boldly to the throne of grace, having no need of human mediators. Hebrews 10:18-22. Believers as a body are "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2:5. They present themselves to God "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God." Romans 12:1. They "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of their lips, giving thanks to his name." Hebrews 13:15. These spiritual sacrifices offered by the body of believers through Christ, their glorified High Priest, are the only sacrifices known to the New Testament church. Of the high priest’s garments, made by divine direction "for glory and for beauty," we cannot here speak in detail. Suffice it to say that they represented in general the dignity and excellence of his office, as the divinely appointed mediator between God and the covenant people. The golden plate with the inscription HOLINESS TO THE LORD is its own interpreter. The twelve names of the tribes of Israel, graven on two precious stones, and borne on the shoulders of the high priest, six on each shoulder, and then the same twelve graven on twelve gems, and borne on his breast as he ministered before the Lord, beautifully typify Christ our great High Priest, who bears his people on his shoulders by his almighty power and efficacious atonement, and on his heart by his everlasting love.

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14. From the typical priests we naturally pass to the consideration of the typical sacrifices offered by them. Upon Noah’s leaving the ark, God prohibited the eating of blood on the ground that it is the life of the animal. Genesis 9:4. The reason of this prohibition is unfolded in a passage of the

Mosaic law, which clearly sets forth the nature and design of bloody offerings: "And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood, I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." Leviticus 17:10-11. Hence the sprinkling of the sacrificial blood by the priest as a sign of expiation, a rite that will be more particularly considered hereafter (No. 15). The reason that the blood makes the atonement is that "the life of the flesh is in the blood." The scriptural idea, then, of a sacrifice is the offering to God of one life in behalf of another that has been forfeited by sin-the life of the innocent beast instead of the life of the guilty offerer. This general idea of the vicarious and propitiatory nature of sacrifices comes out with beautiful simplicity and clearness in the book of Job: "And it was so when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." Chap. 1:5. And again: "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly." Chap. 42:7, 8. The sacrifices of the Mosaic law were of various kinds, implying various accessory ideas. But underlying them all was the fundamental idea of propitiation through blood. {598} Hence the writer to the Hebrews, when commenting on the transaction recorded in Exodus, chap. 24:4-8, says: "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." Hebrews 9:22. The only exception was in the case of the poor man who was "not able to bring two turtle doves or two young pigeons." He was allowed to "bring for his offering the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin-offering" (Leviticus 5:11), upon the principle that God "will have mercy and not sacrifice." No orderly classification of sacrifices is to be sought without the pale of the Jewish ceremonial. The burnt-offerings, for example, mentioned in the book of Job, had the force of proper sin-offerings. Chaps. 1:5; 42:8. The classification in the book of Leviticus is into burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, trespass-offerings, and peace-offerings. But they may be most conveniently considered in the order of their presentation, when two or more of them were offered on the same occasion, as when Aaron and his sons were consecrated to the priesthood, and the people sanctified in connection with this transaction (Lev. chaps 8, 9), and in the offerings of the great day of atonement (Lev. chap. 16).

Here the sin-offering naturally held the first place; for this, as its name indicates, was wholly expiatory and propitiatory, bringing the offerer into a state of forgiveness and divine favor. The sin-offerings had reference (1) to sin generally, as when Aaron and his sons were consecrated and the people sanctified, and when, on the annual day of atonement, expiation was made for the sins of the past year; (2) to specific offences (Lev. chaps. 4, 5), The exact distinction between the sin-offering and the trespass-offering is of difficult determination. Both were alike expiatory, were in fact subdivisions of the same class of offerings. A comparison of the passages in which trespass-offerings are prescribed (Leviticus 5:1; Leviticus 6:1-7; Numb. 5:6-8) seems to indicate that they belonged especially to trespasses for which restitution could be made.

Next in the order of sacrifices, though first in dignity, came the burnt-offering, also called holocaust (Heb. kalil) that is, whole burnt-offering, the characteristic mark of which was the consuming of the whole by fire (Lev. chap. 1). It is conceded by all that this was a symbol of completeness; but in what respect is a question that has been answered in different ways. Some refer the completeness to the offering itself, as that form of sacrifice which embraces in itself all others (Rosenmüller on Deuteronomy 33:10); or, as the most perfect offering, inasmuch as it exhibits the idea of offering in its {599} completeness and generality, and so concentrates in itself all worship. Bähr, Symbolik, vol. 2, p. 362. But we cannot separate, in the intention of God, the completeness of the form from the state of the offerer's mind. The burnt-offering was indeed, in its outward form, the most perfect of all sacrifices, for which reason it excluded female victims, as relatively inferior to the male sex. But because of this its completeness and generality it signified the entire self-consecration of the offerer to God. Winer and others after Philo. But this, let it be carefully remembered, was a self-consecration that could be made only through the blood of expiation, to indicate which, the blood of the burnt-offering was sprinkled by the priest "round about upon the altar;" or, in the case of a bird, where the quantity was too small to be thus sprinkled, was "wrung out at the side of the altar." The peace-offering (more literally, offering of renditions; that is, offering in which the offerer rendered to God the tribute of praise and thanksgiving which was his due) was in all its different subdivisions-thank-offering, votive offering, free-will offering (Leviticus 7:11-16)-a eucharistic offering. Hence its social character. After the sprinkling of the blood, the burning of the prescribed parts on the altar, and the assignment to the priest of his portion, the offerer and his friends feasted joyfully before the Lord on the remainder. Lev. chap. 3 compared with chap. 7:11-18. In the case of monarchs, like David and Solomon, the whole nation was feasted. 2 Samuel 6:17-19; 1 Kings 8:62-66. Hence the Messiah, as the great King of all nations, is beautifully represented as paying his peace-offerings to God for the deliverance granted him from his foes, and as summoning all nations to the sacrificial feast: "My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation; I will pay my vows [vows in the form of peace-offerings] before them that fear him. The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live for ever. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord," etc. Psalms 22:25-31. The peace-offering naturally followed the burnt-offering, as that did the sin-offering in the sanctification of the Israelitish congregation. Leviticus 9:15-18. It signified joyful communion with God in thanksgiving and praise; but this, too, only through the blood of the victim sprinkled upon the altar as a sign of expiation. Lev. chap. 3. In these three classes of offerings, then, we have typically set forth, first, expiation restoring man to God's favor, then self-consecration, then holy communion in thanksgiving and praise-all three only through the sprinkling of the blood of christ, the great Antitype of the Levitical priests and sacrifices. The sacrificial nature of the passover appears in the direction given at its institution that the blood of the paschal lamb should be sprinkled on the lintel and two side-posts of the house where it was eaten as a protection against the destroyer of the first-born (Exodus 12:22-23); and in the ordinance afterwards established, requiring that it should be slain at the {600} sanctuary (Deuteronomy 16:1-8), and its blood sprinkled upon the altar. 2 Chronicles 30:16; 2 Chronicles 35:11. Its character approached very near to that of the peace-offerings. It was a joyous festival, commemorative of the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage; and thus typically shadowing forth the higher redemption of God's people from the bondage of sin. As the blood of the paschal lamb sprinkled on the doors of the houses protected the inmates from the destroyer of the first-born, so does the blood of Christ protect all who through

faith receive its expiatory power from the wrath to come. As the Israelites feasted joyfully on the flesh of the paschal lamb, so does the church feed by faith on the great antitypal Lamb of God, who is the true Passover sacrificed for us. 1 Corinthians 5:7.

There were some other sacrifices of a special character, such as those by which the covenant between God and the people was ratified (Exodus 24:3-8); the ram of consecration, when Aaron and his sons were inducted into the priesthood (Leviticus 8:22-30); the sacrifice and other rites connected with the cleansing of the leper (Leviticus 14:1-32); the sacrifice of the red heifer from which were prepared the ashes of purification (Numb. chap. 19); the sacrifice of the heifer in the case of an uncertain murder (Deuteronomy 21:1-9). Respecting these, it is only necessary to remark generally that, whatever other ideas were typified by them, that of expiation through blood was not wanting.

It was required by the law that all the sacrificial victims should be without blemish, not only because the offering to God of an imperfect victim would have been an affront to his majesty (Malachi 1:8; Malachi 1:13-14), but especially because a perfect victim could alone typify the Lamb of God, "without blemish and without spot," who was offered on Calvary as the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. 1 Peter 1:19-20. Of the unbloody offerings [oblations, called in our version meat-offerings], some were supplementary to the sacrifices, being necessary to their completeness. Such was the salt which, as a symbol of purity and friendship, was prescribed for all meat offerings (Leviticus 2:13), and seems to have been used with all sacrifices also. Ezekiel 43:24 compared with Mark 9:49. Such, also were the flour, wine, and oil offered with the daily sacrifice (Exodus 29:40), and in certain other cases. Leviticus 8:26; Leviticus 9:17; Leviticus 14:10, etc. Other oblations, like those prescribed in the second chapter of Leviticus, were presented by themselves, as expressions of love, gratitude, and devotion to God on the part of the offerers. After a portion of them, including all the frankincense, had been burned on the altar, the rest went to Aaron and his sons as their portion. The priests also received specified portions from the peace-offerings of the people, the trespass-offerings, and the sin-offerings the blood of which was not carried into the sanctuary. See Lev. chap. 6:24-7:34.

{601} 15. Of the typical transactions connected with the offering of sacrifices and oblations we notice the following:

(1.) In all cases the offerer laid his hands upon the head of the victim. The meaning of this act may be inferred from the first mention of it in the Levitical ceremonial: "And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him." Leviticus 1:4. The act in question was, then, the solemn dedication to Jehovah of the victim for the end proposed. By the laying on of his hands, he presented it to God as his offering to make atonement for his soul, and God accepted it as such. From the very nature of the offering, this act of presentation contained an acknowledgment of guilt that needed expiation, but there was no formal transfer of his sins to the victim, as in the case of the scape-goat. See below, No. 16.

(2.) The waving and heaving of offerings belonged to the priests alone. Both were manifestly acts of presentation and dedication to God. For example, the loaf of bread, cake of oiled bread, and wafer of unleavened bread employed upon the occasion of Aaron’s consecration were first placed in his hands to be waved before the Lord, and then burned by Moses on the altar of burnt-offering. Exodus 29:23-25. So also the breast of the ram of consecration was waved, and the right shoulder

heaved, before they were eaten by Aaron and his sons (Exodus 29:26-28); the lamb of the leper who had been healed, with the accompanying oblation, was waved by the priest before the Lord before slaying it. Leviticus 14:12, seq.

According to the rabbins, the waving consisted of a movement forwards and backwards. Some think that there was also a lateral motion from right to left and the reverse. The heaving was a movement upwards and downwards. The ground of the distinction between these two forms of presentation to Jehovah is uncertain. We only know that the ceremony of heaving was restricted to certain cases. Thus the breast of the peace-offerings was always waved, and the right shoulder heaved, before they were given to the priests as their portion. Leviticus 7:28-34.

(3.) The sprinkling of the victim's blood was a most weighty part of the ceremonial, for by this expiation was symbolized. {602} It was accordingly restricted to the priest, who was the appointed mediator between God and the people. The sevenfold sprinkling of the blood that was carried into the sanctuary (Leviticus 4:6; Leviticus 4:17; Leviticus 16:14; Leviticus 16:19), and in certain other cases (Leviticus 8:11; Leviticus 14:7; Leviticus 14:51) denoted the completeness of the expiation, seven being the well-known symbol of perfection. Hence the New Testament beautifully represents believers as purified from sin by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, the great Antitype of the Mosaic sacrifices. Hebrews 9:13-14; Hebrews 10:22; Hebrews 12:24; 1 Peter 1:2.

Kindred to the rite of sprinkling was the application of the victim's blood to the horns of the altar and to the person of the offerer. Exodus 29:12; Exodus 29:20; Leviticus 4:7; Leviticus 4:18; Leviticus 4:25; Leviticus 4:30; Leviticus 8:15; Leviticus 8:24; Leviticus 14:14, etc.

(4.) The burning of the offering, or of certain specified parts of it, upon the altar, whereby its odor ascended up to heaven, was a natural expression of dedication to God. Compare Genesis 8:21, Leviticus 1:9, etc.

16. We have seen the typical import of the furniture of the tabernacle (Nos. 8 and 9 above). That the tabernacle itself, considered generally, had also a typical meaning, is admitted by all who believe in revelation. But when we come to the consideration of details, we encounter diversities of interpretation which cannot be here considered. We notice only the following points:

(1.) The Mosaic tabernacle was, as we have seen, God's visible earthly dwelling-place. As such, it shadowed forth his real presence and glory, first, in the church of the redeemed on earth through Jesus Christ; secondly, in the glorified church in heaven. Some think that the outer sanctuary, with its altar of incense, its golden candlestick, and its table of show-bread, typified God's presence with the church militant, through her divinely-appointed ordinances; and the inner sanctuary, his presence with the church triumphant in heaven.

(2.) Under the Mosaic economy, the people were not admitted to either sanctuary. They could approach God only through the mediation of the priests. The priests themselves {603} entered the outer sanctuary daily to burn incense and perform the other prescribed services; but the high priest alone was permitted to enter the most holy place once every year with the blood of the sin-offering. This represented that, under the old dispensation, the way of access to God on the part of sinners was not yet made manifest. In respect to the holy of holies, we have the express statement of inspiration: "But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost this signifying, that

the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing." Hebrews 9:7-8. By parity of reason, the principle holds good in respect to the exclusion of the people from the outer sanctuary. We are informed, accordingly, that when Christ cried upon the cross with a loud voice, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost, "the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." Matthew 27:50-51; Mark 15:37-38; Luke 23:45-46. By this was signified that now the way of access to God was opened through Christ's blood to all believers; so that they constitute a spiritual priesthood, having access to God within the vail without the help of any earthly mediation, that they may there "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 10:19-20; 1 Peter 2:5; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6.

(3.) The typical character of the tabernacle appears very strikingly in the ceremonies of the great day of atonement. Lev. chap. 16. After the high-priest had first offered a sin-offering for himself, and sprinkled its blood in the inner sanctuary upon and before the mercy-seat seven times, he brought the two goats that had been appointed for the expiation of the people, one for a sin-offering, the other for a scape-goat, the office of each being determined by lot. When he had slain the goat of the sin-offering, he carried its blood into the most holy place, and sprinkled it also seven times upon and before the mercy-seat, to "make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because {604} of their transgressions in all their sins (ver. 16)." Then it was directed that the live goat should be brought: "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited; and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness." Ver. 21, 22. By this double ceremonial was signified, first, that Christ should expiate our sins by his own blood; secondly, that through this expiation he should bear them in his own person, and thus remove them far away from us. The Jewish high priest entered year by year through the earthly tabernacle into God's presence with the blood of the sin-offering, that he might sprinkle it before the mercy-seat. But Christ, our great High Priest, has entered "by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands" into heaven itself, to present his own blood before the throne of God as a perfect propitiation for our sins. Hebrews 9:11-12; Hebrews 9:24. The striking ceremonial connected with the scape-goat on the great day of atonement (Lev. chap. 16) is never to be interpreted separately, but always in connection with the other goat, which was slain as a sin-offering, and its blood carried within the vail into the most holy place. The inadequacy of the type made it necessary that two goats should be used in this one service, one to represent the expiation of the people's sin through the sprinkling of its blood; the other, the vicarious bearing and taking away of their sin. Whatever difficulties are connected with the interpretation of the Hebrew word rendered in our version "for a scape-goat" (Hebrew, la-azazel), the typical meaning of the transaction is clear, and it has its fulfilment only in Christ, who has expiated, and so taken away, the sin of the world.

(4.) In the case of the more solemn sacrifices-the sin-offerings for the high-priest and for the congregation (Leviticus 4:1-21; chap. 16)-the expiatory blood was carried into the sanctuary to be presented before God. But the victim was in all cases slain without the sanctuary; and when its blood was {605} carried into the sanctuary, its body typically bearing the curse of the violated law, was burned without the camp. In correspondence with this, the writer to the Hebrews reminds us

that "Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." Hebrews 13:11-12. He suffered "without the gate" in a two-fold sense. As a condemned malefactor, he was thrust out of the holy city, which answered to the ancient Israelitish camp, and there he expiated on the cross the sin of the world. He also suffered "without the gate" of the true holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem, which he left that he might tabernacle among men and die for their redemption; and having accomplished this work, he went "by his own blood" into the heavenly holy of holies, there to make intercession for us. The dignity and sacredness of these solemn sin-offerings made it necessary that a clean place should be selected for the burning of the flesh; but inasmuch as they were typically laden with the curse of sin, they were carried without the precincts of the camp where God dwelt, and there consumed, where the ashes of all the bloody offerings were poured out. Leviticus 4:11-12; Leviticus 4:21; Leviticus 16:27. The man, moreover, who performed the service of burning the sin-offering on the day of atonement, having been typically defiled by contact with it, was required to wash his clothes and bathe his flesh in water before coming into the camp. Leviticus 16:28. In the case of the scape-goat, "the wilderness," the "land not inhabited," answered to the place without the camp where the sin-offering was burned; and the man that led him away was, in like manner, required to wash his clothes and bathe his flesh in water before reentering the camp. Leviticus 16:26.

17. The distinctions between clean and unclean in respect to articles of food and various other particulars, had also a typical meaning. That the regulations in regard to these matters were promotive of physical purity and health is undoubtedly true; yet we are not to consider them as simply a sanitary code. They reached to the inner man. Through these physical distinctions of clean and unclean God educated the people to an apprehension of the difference between moral purity and impurity.

{606} The Levitical view of sickness and every bodily infirmity is deep and fundamental. All is referred to sin as the primal cause. The sufferer from leprosy and various other infirmities (Lev. chaps. 12-15) is regarded not as a sinner above other men (Luke 13:1-5), but yet as suffering in the character of a sinner. Hence the ceremonial uncleanness of such persons, and the expiatory offerings required in the case of those who have been healed.

TAGS: [BibleTypes] [Bible] [Interpretation]

38. Interpretation of Prophecy

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY.

1. The scriptural idea of prophecy is widely removed from that of human foresight and presentiment. It is that of a revelation made by the Holy Spirit respecting the future, always in the interest of God’s kingdom. It is no part of the plan of prophecy to gratify vain curiosity respecting "the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." Acts 1:7. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God"-this is its key-note. In its form it is carefully adapted to this great end. Its notices of the future are interwoven with exhortations and admonitions, encouragements and warnings, promises and threatenings. These constitute, indeed, the great bulk of the prophetical writings that have come down to us. The subject of the interpretation of prophecy may be conveniently considered under the following heads: prophecies relating to the near future; prophecies relating to the last days; the question of double sense; the question of literal and figurative meaning.

I. PROPHECIES RELATING TO THE NEAR FUTURE.

2. The Bible contains many prophecies relating to the comparatively near future. These are all specific in their character, and have a single exhaustive fulfilment. Examples are: the prediction to Noah of the approaching deluge, and to Abraham of the bondage of his posterity in a strange land; the disclosure through Pharaoh’s dreams of the coming famine in Egypt; Joseph’s announcement of the future deliverance of Israel from Egypt; the token given to Moses that God had sent him: "When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (Exodus 3:12); God’s threatened judgments upon the house of Eli with the {608} accompanying sign (1 Samuel 2:34); the warning that David received by Urim and Thummim of Saul’s approach to destroy him (1 Samuel 23:9-12); the prediction that Josiah should defile Jeroboam’s altar at Bethel with men’s bones (1 Kings 13:2); etc. Minute events, in themselves unimportant, sometimes come within the sphere of prophetic revelation, but always in connection with and subserviency to important transactions affecting the interests of God’s people. Thus when Samuel anointed Saul as the future king of Israel, he foretold to him the incidents of his journey homeward (1 Samuel 10:2-7). But this was in order that Saul might be assured of Samuel’s prophetic office, and consequently of the divine sanction to the transaction. An event in the immediate future is frequently predicted as a pledge that some prophecy of more distant fulfilment shall be accomplished. Thus the death of Eli’s two sons in one day was to be a token of the fulfilment of all the evils threatened against his house. The same end may be accomplished by a miraculous sign. 1 Kings 13:3; 2 Kings 20:9-11. Prophecies of the kind now under consideration are in general very plain and simple, and their recorded fulfilment is to us a sufficient interpreter of their meaning.

II. PROPHECIES RELATING TO THE LAST DAYS.

3. In Old Testament usage, "the last days," or "the latter days" ("in the latter years," Ezekiel 38:8) denote not simply the distant future, but that future as including the kingdom of the Messiah, which extends to the consummation of all things Genesis 49:1; Numbers 24:14; Deuteronomy 4:30; Deuteronomy 31:29; Isaiah 2:2; Jeremiah 23:20; Jeremiah 30:24; Jeremiah 48:47; Jeremiah 49:39; Ezekiel 38:16; Daniel 10:14; Hosea 3:5; Micah 4:1. We are not, however, to conceive of these "last days" as totally separated from the preceding ages. In the plan of God the history of the world constitutes a whole, all the parts of which are closely connected. Hence the prophecies relating to the latter days include, more or less distinctly, the events which precede them, and prepare the way for them. In such prophecies we are not to look for exhaustive details. {609} They give, as a rule, only general views relating to the conflicts of God’s people and their final triumph. Where minute incidents are introduced (Psalms 22:18; Psalms 69:21; Zechariah 9:9; Zechariah 11:13) it is apparently for the purpose of identifying to future generations the Messiah as their main subject. See below, No. 9.

Prophecies relating to the days of the Messiah are introduced in other more indefinite ways, thus: "Behold the days come" (Jeremiah 23:5; Jeremiah 31:31; etc.): "And it shall come to pass afterward" (Joel 2:28); "In that day" (Isaiah 4:2, Jeremiah 30:8; Ezekiel 39:11; Amos 9:11, and elsewhere); or they are sufficiently indicated by their contents, as Isa. chaps. Matthew-66.

These prophecies naturally fall into two classes: those in which the succession of events is distinctly indicated, and those which give only general views of the future, without any clear order of succession.

4. To the first and smaller class belong especially certain of Daniel’s prophecies. The four great monarchies, for example, that are to bear rule over the earth are symbolized first by a great image (Dan. chap. 2), then by four beasts rising out of the sea (Dan. chap. 7). Of these monarchies the fourth, represented by the legs of iron and feet part of iron and part of clay (Daniel 2:33), and by the fourth beast with his ten horns (Daniel 7:7), belongs in part to the latter days of the Messiah. The fourth kingdom, represented by the "legs of iron and feet part of iron and part of clay," is at the beginning "strong as iron" (chap. 2:40); afterwards it is "partly strong and partly broken" (ver. 42); it is, moreover, the last great monarchy that oppresses the world. All these characters point to the Roman empire, first in its pagan, afterwards in its papal form. From the nature of the symbol, the prophet sees the whole image standing till it is smitten in its feet of iron and clay. This does not mean that the four monarchies are contemporaneous, but that they constitute one great system of oppression, in which the power passes successively down from the head to the feet. It is in its feet that the stone smites it, for it is in this its last form that the kingdom set up by the God of heaven shall encounter and destroy it. The toes, part of iron and part of clay, well represent the kingdoms that grew up out of the old Roman empire, with an intermixture of the northern nations. These could never unite into a compact whole, like the original pagan empire, yet they constituted a continuation of it in a divided form.

{610} That the fourth beast again (chap. 7:7-14, 19-28) represents the same Roman empire appears from the following considerations: (1.) Both here and in the second chapter a succession of four great monarchies is represented, of which the first three are admitted to have been universal. It is altogether reasonable, therefore, to look for a universal empire in the fourth; but that empire can be no other than the Roman. (2.) The fourth beast is represented as the strongest and

most terrible of them all, which cannot apply to any other than the Roman power. (3.) All its characters agree with those of the Roman empire, and cannot be made to agree with those of any other power. Those who understand by the little horn of the fourth beast Antiochus Epiphanes, must consider the fourth beast as representing the Syrian monarchy, or perhaps Syria and Egypt. But these belong to the third beast. They are two of the four divisions into which his empire was broken, and which have just been represented by the four heads and four wings of the leopard. (4.) No persecuting power comes after this beast. Its dominion is destroyed by that of the Messiah, who takes the kingdom and holds it for ever. This can apply only to the Roman power as perpetuated in its papal form in the ten horns, which correspond to the ten toes of the image. Chap. 2:41-43. All the characters of the little horn agree with those of the papal power; and considering the vast influence which this has wielded, and still wields, over God's church, we should naturally expect that it would be included in a comprehensive view like this of the world's history. The prophecies of the book of Revelation relative to the great red dragon-pagan Rome (chap. 12), the two beasts that succeeded to his seat and power (chap. 13), and (what is identical with these two beasts) the woman riding upon a scarlet-colored beast (chap. 17), are so intimately related to the fourth kingdom of Daniel, that whatever view be taken of this kingdom must apply to them also. In these prophetic symbols we have again all the characters of pagan Rome as continued in papal Rome. Chap. 32, No. 4. To the class of prophecies now under consideration belong also, according to the most probable principle of interpretation, those of the seven seals, the seven trumpets included under the last seal, and the seven vials of the last trumpet (Revelation 6:1 seq.); for in these the succession of events is distinctly marked. The numbers of the books of Daniel and Revelation, particularly the "time and times and dividing of time"-three years and a half-during which the little horn is to have dominion (Daniel 7:25), and (what is equivalent to this number) the "forty-and-two months" during which the Gentiles are to tread down the holy city (Revelation 11:2), and the beast that succeeds to the dragon is to have power (Revelation 13:5); or in days, the thousand two hundred and threescore days of the two witnesses (Revelation 11:3), and of the woman's sojourn in the wilderness (Revelation 12:6), have furnished for centuries {611} matter of curious speculation and computation, upon the assumption that a day here represents a year (Chap. 35, No. 9); but hitherto history has not verified the results as to time which the students of these prophecies have given. The failure of their computations might have been anticipated. It seems to be the plan of God to throw such a vail over even exact dates of prophecy, that their place in a chronological chart of history cannot be accurately marked out beforehand. Either the time from which the reckoning is to proceed, or the symbolism of the dates, or the place which the whole series holds in relation to other prophecies, is left in obscurity. The experience of those who have busied themselves with the computation of these dates teaches, not that we should wholly withdraw ourselves from inquiries of this kind, but that to pursue them in a confident and dogmatic spirit, as if we had been admitted to the council-chamber of heaven, and had there learned the exact day and hour on which the papal throne must fall, or our Lord reappear on earth, is a mark, not of wisdom, but of weakness and folly.

5. In the second and larger class of prophecies relating to the last days, the element of time, and especially that of succession in time, is either wholly wanting, or is indicated in only a vague and general way.

Examples of this class of prophecies are almost innumerable. A remarkable specimen is found in the fourth chapter of Isaiah, viewed in connection with the preceding context. The prophet's position is that of his own day. He writes at a time when heavy calamities are impending over his countrymen. With these calamities he begins: "Behold the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Judah and Jerusalem the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water, the mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, the captain of fifty, and the honorable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator." Chap. 3:1-3. So he proceeds, in terms which must apply primarily to the Babylonish captivity, to the end of the third chapter, which closes with the terrible denunciation: "Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty men in war. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she, being desolate, shall sit upon the ground" (ver. 25, 26). To complete the picture of desolation, it is added in the beginning of the fourth chapter: "And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name to take away our reproach." The obvious meaning of this last threatening is, that the mass of the men shall perish in war, so that the surviving women cannot find husbands. Seven of them, therefore, ask of one man {612} the privilege of being called each his wife, while they offer to forego all the usual advantages of that relation. Thus far the prophet proceeds in a strain of threatening. But now, with the single formula, "in that day," there is a sudden transition to promise, and promise of such a character that it must cover the whole future period of the Messiah's kingdom: "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel" (chap. 4:2); and so he goes on to describe the glory of the latter days, when the Lord, having "purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning," "will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence" (ver. 4, 5). Here we have, in a certain sense, an indication of time, but it is wholly indefinite. No date is given for the fulfilment of the prophecy, nor any exact chronological order of succession. The prophet began with the judgments that impended over his countrymen. He ends with the full glory of the Messiah's reign, without any indication of the intervening interval of time.

Another striking example is furnished by the eleventh chapter of Isaiah in connection with the preceding context. The tenth chapter of Isaiah contains an account of the Assyrian monarch's progress through the land of Judea, ending with a figurative account of his overthrow: "Behold the Lord, the Lord of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror; and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled. And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one" (ver. 33, 34). Immediately upon this prediction, and with reference to the Assyrian bough and the thickets of Lebanon-Sennacherib with his host-that have been hewn down, follows a prophecy of the Messiah's advent: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." Chap. 11:1. The prophet represents these two events, the overthrow of the Assyrian and the advent of the Messiah, as so connected that the latter follows as a natural sequel to the former, passing over in silence the many intervening centuries. He represents, again, the Messiah's kingdom as one of continuous victorious progress, till "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," without pausing to indicate any intervening period of darkness and depression.

Still a third pure specimen of this form of prophecy occurs in the fifty-ninth and sixtieth chapters of Isaiah. The former of these two chapters is occupied with a description in very dark lines of the sins of God's covenant people (ver. 1-15), and of God's interposition in awful majesty to vindicate his own cause (ver. 16-21). Immediately upon this follows, in the sixtieth chapter, a vision of the latter-day glory that has no parallel in {613} the Old Testament for brightness, extending down to the full establishment of the millennial age. But when shall these things be? How long shall the present age of iniquity endure? And when Jehovah appears to save the cause of truth and righteousness, shall it be by a single interposition or a series of interpositions? If by the latter, how widely shall they be separated, and what dark scenes shall intervene? When shall the promised Redeemer appear, and how long shall his work be in progress before that blessed consummation contained in the promise: "Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended?" On all these points which involve the element of time the prophecy maintains a majestic silence. The closing promise indeed is: "I the Lord will hasten it in his time;" but with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The time for the consummation of God's plan to rescue this apostate world from the dominion of Satan-how many slowly revolving centuries may it include, and what fierce and bloody assaults of the adversary, compelling God's suffering people to cry out: "O Lord, how long!" The whole of the prophecy of Joel belongs to the class now under consideration. It begins with impending judgments, and closes with the conflict and triumph of the last times: "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake; but the Lord shall be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain; then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more." Chap. 3:14-17.

Many more examples might be adduced from the other prophets, but the above will be sufficient.

6. But let no one infer, from this absence of dates and of the exact succession of events, that the view which the prophet gives of the future is loose and confused. Times and successions belong rather to the outward machinery of God's providential government. They are, so to speak, the wheels and bands and shafts which connect the different movements. But the perpetual living power that dwells in the church is above all time and succession. In this lies the guarantee of her final triumph, and with this the prophets are mainly occupied. They take the deepest view of the progress of God's kingdom, for {614} they unfold to our view the indestructible divine life and power which animate it throughout, and which are steadily bearing it onward towards its final destiny-victory complete and eternal over all the powers of darkness. If we examine more particularly the manner in which the prophets of the Old Testament represent the future of the kingdom of heaven, we shall find that it has its foundation in the unity of the plan of redemption, the end towards which it is tending, the indications of that end which are perpetually given in its progress, and the fact that the end itself is the chief object of interest in prophetic vision.

(1.) The unity of the plan of redemption lies not in its times and seasons, but in the higher connections of cause and effect, which, under God's supernatural presence and agency, bind the whole together laterally, so to speak, as well as backward and forward. It may be compared to the

unity of a web, in which each thread of the warp extends from its beginning to its end, and each thread of the woof from one margin to the other; so that every part of the texture is connected with every other part without respect to nearness or distance. So in the plan of redemption, events thousands of years apart and taking place in regions thousands of miles from each other, are as really connected as if they belonged to the same year and country. And since they are thus connected in God's plan, it is natural that prophecy should exhibit them in this connection, passing over, it may be, many centuries in silence; for it is the salient points of the church's future history, the great crises in the process of her development, that the spirit of inspiration will naturally bring to view. Prophecy relating to the last times is not a map, in which the distance from one point to another, with all the intervening mountains, rivers, and towns, is accurately marked; but rather a prospective view, which exhibits only the great features of the region that lies before the traveller. He sees far off in the horizon the goodly mountains rising one behind another, and bathed in the pure light of heaven, with no ability to discern, much less to measure, the intervening valleys and plains. Nay more, mountain {615} ranges that are widely separated may appear to his eye as one and indivisible.

(2.) The plan of redemption has not only complete unity, but continual progress towards a high end. It may be compared to a majestic river, fed by thousands of perennial springs, that cannot stay a moment in its course towards the ocean. Its path is not always straight, but it is always onward. Its current is not always rapid and broken, for it is not always obstructed. Sometimes, like the Arar described by Cæsar, it winds through level plains with a current so gentle and noiseless, that the eye cannot discern its direction. Then it plunges over some Niagara, roaring, boiling, and foaming, and shaking the very earth with its mighty cataracts. But it has all the power in the level meadows that it manifests on the fearful brink of the precipice. To arrest its current in one place is as impossible as in the other. Resistance cannot overcome its strength, but only bring it to view. Let any number of Titans build up ever so high a wall across the level meadow, and the stream, every particle of which is pressed forward by an inward force, will quietly rise above their vain rampart, and then it will begin to thunder. Since then God's kingdom-this river of God that is full of water-is continually tending towards a high end, and since every event of his providence contributes something towards its progress, what wonder if we find in prophecy events separated by many centuries of time immediately connected as cause and effect? Does the prophet predict the overthrow of Sennacherib's army, or the coming desolation of Jerusalem by the Chaldean armies; he connects these calamities immediately with the advent of Christ, for this is the end towards which they look. Desolating judgments prepare the way for the King of glory to appear. After the storm of thunder and hail there follows a serene light, "as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." The mind of the inspired bard hastens onward towards the glorious end of God's judgments, without {616} pausing to give us, what it is not necessary that we should know, the chronological distance of that end.

(3.) The progress of God's kingdom gives continual indications of the end towards which it is tending. The first great interposition of God in behalf of Israel contained in itself a pledge of all needful help for the future, and thus of a final triumph in the future; for it was a manifestation of both God's absolute power to save his people, and his absolute purpose to save them. The full idea embodied in this interposition is summed up in the closing words of their triumphal song on

the shore of the Red sea: "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." What was true of this deliverance was true of every subsequent deliverance. In each of them separately, and in the whole of them collectively, lay the promise: "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold I will make thee [make thee to be] a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel." Isaiah 41:14-16. The chastisements, moreover, which God inflicted on the covenant people through the temporary ascendency of their enemies, and in other ways, gave in like manner indications of a final triumph of the cause of truth and righteousness. However great their severity, they were always so ordered that God's people were never destroyed, but always purified by their power, and thus the way was prepared for their future enlargement. This purifying tendency the divinely illumined eye of the Hebrew prophet clearly discerned. What wonder, then, that he should have constantly connected with present or impending judgments glorious promises respecting the future. The destruction of Sennacherib's army by the destroying angel, and afterwards of Jerusalem itself by the Chaldean armies-the former event so joyous in its outward form, the latter so {617} sad-these were both alike to the prophet's vision parts of the preparation through which God was carrying his people for the future glory and blessedness of the latter days. He accordingly connected both with bright visions of the future, without pausing to notice the intervening centuries, respecting the duration of which he had no commission to speak.

(4.) The end itself towards which the plan of redemption tends is the chief object of interest in prophetic representation. To nourish the faith and hope of the church, to invigorate her in her present struggles by the assurance of final victory-this, and not the gratification of a prurient curiosity respecting the exact dates of "times and seasons," is the main design of prophecy. That it has other subordinate ends need not be denied. It challenges for itself the attribute of omniscience, and its fulfilment is, to those who live after it, a proof of the validity of its claim. But to become absorbed in calculations beforehand respecting its dates is to elevate the subordinate and circumstantial in prophecy to the place of the essential. The bright end of the present conflict with the powers of darkness is what prophetic vision is continually presenting for our encouragement. To those who love God, this is the point of chief interest; and accordingly the prophets make it, not the exact number of years that is to elapse before the final consummation with the details of their history, the prominent point. Some great crises in the church's history are indicated so clearly that they who can discern "the signs of the times" may understand beforehand that they are near. The general expectation of the Messiah's advent at the time when he actually appeared had its foundation in a sober comparison of the prophecies with the existing condition of the covenant people. The present universal belief among Christians that the time for the final overthrow of the triple league between Satan, wicked kings, and wicked priests for the suppression of the gospel is at hand rests, we doubt not, on the same solid ground. But farther than this we cannot go. We cannot say that it shall be in such a year of the present century, or even in the century, in {618} harmony with the true spirit of prophecy. It is enough for us to know that God "will hasten it in his time"-that the victory is certain, and that every believer from Abel to the trump of the archangel shall have his share in it.

III. THE QUESTION OF DOUBLE SENSE.

7. The so-called double sense of Scripture, especially of prophecy, concerning which there has been so much discussion among biblical writers, must be distinguished from the double sense of pure allegory, which all admit. In allegory, the first or literal meaning is only a cover for the higher spiritual sense, which alone is of importance. That we may have a true example of double sense, the obvious literal meaning must have its own proper significance, irrespective of the higher sense belonging to it, and this higher sense must be intended by the Spirit of inspiration. The question now to be considered is: Do such examples occur in Scripture, by whatever term we may choose to designate them? To avoid logomachy, arising from the use of the same phrase in different senses, we prefer the expression literal and typical sense.

8. If, as has been shown above (chap. 37, No. 4), examples of historic types are found in the Old Testament, these contain a twofold sense. The priesthood of Melchizedek and the transactions between him and Abraham were true historic realities, having their own proper office and meaning. Yet the word of inspiration teaches us that the circumstances connected with Melchizedek's priesthood and his meeting with Abraham were intended by God to shadow forth the higher priesthood of Melchizedek's great Antitype. He brought forth bread and wine, the very symbols that should afterwards represent Christ crucified as our spiritual food and drink, blessed him that had the promises, and received at his hand tithes of all (Genesis 14:18-20), thus exercising the prerogatives of one higher than Abraham, and consequently higher than all his posterity. Hebrews 7:4-10. In the intention of the Holy Ghost, the higher typical {619} meaning lay in this transaction from the beginning, but it was not revealed to the apprehension of believers till the Christian dispensation had begun. So also the rest of the covenant people in the land of Canaan is represented in the New Testament as typical of the true heavenly rest. Hebrews 4:7-11. Other examples might be adduced, but these will serve as an illustration of the principle now under consideration.

9. The most striking examples of a literal covering a typical meaning are furnished by the so-called Messianic psalms, a part of which describe the victories and universal dominion of a mighty King whom Jehovah himself establishes on Zion to reign there for ever (Psalms 2:1-12; Psalms 45:1-17, 72, 110, etc.); another part, the deep afflictions of a mighty Sufferer and his subsequent deliverance, which has for its result the conversion of all nations to the service of Jehovah. Psalms 22:1-31; Psalms 40:1-17, 69, 1099, 1099, 109, etc. That such psalms as the second and seventy-second, the twenty-second, fortieth, and sixty-ninth (not to mention others), have a true reference to Christ's person and work, cannot be denied without imputing either error or fraud to the writers of the New Testament. Nay more, our Lord himself said, after his resurrection: "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" (Luke 24:44); whence we learn that it was our Lord's custom to refer to the psalms as containing prophecies of himself. If the psalms, when legitimately interpreted, contain no such prophecies, then, when the writers of the New Testament quoted them as referring to Christ, they either believed that they were making a true application of them according to the mind of the Holy Spirit, or they simply accommodated themselves to what they knew to be the groundless prejudices of the age. Upon the former supposition they were in error; upon the latter, they were guilty of fraud. Such is the dishonor which the modern principles of rationalism put upon the word of God. In the interpretation of these psalms, then, we must assume as a fundamental {620} truth that they

contain a true reference to Christ. The only question is, whether they contain a lower reference also.

(1.) One class of interpreters understand these psalms simply of Christ; that is, they assume that the writer speaks wholly in the name of Christ, without reference to himself or any merely human personage. There are psalms-the hundred and tenth, for example-that may be very well explained in this way. The opening words of that psalm-"The Lord said unto my lord"-seem to exclude David as the subject, and it is difficult to see in what sense David could speak of himself as made by a divine oath "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (ver. 4). But in the attempt to carry this principle consistently through all the Messianic psalms, one meets with serious difficulties. They contain, at least some of them, historic allusions of a character so marked and circumstantial that it is hard to believe that the writer had not in view his own personal situation. In some of them, moreover, the writer makes confession to God of his sins. Psalms 40:12 hew:12; Psalms 69:5; Psalms 69:5.

They who apply these psalms exclusively to Christ assume that these confessions of sin are made in a vicarious way, the Messiah assuming the character of a sinner because "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all." Isaiah 53:6. But the form of these confessions forbids such an interpretation. When the psalmist says: "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me;" "O God, thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee," we cannot understand such language of any thing else than personal sinfulness. It is true that the Messiah bore our iniquities, and that God "made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin;" but the Saviour nowhere speaks or can speak of "mine iniquities," "my foolishness," and "my sins."

(2.) According to another class of interpreters, the subject of these psalms, particularly of those which describe the Messiah as a sufferer, is an ideal personage, namely, the congregation of the righteous considered not separately from Christ, but in Christ their head; or, which amounts to the same thing, Christ considered, not in his simple personality apart from the {621} church, but Christ with his body the church. The contents of these psalms are then applied, according to their nature, to Christ alone, to believers alone who are his members, or to Christ in the fullest sense and believers in a subordinate sense. Much might be said in favor of this view; yet it labors under the difficulty already indicated, that one cannot well read the psalms in question, with their marked historic allusions, without the conviction that the author had in view-not indirectly, but immediately-his own personal situation.

(3.) There remains a third, and perhaps preferable view, which may be called the typical view, maintained, as is well known, by Melanchthon, Calvin, and many later expositors. This begins with the well-established principle that David (in a less eminent degree his successors also on the throne, so far as they were true to their office) was a divinely-constituted type of the Messiah, not only in his office as the earthly head of God’s kingdom, but in the events of his history also; that the psalms in question, whether they describe his victorious might or his deep suffering at the hand of his enemies, had a true historic origin; that their first and immediate reference was to the writer’s own situation and the events which befell him; but that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he was carried beyond himself to describe the office and history of the Messiah; that consequently these psalms have a lower fulfilment in David the type (the seventy-second in Solomon), and a higher in Christ the Antitype. The second psalm, for example, which describes

the vain conspiracy of the heathen rulers against the Lord's anointed king, and God's purpose to give him the uttermost ends of the earth for his possession, may have had its occasion in the combination of the surrounding heathen nations against David. In the victorious might with which God endowed him, it had a lower fulfilment; and this was, so to speak, the first sheaf of the harvest of victories that was to follow. It was an earnest and pledge of the complete fulfilment of the psalm in Christ, in whom alone the promise made to David: "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever" (2 Samuel 7:16), could have its real accomplishment. Luke 1:32-33.

{622} The second class of psalms, of which the twenty-second is a well-known example, may have had, in like manner, a true historic origin. When the psalmist began with the exclamation: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" he may have had immediate reference to his own distressed condition. But since he was the divinely appointed head of the line of kings which should end in Christ, and was thus in his office a type of Christ, God had so ordered the circumstances of his history as to shadow forth in them the sufferings and final triumph of the Messiah. Writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he was led, through these circumstances, to say many things which applied to himself only in a lower and often figurative sense, but which were appointed to have a complete fulfilment in Christ his Antitype (Psalms 22:1; Psalms 22:7-8; Psalms 22:14-16; Psalms 22:18; Psalms 40:6-10 w:6-10; Psalms 69:4; Psalms 69:7-9; Psalms 69:21; Psalms 109:1-20:1-20), and which point to Christ as the chief subject of the prophecies.

How far the psalmist understood this higher reference of his words is a question difficult to be determined. With regard to the sixteenth psalm, the apostle Peter tells us that David, "being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption" (Acts 2:30-31); whence we infer that in penning this psalm David was conscious of its higher application to Christ. The spirit of the New Testament quotations from the psalms indicates that he had a deeper insight into the prophetic meaning of his words than many modern expositors are willing to admit. But however this may be, the Spirit of inspiration had in view the fulfilment of these psalms in Christ; and his intention, clearly revealed to us in the New Testament, is our rule of interpretation.

10. Different from the above literal and typical sense, yet closely related to it in principle, is that of the progressive fulfilment of prophecy, which has a wide application in the interpretation of those prophecies which relate to the last days. By the progressive fulfilment of prophecy is meant, a fulfilment not exhaustively accomplished at one particular era or crisis in the church's history, but successively from age to age; a fulfilment repeated, it may be, many times, and ending only with the final consummation of the Messiah's kingdom. An undeniable example of such a prophecy is God's message by Isaiah to the covenant people: "Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive {623} not," etc, with the threatened desolation that should follow (chap. 6:9-13). This prophecy had a true fulfilment in the ancient Jewish people before the Babylonish captivity. For their blindness of mind and hardness of heart, they were given over to the power of Nebuchadnezzar, who wasted their land, destroyed their city and temple, and carried the remnant of the people into captivity. But the same prophecy had, in both its parts, a more awful fulfilment in the generation of Jews who rejected and crucified our Lord, and were

destroyed with their city and temple by the armies of Rome (Matthew 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:39-41; Acts 28:25-27; Romans 11:8); and its fulfilment is yet in progress. Joel's prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days upon all flesh, with the mighty accompanying judgments (chap. 2: 28-32), and Amos' prediction of the raising up of David's fallen tabernacle (chap. 9:11, 12), had both their initial fulfilment in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and the triumphs of the gospel that followed. Acts 2:16-21; Acts 15:16-17. But the blessings which they promised were not exhausted in the apostolic age. The church has had rich instalments of them, but richer still are reserved for the future of millennial glory. A large part of the prophecies of the Old Testament indicate in their very structure that they are not to be understood of particular events, but of the development of God's kingdom from age to age. The reader may take, as a single example among many others, the prediction of Isaiah and Micah concerning the establishment of the Lord's house in the last days in the top of the mountains, the resort of all nations to it, and the universal peace that shall follow. Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-4. That particularism which seeks for the fulfilment of every prophecy in some one specific event of history must go widely astray in its interpretation of Scripture.

{624} IV. THE QUESTION OF LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE MEANING.

11. On this question expositors are, as is well known, much divided; one class adopting, as far as possible, the literal meaning of the prophetic announcements, the other freely employing the principle of figurative interpretation. A full discussion of the claims of these two methods of interpretation, on which so many volumes have been written, would far exceed the limits of the present work. All that can be done is, to indicate some well-established principles which may help to guide the biblical student in the study of prophecy.

12. We begin by calling attention to the representative use which the Old Testament prophets make of the events of the past history of Israel; that is, to their habit of representing the future under the imagery of this history. When Israel journeyed from Egypt to Palestine through the wilderness of Arabia, God dried up the tongue of the Egyptian sea before the people, guided them miraculously by the cloudy pillar, fed them with manna, made streams of water to burst forth from the rock for their refreshment, and finally divided the waters of the Jordan to give them a passage into the promised land. This primitive history of Israel furnishes for the prophets who lived in later ages a rich treasury of images which it would be absurd to interpret in a literal way.

Thus Isaiah, speaking of the future gathering together of the outcasts of Israel and the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth (chap. 11:11, 12), says: "And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea, and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river [the Euphrates], and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dry shod" (ver. 15). To suppose that the prophet foretells a literal repetition of the miracles wrought upon the Red sea and the Jordan is unnecessary and most improbable. The meaning is, that God shall remove all obstacles which hinder the return of his people to their own land, as he originally removed all obstacles which opposed their entrance into it. This is, indeed, the very idea of the following verse: "And there shall be a highway for the remnant of his people, which shall {625} be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt."

Again, the prophet foretells that in the latter day glory "the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the

shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence." Isaiah 4:5. Here "the figurative reference is to the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire in which the Lord went before the Israelites in the wilderness, and to the glory which rested upon the tabernacle." Henderson. God will give to his church in the latter day that which the pillar of cloud and of fire signified, his glorious presence and protection. A literal repetition of the miracle is not to be thought of.

Once more, God promises to his weary people, on their pilgrimage to Zion, that "in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert" (Isaiah 35:6, and often elsewhere), with obvious allusion to the miraculous supplies of water furnished to the Israelites in their journey through the Arabian desert to the land of Canaan. The water here promised is the water of life, and not literal fountains in the desert. Upon the same principle are we to interpret the river that flows out from under the threshold of the temple, and flows down eastward to the Dead sea, growing broader and deeper in its course, and imparting life to everything which comes within its influence. Ezekiel 47:1-12, and compare Psalms 46:4; Joel 3:18; Zechariah 14:8.

13. The same representative use is made by the prophets of the institutions of the Mosaic economy. One of their offices was, to foretell the extension of the true religion over all the earth; the conversion of all nations to the faith of the covenant people, and their peaceful subjection to Jehovah who reigned in Zion. In what form should this be done while the theocracy was yet in full force? The disclosure of God’s purpose to abolish this theocracy in the interest of a simpler and more spiritual dispensation, which should know no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, would have been a premature act. It would, so far as we can judge, have led to much error and misapprehension; and it must have had the effect of disparaging the existing economy before the world was prepared to receive any thing better in its place. God, therefore, allowed his prophets to portray the glories of the latter day, when all nations should come to the knowledge and obedience of the {626} truth, under the forms of the Jewish dispensation, with its temple, sacrifices, and solemn festivals. A striking example is the bright portraiture of two contemporary prophets: "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people [Hebrew peoples, that is, as Isaiah, all the nations] shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it." Micah 4:1-4, compared with Isaiah 2:2-4. The temple at Jerusalem, with its altar and priesthood, was the central point of the old theocracy. There all the sacrifices were to be offered, there was the seat of royal authority, and consequently of public justice, and thither all the males among the people were required to repair three times a year at the great national festivals. Deuteronomy 16:16. A Jew could conceive of the conversion of all nations only in the form of their subjecting themselves to the theocracy, and coming up to Jerusalem for worship and the administration of justice. Accordingly the Spirit of prophecy here represents the mountain of the Lord’s house as "established in the top of the mountains," a conspicuous object to all nations, who resort thither for worship, submit themselves to the authority

of the great king who reigns there, and thus have universal peace and happiness. To insist on the literal interpretation of these words is contrary to the general analogy of prophecy. It is an attempt to bring back the outward sensuous form of the kingdom of heaven which the gospel dispensation has abolished.

There is another celebrated passage in Zechariah 14:16-21 which is intensely Jewish in its costume. After describing the judgments of God upon the nations that have fought against Jerusalem, the prophet goes on to say: "And it shall come to pass that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up, of all the families of the earth, unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the {627} Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts; and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts." The prophet's care to include "all the families of the earth" in this ordinance is very noticeable. Whatever nation refuses to observe it shall have no rain. But, recollecting that for Egypt this can be no punishment, he appoints for that country the plague instead of the absence of rain. Is it so, then, that in the last days all the families of the earth are to go up year by year to worship at Jerusalem? If so, they are to sacrifice also; for the prophecy is a homogeneous whole, of which, if the beginning is to be understood literally, so is the end also. The reference is to the peace-offerings of the people, on which, after certain prescribed portions had been burned on the altar, the offerer feasted with his friends; and a special provision is made for the multitude of these sacrifices. "Every pot in Judah and Jerusalem," as well as "the pots in the Lord's house," "shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts," that it may be used for boiling the flesh of the peace-offerings, precisely as we find done in the days of Eli.1 Samuel 2:13-16. But all sacrifices are done away for ever in Christ. Hebrews 10:10-18. This part of the prophecy must clearly be understood figuratively, and therefore the whole. The future reception of the true religion by all nations is foretold under the symbols of the Mosaic economy, with its ritual, its yearly feasts, and its central place of worship. For this principle of interpretation we have the warrant of the New Testament. Did the law of Moses prescribe a literal priesthood with literal sacrifices; believers, under the new dispensation, are a spiritual priesthood, presenting their bodies as "living sacrifices." Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5. Did the Mosaic economy have a central metropolis, a literal Zion, whither all the tribes went up; believers in Christ have come to the spiritual "Mount Zion" which this shadowed forth, where the great Antitype of David reigns, that all nations may resort to him, and he may teach them his laws.

Upon the same principle, as well as for other very obvious reasons (see chaps. 42:15-20; 45:1-8; 47:1-12, and the whole of chap. 48), Ezekiel's minute description of a New Jerusalem, with its territory, its temple, and its Jewish appointments (chaps. Matthew-48), is to be understood not literally but figuratively. This temple has also its Levitical priesthood, its altar, and its sacrifices (chap. 43:13-27), all which are done away in Christ. There are other passages kindred to the

above which it is not necessary to {628} consider separately, as they all come under the same general principle of interpretation.

14. In the classes of prophecies that have been considered, the principle of figurative interpretation can be maintained upon solid grounds. But it would be wrong to press it as of universal and exclusive application. Where no reasons to the contrary exist, the literal interpretation, as the most natural and obvious, deserves the preference. To draw the limits between the literal and the figurative in prophecy is difficult, and in some cases impossible. In this respect it has pleased the wisdom of God that a vail should rest on some unfulfilled predictions which his own hand alone has power to remove. There are two questions, especially, respecting which interpreters have long been divided, and will probably continue to be divided, till God himself shall decide them. The first is that of the literal restoration of the Jews to the promised land; the second, that of our Lord's personal reign on earth during the promised age of millennial glory. To enter upon the full discussion of either would require a volume. We must dismiss both with some brief hints.

15. The original promise to Abraham included the grant of the land of Canaan to him and his seed "for an everlasting possession." Genesis 12:7; Genesis 13:15; Genesis 15:18; Genesis 17:8; Genesis 26:3; Genesis 28:13. It is expressed in the plainest terms, the boundaries of the promised territory are defined, and the nations inhabiting it enumerated (Genesis 15:18-21); in a word, every thing indicates the literal as the true interpretation. The remarkable words of the Saviour: "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24), have had a literal fulfilment in the awful judgments which they foretell; and it seems reasonable to believe that the promise implied in the last clause, "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" shall have a literal fulfilment also in their repossession of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The wonderful preservation of the Jewish {629} nation through so many centuries of dispersion points in the same direction. All these things, taken in connection with the numerous and very explicit prophecies of their captivity and dispersion for their sins, and their subsequent restoration upon repentance (Lev. chap. 26; Deut. chaps, 28-30: 1 Kings 8:46-50; Isa. chaps. 6, 11, 66; Jer. chaps. 30, 31; Ezek. chaps. 36-39; Hosea 1:10-11; Joel. chap. 3; Amos chap. 9; Micah 7:8-20; Zephaniah 3:8-20), seem to warrant the expectation of a literal fulfilment hereafter of the promise made to Abraham that his seed should inherit the land of Canaan for ever.

16. That Christ will come again in glory to raise the dead, change the living, and judge all nations, is a fundamental article of the Christian faith. But the doctrine "that the fleshly and sublunary state is not to terminate with the coming of Christ, but to be then set up in a new form; when, with his glorified saints, the Redeemer will reign in person on the throne of David at Jerusalem for a thousand years, over a world of men yet in the flesh, eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage, under this mysterious sway" (Brown on the Second Advent, who correctly states the fundamental principle of the system), cannot lay claim to an irrefragable basis of scriptural teaching. The arguments relied on by its advocates are drawn in part from the very passages that have been considered above (Micah 4:1-4; Zechariah 14:16-21). How little support the theory derives from these passages, when fairly interpreted, we have seen. Nor is it favored by the references to our Lord's second coming in the gospels and epistles, for they clearly connect it with the final consummation of all things. Our Saviour says: "The hour is coming, in the which all

that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28-29. He plainly represents these two resurrections as simultaneous; nor is there in the record of his words any hint of a partial resurrection ages before the reign of death in this world shall close. The resurrection "at the last trump" to which the apostle Paul refers (1 Cor. chap. 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10) is {630} universal. It expressly includes all the dead in Christ and the change of all Christ's living disciples. If nothing is said of the resurrection of the wicked, it is because the apostle has in mind only the "resurrection of life," and has no occasion to speak of the simultaneous "resurrection of damnation" which the Saviour himself connects with it. This resurrection at the last trump is also the annihilation of the reign of death; for when it happens, "then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." 1 Corinthians 15:54. But "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," and "then cometh the end." 1 Corinthians 15:24-26. The Saviour teaches, moreover, that his personal presence on earth is inconsistent with the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." John 16:7. It is expedient, doubtless, because the dispensation of the Spirit is better adapted to our present state of flesh and blood than his personal presence could be. This dispensation of the Spirit must, from the nature of the case, be continued in its full force throughout the millennial era, when the generations of men will succeed each other as at present. But the New Testament knows nothing of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit existing contemporaneously with Christ's personal reign on earth. Its constant doctrine is that the salvation of men is effected by Christ's intercession in heaven conjointly with the gift of the Holy Spirit on earth. The passage mainly relied upon by the advocates of this theory is the twentieth chapter of the book of Revelation, which speaks of the first and second resurrection. But the first resurrection there described cannot be identical with the resurrection described by Paul at our Lord's advent. The resurrection described by Paul includes in express terms all the righteous, whereas this first resurrection of the Apocalypse is restricted to a certain class, namely, the martyrs and confessors for Christ's sake (ver. 4), while the rest of the dead live not till the thousand years are over (ver. 5). Then there is a general resurrection (ver. 11-15), which, from its very terms, {631} includes the righteous and the wicked; for among the books then opened is "the book of life." The risen dead are "judged every man according to his works," and all whose names are not found in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire. At the same time death and hell (Hades), personified as two enemies of the human race, are cast into the lake of fire, and thus "death, the last enemy, is destroyed," and "death is swallowed up in victory." 1 Corinthians 15:26, 1 Corinthians 15:54. This is the resurrection which takes place upon our Lord's advent at the last trump, not a thousand years after his advent; the resurrection and judgment, when the wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." We venture not to interpret the meaning of the first resurrection, believing that it is one of the mysteries which God alone will reveal in its fulfilment. But whether it should be taken literally or figuratively, after the analogy of the resurrection of the two witnesses (chap. 11:11), it does not seem reasonable to build upon this obscure and difficult passage a doctrine respecting our Lord's pre-millennial advent and personal reign on earth which is so decidedly at variance with the general tenor of Scripture.

TAGS: [Bible] [Interpretation]

39. Quotations of OT in the NT

CHAPTER XXXIX.

QUOTATIONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE NEW.

1. As it respects inspiration, and consequent infallible authority, the quotations of the New Testament stand on a level with the rest of the apostolic writings. The Saviour's promise was: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth;" literally, "into all the truth," that is, as immediately explained, all the truth pertaining to the Redeemer's person and work. When, therefore, after the fulfilment of this promise, Peter and the other apostles expounded to their brethren the Scriptures of the Old Testament, wherein the Spirit of Christ "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow," the same "Spirit of Christ" guided them to a true apprehension of their meaning. If we cannot trust Peter and Paul, whom Christ himself personally commissioned to preach his gospel, qualified for this work by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and endowed with miraculous powers as the seal of their commission-if we cannot trust these men to interpret the words of the Old Testament, then we cannot trust the guidance of the Divine Spirit himself. But when we have admitted, as we must, the authority of the New Testament writers as interpreters of the Old Testament, a very important question remains to be considered; and that is the manner of their quotations. This question we propose briefly to examine in respect to both outward form and inward contents.

2. As it respects outward form, we cannot but notice at once the very free spirit of these quotations. It is manifest that these inspired penmen are not anxious about the verbal accuracy of the words cited. The spirit and scope of a passage, which constitute its true life and meaning, are what they have {633} in view, not the exact number of words literally translated from Hebrew into Greek. It is well known that a very large part of their quotations is made from the Greek version of the seventy, called the Septuagint, which was in common use in their day. No one pretends that the translators who made the Septuagint were inspired, or that they always succeeded in hitting the exact meaning of the Hebrew original. Yet, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the robust good sense of the New Testament writers went straight forward without stopping to notice or criticise deviations from the Hebrew, provided they did not affect the use which they wished to make of the passages quoted. But the New Testament writers do not always conform their quotations to the Septuagint. They frequently follow the Hebrew wholly or in part where the Greek version departs from it. Matthew, in particular, follows the Hebrew in the Messianic quotations. Chap. 29, No. 19. Yet in these cases also they cite in the same free manner, abridging sometimes the Hebrew passage quoted, or giving only its general sense. It may be that thus the wisdom of God intended to bear testimony against the undue exaltation of the letter of inspiration above its spirit. From a list of some two hundred and fifty citations placed side by side with the original Hebrew passages and the Septuagint version of the same we select the following as illustrations of the above remarks, each passage being literally translated. The words in brackets are regarded by some as not belonging to the true text.

Hebrew. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to the bound; to proclaim a year of acceptance to the Lord. Isaiah 61:1-2.

Septuagint. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Isaiah 61:1-2.

New Testament. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because he hath {634} anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor, he hath sent me [to heal the broken-hearted,] to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away free the bruised (perhaps from the Greek of Isaiah 58:6); to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Luke 4:18-19.

Hebrew. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy king shall come to thee: he is just and endowed with salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. Zechariah 9:9.

Septuagint. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; proclaim, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold the king cometh to thee, just and exercising salvation; he is meek, and mounted on an ass and a young colt. Zechariah 9:9.

New Testament. Say ye to the daughter of Zion (Isaiah 62:11): Behold thy king cometh to thee, meek, and mounted upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. Matthew 21:5.

Fear not, O daughter of Zion; behold thy king cometh sitting upon an ass's colt. John 12:15.

Hebrew. In hearing hear ye, but understand not; and in seeing see ye, but perceive not. Make fat the heart of this people, and their ears make heavy, and their eyes cover over: lest they see with their eyes, and with their ears hear, and with their heart understand, and turn, and one heal them. Isaiah 6:9-10.

Septuagint. In hearing ye shall hear, but understand not; and in seeing ye shall see, but perceive not. For the heart of this people became gross, and with their ears they heard heavily, and the eyes they closed; lest at any time they should see with the eyes, and with the ears should hear, and with the heart should understand, and should turn, and I should heal them. Isaiah 6:9-10.

New Testament. In hearing ye shall hear, but understand not; and in seeing ye shall see, but perceive not. For the heart of this people became gross, and with the ears they heard heavily, and their eyes they closed; lest at any time they should see with the eyes, and with the ears should hear, and with the heart should understand, and should turn, and I should heal them. Matthew 13:14-15; also Acts 28:26-27. That in seeing they may see and not perceive, and in hearing they may hear and not understand; lest at any time they should turn, and [their sins] should be forgiven them. Mark 4:12. That in seeing they may not see, and in hearing they may not understand. Luke 8:10.

He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they might not see with the eyes, and understand with the heart, and be turned, and I should heal them. John 12:40.

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These quotations of the same passage by different New Testament writers furnish a remarkable example of their free manner, while the spirit and scope of the prophet are kept by all. In Hebrews 10:5 we have a quotation from the Septuagint where it differs widely from the Hebrew of Psalms 40:7 thew:7 thew:7. This reads: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened" (Heb. bored or digged). But the apostle quotes after the Septuagint: "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared for me." The attempted explanations of this difference are not very satisfactory. It is to be noticed, however, that the apostle builds no essential part of his argument upon the clause in question. In the long quotation from Jeremiah in Hebrews 8:8-12, the clause, "and I regarded them not" (ver. 9), is perhaps correct for substance; since many prefer to render the corresponding Hebrew clause not as in our version-"though I was a husband unto them,"-but, "and I rejected them."

When, on the contrary, the spirit and scope of a passage are lost in the version of the Seventy, the New Testament writers quote directly from the Hebrew. Examples are the following:

"When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." Hosea 11:1, quoted in Matthew 2:15. Here the Seventy render: "Out of Egypt I called my children," a variation from the original which makes the passage inapplicable; since Israel, as God's first-born son (Exodus 4:22-23), was the type of Christ, and not the individual Israelites.

Again, to the passage Isaiah 42:1-4, quoted in Matthew 12:18-21, the Septuagint gives a wrong turn by the introductory words: "Jacob my son, I will help him: Israel my chosen, my soul hath accepted him: I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles," etc.; whereas the Hebrew speaks not of Jacob and Israel, but of God's servant: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth," etc. Matthew accordingly follows the Hebrew, yet in a very free manner: "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul delighteth," etc. For other examples see Malachi 3:1, as quoted by Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27; Isaiah 9:1-2, as quoted by Matthew 4:15-16.

3. Passing now to the consideration of the New Testament citations on the side of their inward contents, the first question, that arises has respect to the so-called principle of accommodation. There is a sense in which the writers of the New Testament sometimes employ the language of the Old in the way of accommodation; that is, they use its phraseology, originally applied in {636} a different connection, simply as expressing in an apt and forcible manner the thoughts which they wish to convey. Of this we have a beautiful example in Romans 10:18, where the apostle says, in reference to the proclamation of the gospel: "But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world," meaning that what the psalmist says of the instruction given by the heavens, Psalms 19:1-4, is true of the preaching of the word; so that none are excusable for their unbelief. Another striking example is found in the same chapter (ver. 6-8), where "phraseology originally used by Moses to express the way of justification contained in the law (Deuteronomy 30:11-14) is adapted to the gospel as properly descriptive of the salvation propounded in it." Davidson's Hermeneutics, p. 471. But that the Saviour and his apostles used accommodation in the commonly received sense of the term; that is, that they quoted, in accommodation to the ideas of their age, passages from the Old Testament as applicable to the Messiah and his kingdom, which they knew to have no such application when

fairly and legitimately interpreted; that, for example, they used the hundred and tenth psalm as a prophecy of the Messiah (Matthew 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44; Acts 2:34-35; Hebrews 1:13), simply because this was the current interpretation of their times-this is not to be admitted for a moment. That the Saviour dealt prudently with the prejudices of his age is admitted; but he did not build upon them his claim to be the Messiah, nor solemnly appeal to the authority of Moses and the prophets knowing this to be only a dream of fanciful interpretation. If Christ and his apostles taught any thing, it was that he had come in accordance with the prophecies of the Old Testament, and in fulfilment of these prophecies. Did they indeed, in all this, only act upon the maxim which Paul rejects with abhorrence as damnable? "If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we {637} say), Let us do evil that good may come? whose damnation is just."

4. The writers of the New Testament often cite the Old by way of argument. Thus the Saviour argues against divorce at the husband's will "for every cause" by an appeal to the original institution of marriage (Matthew 19:3-6); and Paul proves that the man is the head of the woman, and that she owes subjection to him, from the order of creation and its accompanying circumstances. 1 Corinthians 11:8-9; 1 Timothy 2:11-14. Respecting this class of quotations, it is only necessary to remark that the validity of the arguments depends on the historic truth and divine authority of the passages adduced. The Saviour and his apostles professedly build their arguments on the record of the Old Testament. If this is sand-mythical quicksand-their house falls, and their authority with it. But if the foundation is rock-an inspired record of facts-their house stands, and with it their character as truthful teachers.

5. Far more numerous are the passages which are cited as prophecies of Christ and his kingdom. These are introduced by various formulas: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet;" "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet;" "in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias;" "this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears;" "this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled;" "it is contained in Scripture;" "another Scripture saith;" "this that is written must yet be accomplished in me," etc. The common formula, "that it might be fulfilled," means that the event recorded took place in order that the purpose of God announced in the prophecy might be accomplished. The prophecy was not the main thing, but the purpose of God contained in it. For the accomplishment of this purpose, and thus of the prophecy which revealed it, God's truth was pledged. In the same way are to be understood the words of John (chap. 12:39, 40): "Therefore they could not believe because that Esaias saith again, He hath blinded their eyes," etc. The hinderance to their belief lay not in the prophecy, but in that which the prophecy announced.

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6. Of the prophecies quoted, some refer immediately to Christ. Such are the following: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Matthew 22:44, from Psalms 110:1); "The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 7:21, from Psalms 110:4); "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth," etc. (Acts 8:32-33, from Isaiah 53:7-8); "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your

brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear," etc. (Acts 3:22-23; Acts 7:37, from Deuteronomy 18:15, Deuteronomy 18:18, Deuteronomy 18:19).

7. Others refer ultimately to Christ, but under a type. An undeniable example is the following: "A bone of him shall not be broken" (John 19:36, from Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12); words originally spoken of the paschal lamb, which was the type of Christ, and now fulfilled in the great Antitype. Again, we read in Hosea (chap. 11:1): "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt;" words which Matthew quotes as fulfilled in Christ (chap. 2:15). It was the purpose of God, namely, that the history of Israel, God's first-born son (Exodus 4:22-23), in his national childhood, should foreshadow that of Jesus, the only begotten Son of God. To the same class belongs apparently the following citation: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." Hebrews 2:6-8, from Psalms 8:4-6. It seems impossible to deny that the immediate reference of the psalm is to man's exalted dignity and high prerogatives as the lord of this lower world. But, as the writer to the Hebrews argues, the words have no complete fulfilment in man considered apart from Christ. It is in the person of Christ alone that the high destiny of human nature finds its full realization. He is made Lord of all, and "crowned with glory {639} and honor" for himself and for all his disciples also, who shall reign with him in glory for ever. We add one more example from Hebrews 1:5, where the writer quotes and applies to Christ the words of Nathan to David: "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son." 2 Samuel 7:14. The promise undeniably had immediate respect to Solomon; not to Solomon, however, in his simple personality, but to Solomon as the first after David of a line of kings that should end in Christ, in whom alone it has its true fulfilment. God took Solomon, and in him the whole line of kings on David's throne, into the relation of sonship, and thus of heirship. Romans 8:17; Galatians 4:7. To Solomon, as God's son, the kingdom was confirmed for ever through Christ; and Solomon's lower sonship, moreover, adumbrated the higher sonship of the last and greatest of his sons, to whom the promise was: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Luke 1:32-33. To draw the exact line of separation between the two above named classes of citations is difficult, and in some cases perhaps impossible. Nor is it necessary, since the essential truth is, that all these prophecies find their accomplishment in Christ; those of the former class directly, those of the latter through types of divine appointment. The exegesis of the New Testament quotations presents many difficult questions, relating partly to the true rendering of the original words, partly to the deviations of the Septuagint from the Hebrew, and the citations from both the Septuagint and the Hebrew; partly to the original application of the passages cited and the use made of them in the New Testament. For the details the student must be referred to the commentators. All that has been here attempted is a statement of the general principles that must govern us in interpreting the quotations from the Old Testament which are found in the New.

TAGS: [Bible]

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