



# Principles of Interpretation

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AS RECOGNIZED GENERALLY BY BIBLICAL SCHOLARS, TREATED  
AS A SCIENCE, DERIVED INDUCTIVELY FROM AN  
EXEGESIS OF MANY PASSAGES OF  
SCRIPTURE.

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Testament, etc.

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**REVISED EDITION**

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"To know wisdom and instruction; To discern the words of understanding; To receive instruction in wise dealing, In righteousness and judgment and equity; To give subtilty to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion: That the wise may hear, and increase in learning; And that the man of understanding may attain unto wise counsels: To understand a proverb and a figure; The words of the wise and their dark sayings."

Prov. 1:2-6. R. V.

## PREFACE.

In the earliest times known to history no effort was made to systemize knowledge. Neither the oft suggested truths of nature nor the principles that guide the thoughts and lives of men, were reduced to law and orderly arrangement. Accordingly, there were no sciences. Now all phenomena are studied minutely, to discover the laws by which they are ruled; and these laws are disposed methodically in groups forming sciences. Men early discovered the fundamental laws of speech, and prepared grammars. Next, they discovered the principles of mental activity, the laws of thought, and immediately books on mental philosophy appeared. Last of all, men have noted that the processes of interpretation are as truly governed by general principles as those of thought and speech. Moreover, the very fact that thought and the expression of thought are in accord with definite laws, implies the possibility, if not the necessity, of interpreting also according to scientific principles that may be clearly defined.

For several generations scholars in various schools of Christian faith have been approaching agreement upon the laws that control the processes of interpreting human speech; so that, at present, the principles herein set forth want but little of universal recognition. Why, indeed, should there not be standard principles as well as fixed rules of grammar or rhetoric? Is it not as important to interpret as to speak? Is not the interpretation often the more difficult task, and therefore the more in need of authoritative direction? In religious matters, at least, it must be conceded that misinterpretation has long been a most fruitful

source of error, and that much of this is due to a careless consideration or total neglect of the plainest principles of the science.

These laws, however, are not limited in application to the Bible any more than to any other production, nor even confined to written speech. They control all interpretations of thought expressed in words, and may be expanded even to govern the interpretation of ideas as indicated by signs, signals, or symbols. The use of such laws, then, is not limited to readers of the Holy Scriptures, although it is true that most books on the subject are prepared to guide the interpreter of the Bible of some portion of that book. This is only because of the deep interest that has always attached to the interpretation of the Sacred Volume. The rules of interpretation are valuable to the student of history, law, medicine, poetry, or any other expression of thought whatever. In the court-room particularly, the interpretation of testimony, of law, of decisions, and of state and national constitutions, is vital to the administration of justice. Here, just as much as in the pulpit or in the Bible-class, laws of scientific interpretation must be followed.

These laws are not enacted by parliaments and congresses, passed by councils and synods, nor decreed by popes and potentates; but just as other scientific laws, they are discovered by observation, particularly by carefully analyzing the processes of correct interpretation. If based on a large number of examples, and stated only as warranted by the data, these principles must be regarded as scientific, and hence as reliable guides to interpretation as far as the nature of the literature to be interpreted permits them to apply.

Since these laws were discovered by analysis and induction, the analytical and inductive method is deemed the most natural approach to them in this volume. The principles here given have undergone the tests of criticism in

the highest courts of civilized nations, and by those in all departments of literary labor on whom men most rely for sound judgment and safe direction, and they have won general acceptance with scholars after the conflict of many generations, during which they have withstood the opposition of numerous unscientific and unreasonable interpreters. Only such rules are admitted to this work as express the principles which guide the best interpreters in all classes of Christian faith and in all vocations of life. Their value in no small measure is due to this general recognition.

In preparing this work, the writer has been prompted mainly by the following purposes:

1. To give a definite form of statement to a greater number of fundamental laws bearing on the subject than have ever been offered before.
2. To present all the principles in the most condensed form for practical use; and to state some rifles, which have always been followed by good interpreters, but which have been heretofore rarely, if ever, noticed in works on this subject.
3. To reduce the entire system of principles to a form that accords with the present state of other sciences.
4. To approach every law by a process of induction, so that the reader cannot fail to discern its value and to learn the method of its application.
5. To make the work valuable for its interpretation of numerous difficult passages of Scriptures; and, by means of an index, to make these comments available for reference.
6. To stimulate and direct the study of the Holy Scriptures, not only by setting forth the principles of scientific interpretation and illustrating them by examples, but also by devoting two chapters to the most approved and fruitful methods of studying the Bible.
7. To offer a contribution and some encouragement to the progress of-one of the most valuable of the sciences. If

this volume should serve only to lead some other mind to aid in unlocking the yet unseen laws of communicating thought, and to prompt some other hand to attempt an improvement in the scientific and practical expression of them, it will not be deemed in vain.

8. Every impulse given to sacred hermeneutics prepares for a better apprehension of revealed truth, a broader and clearer view of the divine will and a higher and better life. To attain these ends, even to a small degree, is far more than worthy of the labors required to produce this work.

CLINTON LOCKHART.

Des Moines, March 20, 1901.

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#### PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The author gratefully acknowledges the generous reception which the public has accorded to the former edition and many private messages of hearty appreciation of the work. He now hopes by many improvements and additions to make the book still more worthy of the goodwill of its readers and so to broaden the field of its usefulness. Some of the changes are in the interest of clearness of explanation and aptness to illustrate principle; while a few passages which at best seem to be ambiguous have been omitted.

An important addition relates to the bearing of literary forms upon interpretation. The Hebrews never gave attention to the manifestation of literary forms to the eye of the reader; and consequently they unwittingly concealed many literary qualities that were evidently present to the thought of the writers. Even the nature of Hebrew poetry has been a matter of gradual discovery in modern times; and many special features both of prose and verse have come to the appreciation of scholars within the last one or two decades. Many intelligent readers of the Bible know

hut little of these literary characteristics and still less of their value in interpretation. Even many scholars are slow to learn that the historical and grammatical method of interpretation, valuable and really indispensable as it is, cannot compass the whole field of hermeneutics, and that the literary method, some features of which have already won recognition, is certain to find an enlarging office. The space devoted to this subject in this work is sufficient only to set forth the most incontestable principles with appropriate illustration.

The former edition has been used in many colleges as a textbook; and this edition is designed to be yet more valuable for this purpose. Some theological seminaries offer no courses at all in hermeneutics; and yet their students in private, as did the writer in Yale University, seize eagerly upon any work that comes to hand that helps them to thread the labyrinths of biblical study. This is not because they regard the Bible as an intended puzzle; for evidently its writers expected their productions to be as clear as others of their time. But, as might be anticipated, students find great difficulty in understanding such a variety of writings belonging to a distant age, and emerging from a language and a civilization almost wholly diverse from our own. Experience has proved that this study elicits deeper and more constant interest in students than any other branch that the seminary offers.

Although the author has sought assiduously throughout the work to present only the most scientific and reasonable interpretations, he does not regard it important that teachers should agree with the exegesis of every passage. He himself does not agree minutely with some of the textbooks that he uses in teaching. A teacher is often fortunate if he finds a book that is serviceable as a basis of procedure in the consideration of some branches of theological study. If he requires one to be perfectly satisfactory, he must write it himself! The brevity of this work

as compared with many larger books on the subject is designed to facilitate collegiate use. At the same time, in all parts of the book, the needs of the general reader, who cannot enjoy classroom opportunities, have been duly regarded.

CLINTON LOCKHART.

Fort Worth, Texas, Sept. 1, 1915.

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# Principles of Interpretation.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE VALUE OF LAWS OF INTERPRETATION.

Who learns to swim,  
Unschool'd in wavy water? Who to think, Except  
by use of thinking? What a man, With shaping  
thought and hand, may for himself, No God will for  
him. Human wit is slow, Stumbling nine times for  
one firm footing gained, But still made strong by  
striving, and sharp-eyed To find the light through  
darkness and distress By time and toil and reason's  
happy guess.

—ROBERT BROWNING.

**Insufficiency of Rules  
Alone.**

It is not hoped that any number of axioms and rules of interpretation will compensate the unfortunate interpreter who is lacking in good judgment and sound common sense. Laws of all sciences presuppose ability in him who would use them. "Rules of interpretation can no more make a good interpreter than rules of poetry can make a good poet"; yet it is a poor interpreter or a poor poet that observes no rules. Rules without genius and genius without rules are alike unsuccessful; while only moderate talents wisely directed often achieve remarkable success.

**Materials  
Needed**

It is likewise impossible that rules can be given that will adequately meet every demand. Even if they could be provided for every passage, literary and historical materials could not

be found sufficient to remove every difficulty. Rules cannot supply materials; but they render a priceless service if they lead the interpreter to seek the necessary materials, and guide him to a proper use of them. It sometimes occurs that the data necessary to understand a passage have been lost or are inaccessible to the interpreter. An infallible exegesis of every utterance, therefore, even on the basis of a perfect system of hermeneutics, is unattainable.

Hermeneutics Not Complete.
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But we have not a perfect system of hermeneutics. Probably many valuable principles of interpretation are yet to be discovered or formulated, just as there are many truths to be disclosed in all the other sciences. A constant progress has been made in the development of the science of correct interpretation from the days of Luther to the present time; and advancing civilization together with the increase of linguistic and historical materials, promises yet more efficient methods of eliciting the meaning of any author's words.

Rules Yet Valuable.
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While the above is true, it is nevertheless absurd to conclude that principles of interpretation are useless, and that it is vain to seek a clearer and more scientific apprehension of thoughts expressed by man and God. Principles of mathematics and physics are not worthless because some of their laws are yet undiscovered. The inventor's labor is not in vain merely because he cannot devise machinery that will do all needed work. The antiquarian ceases not to dig because he cannot unearth all ancient history; nor does the poet cease to write because he cannot imprison all nature's beauties in his verse. Neither should an interpreter be discouraged because he cannot always unfold an author's thought. Hardly a truth discovered in mathematics has not been practically useful in mechanics or astronomy; likewise, hardly a principle of interpretation has won acceptance that has not released some Scripture from obscurity, and set forth some truth in brighter light.

**Must be  
Specific**

But it is not enough for practical use that a principle of interpretation should be stated in its most general form. Possibly all the rules of hermeneutics could be reduced to a few comprehensive laws, just as if all the cutlery in the world were melted and the material molded into a few comprehensive blocks of steel; but this would destroy the very utility for which the rules were designed. The rules of any science, in order to have any practical value, must be as specific and definite as possible. It may be that in making them specific their number will be increased; but as rules are multiplied, their practical value is enhanced, so long as each expresses an advice distinct from that of every other.

**Must be Used.**

It is not enough, also, for the student of hermeneutics merely to study the rules without practically applying them; for this would be about as profitable as attempting to learn carpentry by merely examining a chest of tools. As in carpentry every tool should be used again and again on every kind of material to which it is applicable, so in interpretation every rule should be often employed, and skill in its use should be acquired by careful discipline.

**Valuable for  
Correction.**

Just as the principles of grammar enable the student to correct errors in his customary speech, the laws of hermeneutics serve to rectify many mistakes of interpretation. They remind the interpreter of numerous duties respecting his work that he had neglected, although he may have known them; and they teach him certain features of interpretation that he had not before known. Most people are honest in their understanding of the Scriptures, but their mistakes spring from ignorance of the simplest principles that ought to guide the interpreter. The masses of the people do not even know that there are well recognized canons of interpretation.

Encouragement
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Very few people study the structure or try to learn the names of hundreds of common plants in the fields and by the roadside. Is this because they have no interest in them? Do they care nothing for nature's most abundant and most beautiful products? By no means. It is simply because they have not studied botany, do not know the methods of analysis, and have not at hand the books and other means of learning the mysteries of these plants. Innumerable truths of interest may be there; but they are locked up from the peasant, and he knows not how to find the key to them. The same is true in regard to studying the Bible and other books. It is a popular estimate of the Bible that it is a volume of mysteries, having here and there a few plain statements of truth and duty—all the rest a field for scholarly acumen and theological combat. Such an opinion of the Scriptures is pernicious in the extreme; for it stifles every impulse of the people to study the Bible, and renders them suspicious of every honest interpretation of it. It was a great blessing that the Bible was placed in the hands of the common people, and that blessing will be many times magnified when they learn the methods and secure the means of simple and correct interpretation.

Valuable for Truth.
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Only correct processes can be expected to bring correct results. Ignorance of the principles of mathematics must lead to false estimates of magnitudes, and bad morals produce bad lives; so the Christian world can never hope to reach grounds of common truth until it follows scientific principles of interpretation. Let the masses be taught to interpret by well defined and universally recognized rules, and thousands of popular errors will be taken from their minds as weeds are snatched from a garden of flowers.

Valuable for Other Studies
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The ruins of ancient cities are fast yielding up their buried literature; and this must be translated and interpreted before ancient history can be made available to this generation. The date

and authorship of the books of the Bible are to be learned mainly by interpreting the books themselves. The entire system of Christian Doctrine is based on interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. It is thus apparent that literature, archaeology, criticism, and theology are dependent on hermeneutics; and we need only hint at the bearing of interpretation on homiletics, ecclesiastical polity, sociology, missions, and other subjects. Accurate interpretation leads to truth, and truth promotes and encourages study in all branches. Besides all this, habits of scientific method and accuracy in one branch inevitably lead to similar habits in all the others and to better habits of practical life.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE AXIOMS OF HERMENEUTICS.

Character of Axioms
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Every well developed science presents or assumes certain fundamental principles, which may be very briefly expressed, but which contain only the most primary and essential truths of the science. These are usually called *Axioms*. In mathematics an axiom is a proposition the truth of which is so evident at first sight that it needs no demonstration. In many other sciences, however, the axioms may not be self-evident ; but "though they may require proof, they are considered to rest in irrefragable evidence" (Encyc. Dict.). The axioms in hermeneutics are in many cases self-evident, but some of them have won general recognition only after generations of conflict and practical test; nevertheless, no proposition can be admitted to the list of axioms unless its truth is fully conceded by scholars, and it essentially underlies certain necessary rules and processes of interpretation.

Test of Axioms
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An axiom must not be tested by fancy, or prejudice or preconceived opinions; for it is not designed to express the particular views or tenets of any person or association of persons. If it does not state scientifically the very nature of thought and speech, it is wholly worthless. The well accredited laws of thought and the evident intent of speech are therefore the only tests to which its truthfulness can be subjected. In applying these tests the opposite of an axiom may be studied; and if its opposite be found to be absurd, the axiom must be true. If

the opposite of any axiom should be found true or probable, the axiom is unworthy of its place.

**Axiom I.  
Object of Speech.**

A statement of the true object of speech lays the foundation of all hermeneutics. If " the object of speech be uncertain or obscure, the interpreter can never rely on his results. It is a remarkable fact that men have arisen in various ages who assumed that the meaning of Scripture cannot be known, and that much more thought is concealed than revealed by words. The true interpreter understands any writer to mean what he says, not what he does not say. The opposite of this is absurd, and the interpreter is forced to proceed on the basis of the

*AXIOM : The true object of speech is the impartation of thought.*

**Axiom II.  
Object of Interpretation.**

Next to the object of speech, it is fundamental to state the object of interpretation. It is not the privilege of any interpreter to impose his own thought upon the words of an author, nor in any way to modify the author's meaning. The interpreter is not responsible for the thought, whether it be true or false, consistent or inconsistent, good or bad doctrine. His only province is to apprehend the precise thought imparted by the author's words, and leave the author responsible for the character of his thought. To do otherwise, is to make the author say what the interpreter wishes, which makes the interpretation a mockery. Hence the necessity of the

*AXIOM : The true object of interpretation is to apprehend the exact thought of the author.*

**Axiom III.  
Reliability of  
Language.**

If language be unreliable as a vehicle of thought, it is useless for us to proceed further with the science of interpretation; for we could have no assurance that any interpretation would rightly reflect the author's meaning; and,

indeed, no dependence could be placed on his words. We may need various historical facts, good common sense, and sound rules, to interpret correctly a certain production; but assuming that these are present with the intended reader, an author may safely commit his thought to language as a reliable means of communicating it to others. To deny this, is to render nugatory every written law, human and divine; to discredit the words of every prophet and sage, and to enshroud in darkness the history of all the past. Records, bonds, notes, proclamations, addresses, promises, inscriptions, and translations would become at once, all and alike, worthless and vain. These facts require the following

AXIOM : *Language is a reliable medium of communication.*

<p>Axiom IV. Usage.</p>
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By *usage* is meant the continued use or treatment of words by the people to whose language the words belong. The power of usage over words is universally recognized in grammar and lexicography. In preparing dictionaries, the authors must find the senses in which the people use each word, and set down the meanings accordingly.

In regard to the *character* of this influence, we may note that by usage, (1) a word receives its first meaning, (2) a word may have its meaning changed, (3) a word may receive many meanings, or (4) a word or a certain meaning of a word may become partially or wholly obsolete.

In regard to the *extent* of this influence, it is clear that a certain usage may prevail, (1) wherever the language is spoken, or (2) only in a certain district, or (3) only in a certain vocation, art or science, or (4) only in the writings of a particular author. The fundamental law of all languages that underlies all these conditions may be expressed in the

AXIOM : *Usage determines the meaning of words.*

<p><b>Axiom V. Variety of Ex- pression.</b></p>
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If two witnesses independently testify to the same events, their testimonies are never expressed in the same form; and in matters more abstract a much greater variety of expression by different authors appears. This is because no two minds are like; and since they are reflected in speech as in a mirror, their reflections cannot be the same. This is but a part of the infinite variety with which God has clothed the universe. This does not necessarily apply to writers taught in the same school, or to those who quote, or are influenced by the same authors; but it is a proof of the truth of this principle that often two persons attempting to reproduce the words or thoughts of the same author, do not give them alike. It rarely occurs that even under similar influences two writers express a thought in similar language. From these facts comes the

*AXIOM: TWO writers do not independently express thought alike.*

<p><b>Axiom VI. Environment.</b></p>
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That human nature is impressible by surroundings, is unquestionable. No one would think of Paul's ever having written such letters as his if the influence of his youth, education and missionary experiences had been other than they were. He might have been a great man, but his greatness would have sought another channel. Genius would not in any case have saved him from the influence of his environment. His writings bear constant witness to this truth; for his tone, language, and drift of thought in every paragraph reveal his anxiety for the great cause which he defends, for the churches that he has planted, and for his own apostolic authority and personal integrity. In a similar manner every other writer in the Bible and in other books writes according to the circumstances under which he may be placed. If it be asked, how far inspiration affects this principle, it may be said that inspiration is simply one of

the influences of the writer's environment. It may also be observed that inspiration did not remove the writers of the Bible from their natural surroundings, but merely enlightened them to meet the exigencies of their circumstances. These facts make evident the truth of this

AXIOM: *Every writer is influenced by his environment.*

**Axiom VII.  
Author's Pur-  
pose**

The speech of the insane man may not always be consistent or regulated by reason, but it is usually the result of some purpose, however wild or vain. Much more are the products of intelligent minds due to the purposes that inspire them. According to a purpose, materials are selected for a work; according to a purpose, the materials are arranged to produce an intended effect; and according to a purpose, the language is adapted to express a certain thought or temper of mind. In all cases, the purpose of an author is all-powerful in shaping his composition; and from this we derive the

AXIOM: *An author's purpose determines the character of his production.*

**Axiom VIII.  
Modifications of  
Writings.**

Persons who have attempted to copy any writings, know how much care and revision are required to prevent accidental errors from creeping into the copy. Men who have examined ancient manuscripts of works that were often copied before printing was invented, have observed that they rarely find two manuscripts of the same work exactly alike; and if many manuscripts be compared, the differences are generally found to be numerous. They usually consist of omissions, insertions and substitutions, made generally by accident, but sometimes to correct a supposed error or to add an explanation.

Likewise, no translator can reasonably hope to express in another's tongue in every respect the exact shade of an

author's thought; for he may misunderstand it, or the idiom of the two languages may differ so much as to render it impossible to convey the precise meaning.

Also, if any writing in a living tongue be kept for many years, some of its words on the lips of the people are liable to change their meaning, or go entirely out of use, and then the writing in the hands of a new generation will come to be obscure or seem to have a meaning more or less different from that intended by the author.

Now the Bible has suffered all these modifications. For nearly fifteen hundred years it was copied and recopied with pen and ink, until hundreds of copies and families of copies were produced, hardly any two of which are exactly alike; and when they are all compared, the whole number of differences is very great. The manuscripts of the apostles have perished; and our oldest Greek manuscripts of the New Testament were made not earlier than 350 A. D. We have two translations and many quotations that were made in the Second Century and some quotations in the First Century. By careful comparison of all the materials, most of the changes have been corrected. In our Common Version of the Bible, which was made in 1611 A. D., we have abundant examples of mistranslation and of changes from the original made by copyists; also there have come many changes of the English language since the Version was made. Nearly all of these weaknesses are removed by the Revised Versions. Such facts give rise to the

*AXIOM : Any writing is liable to modification in copying, translating, and the gradual change of a living tongue.*

<p><b>Axiom IX.</b> <b>One Meaning.</b></p>
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When we interpret the writings of men on subjects of common interest, we expect them to mean what they say, no more no less. But some interpreters of the Bible have attempted to find in its words a double sense, or even a three-fold or four-fold sense. For example, Psalm II has been thought

to refer to David and also to Christ; Psalm XLV to Solomon and to Christ; and Isa. VII. 14,15, both to a child born in the days of the prophet and to the Messiah. Clement of Alexandria maintained that the laws of Moses contained a four-fold meaning, a natural, a moral, a mystical, and a prophetic. Swedenborg taught a three-fold sense, a literal, a spiritual, and a celestial, corresponding to the three heavens, lowest, middle and highest. With him the words "thou shalt not kill," meant in the natural sense, to prohibit murder and revenge; in the spiritual sense, not "to act the devil and destroy a man's soul;" in the celestial sense, as the angels understand it, not to hate the Lord and his Word. Why a passage may not as well bear ten or twelve meanings as three or four, probably does not admit of reasonable explanation. Who is to decide what these meanings shall be, or how he is to know them, it is idle to ask. On such a principle of interpretation, there is no limit to the meanings that a fertile fancy may foist in any passage of Scripture. The words of prophets and Apostles will, in such a case, be wholly at the mercy of unscrupulous minds who know no restraint in their interpretations but the limit of a reckless imagination. Dr. Owen was right when he said, "If the Scripture has more than one meaning, it has no meaning at all." Terry quotes from Stuart's Hints on the Interpretation of Prophecy these sensible words, "This scheme of interpretation forsakes and sets aside the common laws of language. The Bible excepted, in no book, treatise, epistle, discourse, or conversation, ever written, published, or addressed by any one man to his fellow beings (unless in the way of sport, or with an intention to deceive) can a double sense be found. There are, indeed, charades, enigmas, phrases with a double entente, and the like, perhaps, in all languages; there have been abundance of heathen oracles which were susceptible of two interpretations, but even among all these there has never been, and there never was a design that there should

be, but one sense or meaning in reality. Ambiguity of language may be, and has been, resorted to in order to mislead the reader or hearer, or in order to conceal the ignorance of soothsayers, or to provide for their credit amid future exigencies, but this is quite foreign to the matter of a serious and bona fide double meaning of words. Nor can we for a moment, without violating the dignity and sacredness of the Scriptures, suppose that the inspired writers are to be compared to authors of riddles, conundrums, enigmas, and ambiguous heathen oracles." The necessary truth in all this may be embodied in the

*AXIOM : By one expression one thought is conveyed, and only one.*

<p><b>Axiom X.</b> Function of a Word.</p>
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In preparing lexicons, the lexicographer determines the meanings of words mainly by examining all their occurrences in literature and noting the associations of each word. If some word is used in some passages in a sense different from that which it must have in some other passages, the word has two or more meanings; and its meaning in any place depends on the words that accompany it.

This can be made very clear by the uses of a simple English word. The word *top* in the expression, "On the top of the mountain" (Shakespeare), means the summit; in the expression, "Such trees that spread their roots near the top of the ground" (Bacon), it means the surface; in the expression, "All the storied vengeance of heaven falls on her ungrateful top" (Shakespeare), it means the crown of the head; in "He who is the top of judgment" (Shakespeare), it means the chief justice; in "The schoolboy spins his top," it means a conical toy; in "It had long been his ambition to stand in a bar of his own, in a green coat, knee cords, and "tops" (Dickens), it means a kind of boots with colored tops; in "The joiner placed the top in the chair," it means the uppermost piece in the back of the chair, and in

"The sailor went aloft, and stood on the top," it means a small platform high up on the mast of the ship. These eight meanings, wholly different from each other, are distinguished solely by the association of the word "top" with other words.

We might also notice the Greek word *moraino*. In Matt. 5:13, "If the salt have lost its savor," it means to *lose savor* to *become tasteless*; in Rom. 1:12, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools," it means to *become foolish*; and in I Cor. 1:20, "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" it means to *make foolish*. In each case the meaning depends on the connection in which the word is found. This principle is so familiar and evident that we may frame the

AXIOM : *The function of a word depends on its association with other words.*

<p>Axiom XI. Correct Definition.</p>
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It is often of great value in testing the meaning of words to substitute assumed or proposed definitions in the place of the words themselves, to see whether the sense will remain unimpaired. The word *firmament* is an easy and instructive example. Primarily firmament is that which makes anything firm and strong. The translators of our English Bibles took this word from *firmamentum* in the Vulgate (Latin translation), which means a prop, that which strengthens or makes firm. The idea of stability in this word was borrowed by the Vulgate translators from the Septuagint (Greek translation), which has *stereoma*, that which has been made strong, a firm basis. But now let us substitute any of these definitions in Gen. 1:6-8, "And God said, let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And God called

the firmament Heaven." It is certain that we destroy the consistency of the passage. God did not separate the waters below from the waters above with anything that makes firm or that is made firm. The heaven is not a prop or stable basis on which the upper waters rest. All the translations, therefore, have erred by giving us words the true definitions of which will not suit the text. The Hebrew word is *rakmh*, and means an expanse, an open space. If now we substitute expanse in the passage, it makes good sense, and satisfies the nature of the case. God separated the waters in the clouds from those in the sea by an expanse or open space, which was called among the Hebrews "heaven." The principle of this substitution is self-evidently right and true. The opposite of it would involve the absurdity that equals are not equals. We therefore state the

*AXIOM: A correct definition of a word substituted for the word itself will not modify the meaning of the text.*

<p><b>Axiom XII.</b> <b>Contradictories.</b></p>
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Often statements appear to be contradictory when there is no reason to question the veracity of the authors. If two statements are real contradictories, one of them must be false; but sometimes the semblance of contradiction is due to the use of one or more terms in the two statements with different meanings or applications. For example, it is stated in Gen. 6:6 that the Lord repented that he had made man; while it is said in I Sam. 15:29 that the Lord is not a man that he should repent. The two passages cannot both be true, unless "repent" has different significations. Doubtless this is the case. The Lord repented that He had made man, in the sense that He treated man as if He had repented, the figure of (apparent) cause for effect. Samuel means that the Lord is not a man that He should literally and actually repent. One passage affirms a change of action; the other denies a change of mind. They are not contradictory.

One of the most noted apparent contradictions in the Gospels is seen by comparing John 19:14 with Mark 15:25. John says that it was the sixth hour when Jesus was still before Pilate, according to which the crucifixion could hardly have begun before the ninth hour; but Mark distinctly says that it was the third hour when they crucified Him. Now, if it can be shown that Mark numbered the hours from six o'clock in the morning, making the third hour nine o'clock, and John counted the hours from midnight, making the ninth hour nine o'clock, the statements are harmonious. Canon Westcott in the Bible Commentary on John, at the end of Chap. 19, has a scholarly excursus which presents the proofs of these methods of counting. The secret of the harmonization is to show that the terms do not have the same meaning. The principle is evident, as in the

*AXIOM : One of two contradictory statements must be false, unless corresponding terms have different meanings or applications.*

<p><b>Axiom XIII.</b>  <b>Law of</b>  <b>Harmony.</b></p>
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In judicial proceedings, discrepant testimony is often harmonized by the discovery of facts which both explain and confirm the whole evidence. Eminent jurists are always slow to discredit impartial testimony, even in case of apparent contradiction ; and they seek facts that will bring the evidence into accord. If the testimony is true, it is certain that facts exist somewhere that will explain the apparent conflict. The judge may not be able to avail himself of such facts, and he may be compelled to render his decision without them. So, also, the interpreter of the Bible is sometimes unable to obtain facts that are needed to clear up a discrepancy. An example of this is found in the genealogies of Christ as given by Matthew and Luke (Matt. 1:2-16; Luke 3:23-38). The veracity of these two writers is above question by any one who considers the spirit and character

of their lives and writings; yet Matthew names Jacob as Joseph's father, and traces the lineage through twenty-five names back to David; while Luke names Heli as the father of Joseph, and traces the lineage through forty names back to David, and uses only two of the same names as those given by Matthew. Now it is claimed by Weiss and Riddle (See their editions of Meyer's Com. on Luke) that Luke's list must be the lineage of Mary; because the Jews were very careful in keeping their family lineage; also, because Luke does not pretend to give Joseph's ancestry as that of Jesus, but clearly sets Joseph aside as a supposed father; and further, because Luke probably obtained this list from Mary, as he is supposed to have obtained much of the material in the two preceding chapters. This makes Jesus a real descendant of Heli, while only a supposed descendant of Joseph. Luke's list then becomes very valuable, since it traces the blood relationship of Jesus to David, which fulfilled the prophecy that he should be "the son of David;" while Matthew shows his title to the throne of David, as also prophesied. This explanation is so plausible, if we may not say probable, that we could wish for facts to demonstrate its correctness.\* Matthew and Luke both mention Zerubbabel and Shealtiel at about the same period and in the same order. How can they be otherwise than the same persons? But we cannot know who were the true fathers of Joseph and Shealtiel, and who the corresponding persons in the other list; for we have not a fact to establish certainty. It is not to be doubted by a considerate mind that facts once existed to make this perfectly clear, but they may be lost forever. If both lists are true, harmonizing facts must have existed; hence the

*AXIOM: Truth must accord with truth; and statements of truth apparently discrepant can be harmonized if the facts are known.*

\*See other views under Rule xxv.

**Axiom XIV.  
Law of Opposi-  
tion.**

A proposition purporting to set forth a truth must not be supposed to exclude everything as false that it does not contain; but it must exclude everything that is in opposition to it. For example, when Jesus says, "The truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32), he does not exclude his own statement, "If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (ver. 36). The latter does not oppose the former. The truth and the Son are not mutually exclusive.

"In him is life" (Jn. 1:4), excludes its opposite, in him is only death; but it is not opposed to "The Father hath life in himself," and does not exclude it.

"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. 19:17), excludes the idea that one enters life by breaking or neglecting the commandments; but it does not exclude the teaching, "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life" (Jn. 3:36), because believing is not opposed to obeying.

Jesus' sayings, "I am the resurrection and the life" (Jn. 11:25), "I am the bread of life" (Jn. 6:48), and "I am the way, the truth and the life" (Jn. 14:6), are not mutually exclusive, though they are very diverse. They are not opposed one to another.

The principle here developed is called "The Law of Opposition," and may be formulated in the

*AXIOM : An assertion of truth necessarily excludes that to which it is essentially opposed and no more.*

**Axiom XV.  
Universality of  
Laws of Inter-  
pretation.**

It has been seen that language is designed to impart thought (Ax. I), and that it is a reliable medium of communication (Ax. III) ; it now follows that language used by any intelligent being to convey ideas must be subject to known methods of interpretation. Otherwise, the language would be an enigma, unless a special key to

its meaning were given along with it. Even in such a case, the key would probably correspond to our grammars and dictionaries, and would be used on the same principles. It does not follow that because a speaker is greater than his audience that his language must be interpreted by laws different from theirs. An orator may use a more excellent speech than the masses of men, but it is subject to the same rules of interpretation. God uses the languages of men in setting forth His messages; but if He used a language different from ours, He would not accomplish the purpose of communicating His thoughts, for we would not understand Him. For example, if we might suppose God to mean by His words, just the opposite of what we mean by the same words, and did not inform us of that fact, how could we know His true will? Or, if His assertions had some inscrutably deep significance, that the words do not naturally convey, of what value would they be to us? Who would then have the ability or authority to interpret them? It is self-evident that such a communication would subvert the very object of a revelation, and leave men in eternal ignorance and confusion. It would be the very climax of absurdity for any sober minded being to offer such a communication. We have, therefore, this fundamental principle in the

*AXIOM: Every communication of thought, human and divine, -given in the language of men, is subject to the ordinary rules of interpretation.*

## CHAPTER III.

### PRELIMINARY RULES.

**Relation of  
Rules to Axioms.**

As in all other sciences in which axioms are used, the more specific directions for work or experimentation are based on axioms; so here the rules of interpretation, which are simply directions to the interpreter, are based on the foregoing axioms. The axioms present the fundamental laws, while the rules set forth the directions that bring the truths of these axioms into practical operation. These rules are here approached inductively by the process of interpreting passages that require their use, in order that their nature, value and application may be perfectly clear.

**How some  
Preliminary.**

When a writing is presented for interpretation, there are some rules to be observed before the meaning of the words, sentences and paragraphs can be considered. Such are called Preliminary Rules; and they should receive first attention. They relate mainly to a consideration of the kind of writing or speech and to its condition. A neglect of these would probably involve the interpretation in error, even if other rules were strictly followed.

#### RULE I.—*Uniformity of Method.*

**Variety of  
Material.**

There is a limitless variety in the kinds of matter to be interpreted in the world; such as, law, history, poetry, philosophy, science, Scripture, biography, notes of travel, description, fiction, orations, sermons, articles, advertisements, and many

others. Now all these must be studied somewhat differently, so that it will be necessary to consider the character of the work before interpreting it; nevertheless, the same laws are to be followed and the same rules are to be applied. For example, in the Pentateuch, there are historical and legal matters. We must study the history and the laws in the light of the customs, country, languages, and experiences of the peoples described; so that, while we might study the history as history and the law as law, we must none the less apply the same general methods to both. If we were next called to study the history and the laws of the Romans, we would be compelled to follow exactly the same principles as those used with the history and laws of Israel. If it be urged that God is the author of one and man the other, no matter; the one abiding principle is, "Consider the author." This inflexible rule is the same for both.

History and  
Laws.

But suppose that one day we work with the Psalms of David, and the next day with the Odes of Horace; the one exultant with the praises of Jehovah and leading the people in divine service, the other memorializing the pleasures of a feast, the love of a woman, or the attractions of a villa. Or, suppose we pass from the sublime predictions of Isaiah burdened with the blessings and curses of God which untold centuries are to record, to the oracles of Delphi where the cunning prophetess devises her ambiguous responses so as to cover her miserable ignorance whatever the future event may be. How can we interpret all these by the same principles? We must, of course, mark the differences as strictly as possible; but, after all, the same rule applies to the one as to the other, "Consider the writer's purpose."

The Bible.

The Bible has its own numerous characteristics, its surpassing dignity of style, sublimity of conception, and reach of purpose; yet, considering all these, it must be interpreted naturally and

reasonably as are other books. The Jewish Rabbis who counted the letters in the record of creation and in the decalogue, to find some fanciful meaning therein, were just as foolish as we would be in counting the letters in the Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States, with a view to settling some important question in the Supreme Court.

**Philo's Method**

The folly of interpreting the Bible differently from other books is illustrated by the allegorizing of Philo of Alexandria in the first century on the four Rivers of Eden (Gen. 2:10-14). He makes them a sketch of four virtues, prudence, temperance, courage, and justice. The main river is the wisdom of God; and the four branches water all good actions with an abundance of benefits. (See *Allegories of the Sacred Laws*, book 1, 19.) Philo might as well have chosen any other four virtues; or four sources of knowledge, nature, reason, experience, revelation; or four natural blessings, food, air, light, and heat; or four blessed associations of life, family, school, state, and church. There is neither certainty nor limit to such interpretations.

**Swedenborg's Method.**

The Swedenborg method, defended later by John Doughty in his "Parable of Creation," is to regard all history in the Bible as parable; to find only moral and spiritual lessons in the "Word of God, of which Æsop's Fables are a faint imitation;" to read its history for the "spiritual lessons concealed within it," its geography for the "relative spiritual situation or states of men," and the geological features of creation as a "fitting dress for the portrayal of the regeneration of man." The first chapter of Genesis is to him "not a relation of the process of the world's formation, but a spiritual account of the re-formation of the heart and mind;" and the six days represent six general states through which all regenerating persons must pass," from the time that their minds are "without form and void" till

they reach the "image of God." According to all of which, the world for thousands of years has wholly missed the Lord's meaning and the benefit of His revelation, because He so "concealed" the sense that only one man, and he late in the centuries, is able to find it!

To multiply examples of unnatural exegesis of parts of the Bible, is only to demonstrate over and over the necessity of following the

RULE:—*Interpret communications of all kinds by the same general principles.*

#### RULE II.—*Genuineness.*

##### Genuineness

In studying a production that has passed through many hands, we sometimes have reason to suspect that certain passages have been added by some other person than the author of the document. The person who made the addition may have meant sometimes very different from what the author of the document would have written; and to interpret correctly, we may need to know who made the addition, and why he made it. It is necessary, then, to know whether a passage to be interpreted was written by some other hand than that of the leading author. A passage thus added to a writing is called an *interpolation*, and is said to be not *genuine*.

##### Test of Genuineness.

If the genuineness of a passage in the New Testament be questioned, it may be subjected to a critical test, by comparing ancient copies, to see how early the passage was found in its place. The chief documents to be consulted are the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament; and, as a general rule, the older a manuscript is, the more valuable it is for this purpose. These are usually designated by letters of the alphabet, thus. A is the Alexandrian manuscript, made in the fifth century, now in the British Museum, which contains almost all of the New Testament. B, the Vatican

manuscript, at Rome, made about the middle of the fourth century, has nearly the whole Bible. C, the Ephraem manuscript, fifth century, has about two-thirds of the New Testament. D, the manuscript of Bezae, sixth century, has the Gospels and Acts in Greek and Latin. In a similar manner other letters represent other later manuscripts. One of the most valuable of them all, the Sinaitic manuscript, represented by the Hebrew letter *Aleph*, middle of the fourth century, now at St. Petersburg, was discovered in a convent at Mt. Sinai, 1859, by a German scholar, Tischendorf. We may also consult the oldest translations into Syriac, Latin, Coptic and other languages.

Besides these, many ancient writers left numerous quotations from the New Testament that prove the early date and readings of many passages; and these may be consulted. Clement of Rome, who wrote about A. D. 95, quotes from seventeen books of the New Testament. Hermas, who wrote in Rome, about 100 A. D., quotes from fourteen books. Barnabas, probably an Alexandrian, A. D. 100 to 125, quotes from twelve books. Ignatius of Antioch, about 100 A. D., quotes from nineteen books. Polycarp of Smyrna, about 155, quotes 40 passages. Justin Martyr, about 150, quotes 125 passages. Ireneus, about 180, quotes 767 passages from 26 books. Clement of Alexandria, about 200, quotes 389 passages from 21 books. Tertullian, about 200, quotes 1802 passages from 24 books. Origen, about 230, quotes nearly 6000 passages from 25 books of the New Testament. By the use of all this means and much more, the genuineness of suspected passages must be determined. Our revised versions usually indicate in the marginal readings whether an important passage is an interpolation; and the leading commentaries on the Greek text give the evidence for and against suspected readings.

Genuineness of Hebrews
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A question may arise as to the genuineness of a whole book that has been ascribed to a certain author, but which for some reason may seem to have been written by another. The

interpretation of such a book will, in many points, depend on the authorship, though the question of genuineness may not affect the canonicity or inspiration. In the Bible we have an example of this in the book of Hebrews. By the title in our older English Bibles, Hebrews is ascribed to Paul; and this title was retained by the English Revisers, but under the protest of the American Committee. The author's name is omitted from the title in the American Standard Version.

The question to be investigated is, Did Paul write the Epistle to the Hebrews? The following facts are urged for the *negative* side: 1. We have no mention of Paul as the author till about the middle of the second century, then by Pantaenus; and he encounters an objection that the author does not follow Paul's custom to mention himself by name in the Epistle. 2. Next, Clement of Alexandria, a disciple of Pantaenus, refers the Epistle to Paul about the beginning of the third century; but because of the un-Pauline character of the language, he assumes that Luke prepared the present Epistle from a Hebrew original written by Paul, which, though merely an assumption, shows the uncertainty of the authorship in the early church. 3. Origen, the next, near the middle of the third century, ascribes only the thoughts to Paul, the diction and composition he denies to be his; but he says tradition speaks sometimes of Clement of Rome and sometimes of Luke as the writer, but he thinks the author is known only to God. 4. After that time, the churches in Egypt and generally in the East accepted the Pauline authorship, but the western churches denied it till after the middle of the fourth century. 5. The author clearly does not count himself an apostle, but numbers himself among those to whom that which was "spoken by the Lord was confirmed by them that heard" (2:3), which was precisely the position of Luke when he wrote his gospel (Luke 1:2), and contrary to Paul's custom and express declaration (Gal. 1:11,12). 6. Supposed indications of Pauline authorship in the Epistle are only against it: "My

bonds" (A. V. 10:34) is an incorrect reading for "them that were in bonds" (Rev. Ver.) ; and the writer was not a prisoner, as some have supposed, but free to go where he would, and he actually offers to visit his readers soon (13:23). The reference to Timothy (13:23), who was so long Paul's bosom companion, could have been made by another writer; and his well known, and hence notable, imprisonment implied in this verse, could hardly have occurred in Paul's lifetime without mention either in Acts or Paul's Epistles, in which no hint of it is found, but, on the contrary, frequent reference is made to his active labors. "They of Italy salute you" (13:24), has been thought to point to Italy as the place of writing, and hence to Paul as the writer; but this fails utterly by the fact that "they of" should be "they from" (Greek *apo*, cf. Matt. 21:11; Mark 15:43; John 19:38; Acts 10:23), and refers to the brethren who had come from Italy to the writer (see reading by Am. Com. of Revisers). 7. The manner of writing is not Pauline: (a) it is far more rhetorical and classical in language; (b) it lacks Paul's rush of thought and consequent irregular and broken construction of sentences; (c) it quotes the Old Testament from the Septuagint strictly, while Paul quoted the Septuagint loosely, and often translated the Old Testament quotation from the Hebrew; (d) Paul invariably stamps a letter with his own salutation, "which," he says, "is the token in every Epistle" (2 Thess. 3:17), and Hebrews is not so marked; (e) the object of the book is to persuade Jewish Christians, but Paul was not the man to have the greatest weight with the Jews, being the "apostle to the Gentiles" and the object of Jewish prejudice, and Paul would less likely perform this task since he had agreed with Peter, James and John that he would labor with the Gentiles and they with the Jews (Gal. 2:9), and Paul's life principle was "not to build upon another man's foundation" (Rom. 15:20).

On the *affirmative* side, the following points are cited:  
 (1) The traditions given by Pantaenus and Clement are the

earliest which we possess, and they name Paul as possibly the author. (2) The writers of the Alexandrian church in the third century, including Origen and many others, show that the Pauline authorship was generally accepted there, while it is conceded that the churches in Palestine, Syria and Asia Minor at that time held the same view, insomuch that Eusebius accepted fourteen epistles of Paul, and that the Alexandrian, Vatican and Sinaitic manuscripts place the epistle just after those to the Thessalonians. (3) The Western churches from the first received the epistle as sacred, and in the course of four or five centuries were led by their best scholars fully to acknowledge its Pauline origin. (4) Fifty-one words in this epistle are found in Paul's other writings and speeches which are not elsewhere in the New Testament, and seventeen of these are not in the LXX. (Septuagint, the Greek version of the O. T. in common use in the days of Christ and the apostles). (5) A very large number of verbal, grammatical and rhetorical resemblances between this and Paul's other writings are pointed out. (6) Many remarkable similarities and coincidences in quoting and citing Old Testament passages and in viewing and handling religious truth are found by comparing this letter with other productions of Paul. (7) Any differences in style between this and other writings of the apostle may be accounted for by difference of theme, leisure in composition, effort to convince the Jews of the truths set forth, intent to defend his own career as reflecting glory upon the older dispensation, and finally his desire to supply the church in all time with precious truth most vital in its import and with a system of interpretation of the Old Testament in harmony with the broad reach of the divine purpose. (8) Paul's deep interest in the Jews is proved by his own willingness to be "*anathema* from Christ" on their behalf (Rom. 9:3), by his first effort to save the Jews in every city, by his effort for more than a year to raise a large collection for them, and by his determination at any cost to carry it to them (2 Cor. 9:1,2; Acts 21:

10-14). (9) Last of all, the argument that Paul could not have written "was confirmed unto us by them that heard" (2:3) because he also was an apostle, is met by the fact that Paul had not been an apostle to the Jews whom he addressed, while those who personally heard Jesus had confirmed their testimony to Paul's readers; and met also by citing Paul's custom to refer to the other apostles, as in Acts 13:31, "Who are his witnesses unto the people."

These arguments on the two sides show how evenly balanced is the discussion, and how difficult it is to be certain whether the epistle is genuine or not. Whether it was composed by Paul, Luke, Apollos, Barnabas, or some one else, will probably never be surely known; but it will hardly ever be doubted that it was from the first received as pure, Christian teaching while some of the apostles were still living and ever afterward. Therefore, although it is uncertain whether or not the book is Pauline, it is unquestionably admissible into the Sacred Scriptures. A book thus worthy to be received, whether genuine or not, is called *canonical*. Any book or passage whose statements are to be believed, is said to be *credible*. Hence arise in biblical criticism the terms, *genuineness*, *canonicity*, and *credibility*.

Other Books
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The genuineness of II Peter has often been questioned, but never with sufficient force to convince many non-rationalistic scholars. Discussions are waged against the genuineness of II and III John, Jude and Revelation, but not successfully. The genuineness of several books of the Old Testament is under discussion, the results of which are variously estimated. The interpretation of such books will depend largely on the conclusions reached by the interpreter as to authorship, date and occasion of writing; and this fact makes it necessary for him to assume some attitude on this question. He may regard the authorship as uncertain; but if so, any interpretation that depends on the authorship will also be uncertain. In no case can a passage that is not genuine be

interpreted in a way that harmonizes only with its being genuine. Accordingly, we have this indispensable

RULE:—*Before interpreting a passage, investigate its genuineness.*

### RULE III.—*Correct Text.*

#### Changes of Texts

If a document of any kind has been quoted or copied, it has run a risk of suffering some changes of its text. The more often copies have been made, the more likely changes have occurred. As the Bible has been often copied, and especially as it passed under the hands of numerous scribes before printing was invented, it would be remarkable if the fate of all other literature, to be often modified, and to have many historic copies and hardly two of them alike, had not overtaken its sacred pages. Indeed, nothing less than a miracle could have prevented it; and no doubt it is a very wise providence that such a miracle has not been wrought. While among all the old copies many thousands of variations can be found, it is a matter of gratulation that few of them are serious, that hardly any of them were made with an intent to change the author's meaning, and that none of them imperils a single important doctrine of the gospel or renders uncertain a single duty of practical life.

#### How Texts Corrupted.

The nature of these changes show that the most of them were produced by accident. Sometimes the copyist found a brief comment on the margin of a manuscript, and thinking it a part of the text, copied it in. Often the memory failed between reading a line or sentence and writing it. Sometimes the mind of the copyist followed his memory of a parallel passage, the wording of which was a little different. Frequently the eye of the reader missed the exact place to begin a reading, especial danger of this occurred when the same word or phrase appeared in two places near together

on the same page. These and other occasions gave rise to several classes of corruptions described below; and it has been the task of textual criticism (now sometimes called "Lower Criticism") to collate ancient copies of the various parts of the Bible, to trace out the variations, and to make corrections. This has required the life-long labors of three or four generations of scholars, to whose patience and industry the world owes a debt of gratitude. The work of correcting is now about done, unless other very ancient manuscripts should be discovered, by which some doubtful points might yet be decided. The English reader now has the results of all this work in the Revised Versions of the Bible.

<p>Examples of Changes</p>
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In Luke 16:9, the A. V. has "when ye fail," where the R. V. has "when it shall fail." This small change makes a difference in the meaning of the passage. "When ye fail" conveys the idea that at the end of life man shall fail in some sense, perhaps as one might fail in business; while the correct reading, "when it shall fail," implies that at death his wealth will fail him, and he will go hence penniless, dependent on those who may receive him into the eternal tabernacles.

In James 1:19, the A. V. reads, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren," and the R. V. reads, "Ye know this, my beloved brethren." Here the difference between "wherefore" and "ye know" is only one letter in Greek (*hoste*, wherefore; *iste*, ye know). The weight of authorities is for the latter.

In Rom. 7:6, the A. V. has, "that being dead wherein we were held;" and the R. V. has, "having died to that wherein we were held." This error is known to have been introduced by Beza, an editor of the A. V. Greek text, on account of a misunderstanding of some words of Chrysostom. The Revision shows the thought to be, that by accepting Christ we have died to the law that held us; while the old version awkwardly represents the law as dead.

<p>Examples of Insertions.</p>
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Many examples of words inserted by mistake might be pointed out in the New Testament. In Matt. 13:9, the A. V. reads, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." The words "to hear" have been inserted, and are omitted by the Revision. The words were probably borrowed by accident from Mark 4:9 and Luke 8:8.

In Mark 9:49, the words, "and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt," have been inserted probably from a marginal comment. They are omitted in the R. V.

In John 5:3, 4, more than a long verse has been added to the true text to explain the gathering of sick people in the porches by the pool of Bethesda. It may perhaps astonish some readers to learn that we have no apostolic testimony that an angel used to descend into the pool to move the waters, and that this was likely a mere superstition of the Jews, which some later hand has preserved by inserting it into the Sacred Scriptures.

The closing part of the "Lord's Prayer," "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen," is not genuine, but was probably added to give more finished appearance to the prayer and to fit it for the liturgy. Likewise, the confession by the Ethiopian officer, Acts 8:37, was not written by Luke, but doubtless represents the apostolic practice, and so is credible even though not genuine. A notable example of interpolation is the whole account of the woman accused before Christ by the scribes and Pharisees, John 7:53-8:11. The margin of the Revised Version on almost every page mentions other examples of insertion.

<p>Examples of Omissions.</p>
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There are some cases of words omitted, that textual critics have restored to the text. For example, in Luke 24:17, the words "stood still" are omitted in the A. V., but the correction is made in the R. V. So in 1 John 3:1, the words "we are" must be restored to the text. It is remarkable that while the A. V. has scores of interpolations, it has omitted ex-

ceedingly few words that critics find genuine. Thus, much chaff has drifted into the wheat, while but little of the wheat has been lost.

**Incorrect Order**

In some cases a change in the order of words makes little difference in the meaning. In many passages, some ancient authorities read "Jesus Christ" where some others read "Christ Jesus." This rarely makes any difference. But in some other cases a transposition of words changes the sense. An example of this appears in our English versions. In John 11:20, the A. V. reads, "but Mary sat still in the house;" while the R. V. reads, "but Mary still sat in the house." The difference is clear. The value of the order is further illustrated in 1 Cor. 16:3, where in the text the English R. V. reads, "whomsoever ye shall approve by letters, them will I send;" but in the Am. Stand. Version it reads, "whomsoever ye shall approve, them will I send with letters." In the last case the Greek is ambiguous; and often the order in the original does not indicate surely what should be the order in the English.

**Punctuation.**

The original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts in their earlier forms did not have punctuation; so that the translator is often uncertain what punctuation should be used in English. But in many passages the sense is so dependent upon the punctuation that another pointing would convey a different signification. The interpreter must always try to determine what punctuation best suits the author's intent. In Mark 14:68, we may have, "I neither know nor understand what thou sayest," or we might have, "I neither know nor understand: what sayest thou?" So in Rom. 8:33,34, we may read declaratively or interrogatively, "It is God that justifieth," or "Shall God that justifieth?" "It is Christ Jesus that died . . . for us," or "Shall Christ Jesus that died . . . for us?" In 1 Cor. 6:4, the interpretation turns on the punctuation of the words, "Do ye set them to judge

that are of no account in the church?" or imperatively, "Set them to judge." Also in 1 Sam. 14:30, we may read, "For now hath there been no great slaughter," or, "For hath there not been now a much greater slaughter?" In most of these cases the punctuation is uncertain, and the interpreter must consider what meaning each form of the sentence should yield.

Greek Accents.
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In copying or printing the Greek New Testament, a change of meaning might be made by merely changing the accent of a Greek word. This is exemplified in James 3:6, where the R. V. says that the tongue "setteth on fire the wheel of nature," and where the A. V. has "course of nature." The Greek word *trochos'* means a wheel, but the word *tro'chos* means a course, race-course or orbit of a planet. In 1 Cor. 3:14, a change of accent changes the tense of a verb. The R. V. reads, "If a man's word *shall abide*" (*menei'*), while the A. V. reads, "If any man's work *abide*" (*men'ei*). The future is no doubt correct, since it corresponds to the verb "shall be burned" in the next verse, with which it is in contrast.

These examples are probably sufficient to illustrate the necessity of examining the text carefully to be sure that it is just what the author wrote. It is *his* meaning, unchanged, and not another's, that the interpreter must seek; hence the importance of the

RULE :—*A correct text of a passage must be obtained before it is interpreted.*

#### RULE IV.—*Accurate Translation.*

Difficulty of Accuracy.
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In the interpretation of ancient or foreign literature, it may be often convenient or necessary to use a translation rather than the original. Now, inasmuch as we have seen in Axiom II that the interpreter's aim should be to apprehend the exact thought of the author, it follows that the author's ideas

must be exactly reproduced in the translation; otherwise, a modified conception of his thought will be conveyed. Persons who use translations should keep in mind the fact that an accurate translation of thought from one language to another is a very difficult task even for the best of scholars. An example of this may be found in Luke 3:23, which reads in the A. V., "And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli." In the R. V. it reads, "And Jesus himself, when he began *to teach*, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli." The difficulty of exact translation appears when we note the literal statement of the Greek, which is, "And Jesus himself was beginning about thirty years, being son, as was supposed, of Joseph, of Heli." The difficulty is to determine what beginning is meant and how to state it clearly in the translation. It is probably the beginning of his active ministry, which is inaccurately stated in the R. V. by inserting the words "to teach." Certainly the A. V. is erroneous in saying that he "began to be about thirty years of age," since that is so indefinite as to be meaningless. If the idea were that he was just entering his thirtieth year, it would have been otherwise expressed, and the indefinite word "about" could not have been used. In order, therefore, to express the meaning of the writer, we must insert some words in the English translation; and yet it is not absolutely certain what words will exactly express the thought. There are many other passages in which a similar difficulty appears.

The interpretation of John 3:8 turns on the translation. The R. V. reads, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." But in the margin of the R. V. the words "the Spirit breatheth" are offered to substitute for "the wind bloweth." The question is to decide which of these

the Savior meant to say; for the Greek admits of either translation, and scholars are divided in their preference. If we translate it to mean "the wind bloweth," the passage presents a comparison of the working of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of men to the blowing of the wind. The point of similitude is the secrecy of its operation, thou "knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth." If we translate with the words "the Spirit breatheth" there is no comparison, but a direct statement of the work of the Spirit. The passage then means that the Holy Spirit speaks as he wills, and the sinner hears his message, not knowing by what providence it reaches him or to what other persons the message goes, and so, by the Gospel Message, is born every one that is born of the Spirit. The latter interpretation makes the passage a parallel in its main import to 1 Cor. 4:15; James 1:18; and 1 Peter 1:23.

<p>Misleading Translations.</p>
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The Accepted Version of the English Bible, which is still used by the masses of the common people, contains many passages whose translation is very misleading. For example, the word *offence* is often used where the word *stumbling* should have been employed. When Jesus says to Peter "thou art an offence unto me" (Matt. 16:23), he does not mean that Peter is distasteful to him, but that the Apostle would cause him to stumble from the course of rectitude. They are not petty personal provocations that grieve the Savior when he says, "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh" (A. V., Matt. 18:7). He is rather pitying the world because of its stumblings into sin and ruin, and lamenting the fate of those who are guilty of placing the stumbling-blocks. So, also, how weak and meaningless is, "The Spirit of God *moved* on the face of the waters" (A. V., Gen. 1:2), as if the Spirit were a mere vapor on the ocean! How much more expressive is, "The Spirit of God *brooded* on the face of the waters," which is

designed to point to the Spirit as the world's great life-giver ! Likewise, the A. V. robs its readers of Paul's meaning in 1 Cor. 4:4, "For I know nothing by myself," as if Paul were wanting in self-consciousness! He is really saying, "I know nothing *against* myself," that is, he had a clear conscience, and was not self-condemned before his accusers.

**A Notable  
Mistranslation.**

A most notable example of mistranslation that reappears in similar passages is found in Acts 3:19, A. V., "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." The leading error is in the expression "be converted," which in the Greek is in the active voice, "turn" (*epistrepsate*). The mistake occurs in the A. V. wherever "be converted" appears in the New Testament, in six other passages, Matt. 13:15;18:3; Mark 4:12; Luke 22:32; John 12:40; Acts 28:27. In all cases the Revised Versions make correction by translating "turn" or "turn again," in the active voice.

Another error in this passage occurs in the clause, "when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord," which should be "that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," as in the R. V. This clause is not designed to tell *when* the sinner's turning should be, but to what *end* it should be. So, also, in the next verse it should not be "and he shall send Jesus Christ," as in the A. V., but "and that he may send the Christ," as in the R. V. These errors have naturally led to practical mistakes among the uneducated, and are on this account worthy of the more attention at the hands of all.

In any translation from one language into another there are liabilities of error and consequent misrepresentations of thought which may turn the interpreter astray. Hence we necessarily frame the

RULE:—*If a translation be used, it must be an exact equivalent of the original, or the difference must be no by the interpreter.*

RULE V.—*Nature of Composition.*

Literal or  
Figurative.

By *literal* language is meant that which should be interpreted word for word in its primitive or most fundamental current sense. By *figurative* language is meant that of which the meaning is a deflection or departure from the literal. In most kinds of literature figurative language is frequently used; and since its meaning is different from that of literal speech, the interpreter must be careful to identify it. This can often, but not always, be readily done. When Jesus says, "Go, tell that fox" (Luke 13:32), he certainly does not mean a real fox, but the man Herod, who was sly as a fox. To take the word literally is to rob the passage of its sense, and to introduce confusion into the author's conversation. But in Luke 9:58, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of heaven have nests," the word foxes can be reasonably referred to the little animals commonly so-called, and a figurative application would be most inappropriate.

A Test,  
the Sense.

The difficulty of distinguishing the literal from the figurative in some cases, suggests the need of reliable tests. We may discover such tests by carefully observing how we make distinctions of this kind. If Jesus says, "I am the vine, and my Father is the husbandman" (John 15:1), we perceive at once that it does not make good sense to interpret "vine" and "husbandman" literally; for Jesus cannot be a real vine, nor his Father be a real vinedresser. The moment that we perceive the incongruity of such a literal interpretation we conclude that the words are used figuratively. From this we formulate an easy *test*: If the literal meaning of any word or expression makes good sense in its connections, it

is literal; but if the literal meaning does not make good sense, it is figurative.

Another Test, Usage.
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If we were to examine the words, "The sun and the moon stood still in their habitation" (Hab. 3:11), we should be guided, not only by the sense of the word "habitation" to regard the passage as figurative, but also by the usage of the writer in this whole chapter which is a poem, and in which he indulges in the loftiest and most brilliant imagination, and still further by the usage of other Hebrew poets, especially in their descriptions of God and His works. Compare Ps. cxiv; xcvi. 1-5; xcvi. 11, 12; Job xxvi. 6-14; xxviii. 25, 26, et al. In all these passages the strongest figures of speech are abundant, and we cannot fail to observe that Hebrew poets are even far more extravagant in their use of figures than English poets. The sun and moon in the poem of Habakkuk merely join in with the rest of nature in the author's imaginary demonstration of all things in the presence of God. Usage strongly marks the passage as figurative.

If we are to decide whether the Greek word "*pneunia*." in John 3:8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth," should be understood literally "wind" or "breath of wind," as in classic Greek literature, or figuratively "spirit," we should consult the usage of the word in the New Testament, where it occurs 386 times, and is usually translated "spirit," and in the A. V. is not rendered "wind" in any other passage. In this case the usage is overwhelmingly against the literal classic meaning and in favor of the figurative signification. Nevertheless, this must not be regarded as positively decisive; for this very word "*pneuma*," is used in Heb. 1:7 in the sense of wind, "Who maketh his angels winds, His ministers a flame of fire." This is the translation in the R. V.; and the only reasonable interpretation is, that God makes the winds to be His messengers, and the flaming lightning to be His servants. This is simply an exception

to the New Testament usage of the word *pneuma*; for as a rule it has the figurative meaning "spirit," and probably should have that meaning in John 3:8, and it should read, "The Spirit breathes where it pleases, and thou hearest its voice, but knoweth not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth." See R. V., margin. Generally, therefore, we may rely on the usage of an author and that of kindred writers as a good test to determine the literal from the figurative.

**Value of the Rule.**

It is evident that it makes great difference in interpreting, whether we understand that the sun and moon were literally arrested in their course, or that merely the heart of the inspired poet was moved with a grand poetic conception. It makes a great difference in meaning whether *pneuma* is "wind" or "spirit" in almost any passage. It becomes, therefore, an important

*RULE:—Before interpreting a passage, determine whether it is literal or figurative.*

**RULE VI.—Prose and Poetry.**

**Characteristics Of Poetry:  
(1) Figures.**

In every language of civilized people there is much poetry, and it differs materially from prose in having the following characteristics:

(1) Much more figurative speech, and the figures more bold and imaginative. The following from Job 41:18-22, concerning the Leviathan (the Egyptian crocodile) could not be written in prose without the charge of gross extravagance :

"His sneesings flash forth light, And his eyes  
are like the eyelids of the morning.  
Out of his nostrils a smoke goeth,  
As of a seething pot and burning rushes.  
His breath kindleth coals, And a  
flame goeth forth from his mouth.  
Strength abideth in his neck,  
And terror danceth before him."

Compare also Ps. 22:14; 33:7; 36:5-8; Prov. 8:22-29; Song 4:1-5.

(2) License.

(2) License, or freedom to depart from customary forms of expression, abounds in poetry. In Ps. 80:4, we have a statement that could not be tolerated in prose,

"O Jehovah, God of Hosts, How long wilt thou smoke against the prayer of thy people?"

Here the word "smoke" is used to convey the thought of anger, which is so great a departure from the usage of the word "smoke" that the English translators of the R. V. put "be angry" in the text, to prevent the reader from a total misunderstanding. This might be called a figure, and is a metonymy; but it is so radical a departure from the literal as to be admissible only in poetry, and there only by license.

Not Affecting  
the Sense.

Some kinds of license do not usually affect the sense of the passage in which they are found. Such are the following:

*Elision*, or omission of parts of words; as, 'gainst for against, 'gan for began, list'ning for listening, "gi'me for give me, o' for of.

*Abbreviation*; as, morn for morning, fount for fountain, lone for lonely, lure for allure, list for listen, ope for open, oft for often.

*Apostrophe*, or contraction of two words into one; as, 'tis for it is, can't for cannot.

*Paragoge*, or an addition of a letter or more; as, with-ouen for without, couchen for couch.

*Prothesis*, or prefixing one or more letters; as, beloved for loved, appertinent for pertinent.

*Tmesis*, or separation of parts of a compound word; as, to what person soever, for to whatsoever person.

Affecting the Sense.
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On the other hand, some licences introduce changes that might affect the sense of a passage, and be misunderstood. Such are the following:

*Enallage*, or the use of one part of speech for another, as,

"Bright through the darkness, lightnings glare,"

where "bright," an adjective, is used for the adverb brightly. Likewise, "Oft in the stilly night," makes "stilly" an adjective contrary to good usage.

*Hyperbaton*, or transposition of words; as,

"The Muses fair, these peaceful shades among, With skillful fingers sweep the trembling strings."

So also,

"Who makes His messengers winds, And a flame of fire His ministers" (Heb. 1:7),

for,

"Who makes winds His messengers,  
And a flame of fire His ministers."

*Pleonasm*, or the use of a greater number of words than are necessary to express the meaning; as, "The Lord, He is God."

*Ellipsis*, or the omission of some words not absolutely essential to express the meaning, but necessary to complete the grammatical construction; as,

"While all those souls have ever felt the force  
Of those enchanting passions, to my lyre  
Should throng attentive."

In this passage the word "that" is grammatically required after the word "souls." So in the following the word "trembled" must be understood after "Sinai:"

"The earth trembled,  
The heavens also dropped at the presence of God; And yon Sinai at the presence of the God of Israel."

*Inversion*, or a violent transposition of words in a sentence ; as,

"Now storming fury rose, And  
clamor such as heard in heaven till now Was  
never."

*Intransitive for transitive verbs*; as,

"Still, in harmonious intercourse, they lived  
The rural day, and talked the flowing heart."

**(3) Passion.**

(3) Poetic passion, or a deep emotion from which the poetry springs. This passion may be love, hatred, terror, joy, surprise, indignation or shame. It may be clearly discerned in the following, composed after the death of Saul and Jonathan by their truest, but oft abused, friend, David:

"Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places.  
How are the mighty fallen!" II Sam. 1:19.  
"They were swifter than eagles, They were  
stronger than lions." Ibid, verse 23.

Or the Psalmist's cry of penitence over his sin:

"Against thee, and thee only, have I sinned, And  
done that which is evil in thy sight. That thou  
mayest be justified when thou speakest, And be  
clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in  
iniquity; And in sin did my mother conceive me."  
Ps. 51:4, 5.

Such passages naturally abound in exaggerations due to passion which remove them from the field of prose interpretation.

**(4) Parallelism.**

(4) In Hebrew poetry there is a peculiar repetition of form, and usually of thought also, in successive, or alternate lines, called Parallelism. Usually the second line expresses virtually the same thought, and in a very similar form, as that in the first line; and so in each couplet or triplet. Such a parallelism is called Synonymous. Thus in Ps. 24:1-3:

"The earth is Jehovah's and the fulness thereof;  
The world, and they that dwell therein. For he  
has founded it upon the seas. And established it  
upon the floods. Who shall ascend into the hill  
of Jehovah? And who shall stand in his holy  
place?"

Often two or more lines express a contrast, in which case the parallelism is Antithetic; as in Prov. 12:1, 2:

"Whoso loveth correction loveth knowledge: But  
he that hateth reproof is brutish. And a good  
man shall obtain favor of Jehovah: But a man of  
wicked devices will he condemn."

Sometimes the form remains similar in successive lines, but there is an advance in thought. Such a parallelism is Synthetic; as in Ps. 19:7-11:

"The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul: The testimony of Jehovah is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart: The commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring forever: The ordinances of Jehovah are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: Sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: In keeping of them there is great reward."

Rarely we find a most beautiful and artistic parallelism, in which the first line corresponds to the last; the next to the first, to the next to the last; and the third from the first, to the third from the last. This is called Introverted, and is exemplified in Ps. 135:15-18:

"The idols of the nations are silver and gold,  
The work of men's hands. They have mouths,  
but they speak not; Eyes have they, but they  
see not; They have ears, but they hear not;  
Neither is there any breath in their mouths.  
They that make them shall be like unto them;  
Yea, every one that trusteth in them."

**(5) Metre.**

(5) In most languages, poetry is distinguished from prose by metre, or measure, which is the system according to which verses are formed. The meter depends on the character and number of syllables employed to form a metric foot, the number of feet to form a line, and the length and the arrangement of lines to form a stanza. The poet must select his words and determine the order so as to produce the metre according to which his poem is planned. This often leads the poet to select words which he would not employ in prose to express the same meaning; and this often produces obscurities, or otherwise affects the interpretation. In Hebrew poetry the metre is not based on syllables, but on the number of words used to form a line. The Hebrew metre is hardly ever reproduced in the English translation of the Bible. Accordingly, only the student of the Hebrew text can take into account the original metre when interpreting passages from the Old Testament.

**Value of the Rule.**

In many passages the poetic form furnishes a key to the interpretation. For example, in Ps. 24:4,

"He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;  
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity,  
And hath not sworn deceitfully."

Here we may wish to interpret the words, "lifted up his soul to vanity." Although the words are very obscure in themselves, yet the corresponding words in the parallelism, "sworn deceitfully," are so perspicuous that we cannot doubt that lifting up the soul to vanity means swearing falsely. All these peculiarities of poetry and their bearing on the interpretation, require the

*RULE :—Before interpreting a passage, determine whether it is prose or poetry.*

RULE VII.—*Literary Features.*

Variety of Literature.
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Literature has many varieties. It is not all merely history, discourse, song and dialogue. There are law, record, proverb, drama, description, story, psalm, parable, prophecy, epistle, elegy, rhapsody and many other kinds. It is evident that in all these forms of composition thought is expressed in many different ways, and that the interpreter should have some familiarity with each of them. He that does not understand the forms in which ideas are set forth will hardly be able to recognize the ideas when they appear. From this it follows that the successful interpreter will be a constant and careful student of various kinds of literature.

Literature in the Bible.
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The Bible, and especially the Old Testament, has a surprising variety of literary materials. The *historical portions* are varied with stories, prophecy, statutes, genealogies, triumphal songs, elegies, psalms of praise, speeches, fables, prayers, warnings and covenants, besides the current narratives.

The *Psalms* have hymns of praise, odes of triumph, confessions of sin, dramatic monologues, national lyrics, votive hymns, festal anthems, inaugural songs, prophecies, litanies, acrostics, exhortations and prayers for the individual and for the nation. It is unfortunate that this variety is so little recognized by readers and interpreters.

The *Prophetic books* contain accusations, exhortations, allegories, hymns, dramas, elegies, doom songs, Messianic predictions, impersonations, choruses, epigrams, ideals, descriptions, visions, apocalypses, poetic prayers, royal proclamations, dreams, interpretations, narratives, emblems and rhapsodies.

Other books of the Old Testament and also the New contain many other literary features which challenge the

keenest interest of the student, the highest admiration of the scholar, the deepest devotion of the saint and the most careful study of the interpreter.

Printing in  
Common  
Bibles.

Our Bibles, both the Authorized and the Revised Versions, are so printed as to conceal the real literary character of a large part of the material. Often verse is printed as prose; no personae are noted in the dialogues; and all arrangement into stanzas and strophes, all quotation marks and sudden changes of form are omitted. This deceives the reader into the supposition that much that scholars know to be verse is prose, and that there is little variety in either verse or prose. A carefully prepared edition of the American Revision is greatly needed.\*

Characters  
in Prose.

In many passages of plain prose, especially in the prophetic books, the dialogue form appears without warning, and the speakers are not announced in our Bibles. The following from Joel 3:9-16, concerning the Valley of Decision will illustrate this:

*Jehovah (to His Messengers).* Proclaim ye this among the nations: Prepare war; stir up the mighty men; let all the men of war draw near, let them come up; beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears; let the weak say, I am strong.

*Voices (to the nations).* Haste ye, and come, all ye nations round about, and gather yourselves together. (*To Jehovah*). Thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Jehovah.

*Jehovah.* Let the nations bestir themselves, and come to the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Jehovah—judgment) ; for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about. (*To His Hosts*) Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe; come, tread ye; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow. (*Aside*) For their wickedness is great.

*Prophetic Spectator.* Multitudes, multitudes in the Valley of Decision for the day of Jehovah is near in the Valley of Decision. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. And Jehovah will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake; but Jehovah will be a refuge unto his people, and a stronghold to the children of Israel.

\*The best work of this kind now available (1915) is Moulton's Modern Reader's Bible, single volume, 1907, The Macmillan Co., N. Y. Unfortunately it uses the English, not the American, Revision. It needs other improvements.

It would be idle to attempt an accurate interpretation of this interesting passage without observing its true form and the speakers of each part.

The following from Hosea 14:4-8, on Jehovah's acceptance of Ephraim's repentance will further illustrate the principle:

*Jehovah.*—I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew **unto** Israel; he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the grain, and blossom as the vine; the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

*Ephraim.*—What have I to do any more with idols?

*Jehovah.*—I have answered, and will regard him.

*Ephraim.*—I am like a green fir-tree— *Jehovah.*—

From me is thy fruit found.

<p>Characters in Verse.</p>
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Many dramatic pieces in the Bible are in verse; but since the Hebrews did not insert the *dramatis personae*, the readers of our common Bibles are left ignorant of the dialogues and helpless in the interpretation. For example, the Song of Solomon is a drama throughout with two leading characters, a rural bride and a royal bridegroom, besides courtiers, chorus and others. Popular quotations from this book are often interpreted and applied without regard to the original characters: Thus: "I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem," is sometimes used as a personal description of Solomon. On the other hand, these are the words of the Bride, conscious of her rural rearing and sun-browned features.

In like manner the words, "I am the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley," are both misquoted and misapplied by not observing the literary connections. All efforts to make the words refer to the coming Messiah are worse than futile. The passage in a larger section reads as follows:

*The Bridegroom.*—Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou **art** fair; Thine eyes are as doves.

*The Bride.*—Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant; Also our couch is green.

The beams of our house are cedars,  
And our rafters are firs.

I am a rose of Sharon, A  
lily of the valleys.

*The Bridegroom.*—As a lily among thorns,  
So is my love among the daughters.

*The Bride.*—As the apple tree among the trees of the wood,  
So is my beloved among the sons. —Song 1:15-2:3.

From this it is clear that the Bride modestly thinks of herself as only a little rose or lily as compared with the cedars and firs of the palace about her. The Bridegroom consolingly turns the comparison into a compliment by responding that she is among other women as "a lily among thorns."

The opening of the prophecy of Obadiah is all but a mystery to the average reader who can see in the printed text no indication of the real literary form. The prophet announces in verse form a dramatic situation involving the fate of the country of Edom. Jehovah is conceived by the poet as planning Edom's overthrow. A messenger is sent to various nations to stir them up to form an alliance against Edom so great that Edom will be small and insignificant in comparison with the host that will make the attack upon her. This opens the way for Jehovah to pronounce her doom in bold language. By inserting the characters omitted in our common Bibles, the sense becomes clear:

*Prophet.*—We have heard tidings from Jehovah,  
And an ambassador is sent among the nations—

*Embassador (to nations).*—Arise ye, and let us rise up against her  
in battle.

*Jehovah (to Edom).*—Behold, I have made thee small among the nations,  
 Thou art greatly despised. The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee,  
 O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock,  
 Whose habitation is high;  
 That saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou mount on high as the eagle, And though thy nest be set among the stars,  
 I will bring thee down from thence.

*Prophet (to Edom).*—If thieves came to thee,  
 (Commenting) If robbers by night,  
 (How art thou cut off!)  
 Would they not steal [merely] till they had enough?  
 If grapegatherers came to thee, Would they not leave some gleaning grapes? How are the things of Esau searched! How are his hidden treasures sought out! All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee on thy way, Even to the border; The men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee,  
 And prevailed against thee; (*Aside*)  
 There is no understanding in him!

Alternate Address.

Often a prophet dramatically addresses one party to a contest and then abruptly addresses the other party, and so on, alternating without warning to the reader. This is, of course, purely rhetorical, since in most cases one or both parties may be absent. An example of this is found in Nahum 1:9-2:3, in which the speaker alluding to the future downfall of Nineveh, the old oppressor of Judah, contrasts the exchanging fortunes of the two peoples by addressing first one and then the other. The passage should read thus:

(*To Ninevites*).—'What do ye devise against Jehovah? He will make a full end; affliction shall not rise up the second time. (*Aside*) For entangled like thorns, and drunken as with their drink, they are consumed utterly as dry stubble. (*Addressing*) There is one gone forth out of thee, that deviseth evil against Jehovah, that counselleth wickedness.

(*To Judah*).—Thus saith Jehovah: Though they be in full strength, and likewise many, even so shall they be cut down, and he shall pass

away. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. And now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.

(*To Ninevite King*).—And Jehovah hath given commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image; I will make thy grave; for thou art vile.

(*To Judah*).—Behold, upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! Keep thy feasts, O Judah, perform thy vows; for the wicked one shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

(*To Nineveh*).—He that dasheth in pieces is come up against thee: keep the fortress, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily.

(*To Judah*).—For Jehovah restoreth the excellency of Jacob as the excellency of Israel; for the emptiers have emptied them out, and destroyed their vine-branches.

It is evident that nothing else than confusion can result from a disregard of such alternation. The context that usually aids the interpreter, becomes in this case only a snare to his understanding. Though this style of address rarely appears in other literatures, it is often found in the writings of the Hebrew prophets.

Change of Pronouns.
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More frequently there appears simply a sudden change of pronouns, generally from second to third person or the reverse, as in the following from Isa. 21:5:

They prepare the table, They set the  
watch, They eat, they drink— Rise  
up, ye princes, anoint the shield.

Two such changes occur in a single strophe in Ps. 25:7-11.

Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions:  
According to thy lovingkindness remember thou me,

For thy goodness' sake, O Jehovah. Good and  
upright is Jehovah: Therefore will he instruct sinners  
in the way. The meek will he guide in justice; And the  
meek will he teach his way. All the paths of Jehovah  
are lovingkindness and truth

Unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.  
For thy name's sake, O Jehovah, Pardon mine iniquity,  
for it is great.

Such compositions are designed to carry two kinds of material, direct address or prayer and remarks aside or for the reader. This art of the Hebrew poet is probably intended to add vividness to his work; but it must receive attention at the hands of the interpreter, who otherwise may be seriously misled. The following from the Third Psalm will illustrate this alternation of prayer and remark:

(Prayer) But thou, O Jehovah, art a shield about me: My glory, and the lifter up of my head.

(Remark) I cry unto Jehovah with my voice,  
And he answereth me out of his holy hill.  
\* \* \* \* \*

(Prayer) Arise, O Jehovah; save me, O my God;  
For thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek  
bone; Thou hast broken the teeth of the  
wicked.

(Remark) Salvation belongeth unto Jehovah.

(Prayer) Thy blessing be upon thy people.—Ps. 3:3-8.

<p>Change in The Poet's Mind.</p>
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In certain poems a change of the poet's mind from joy to grief or grief to joy occurs so suddenly as to surprise the reader and even to embarrass the interpreter. Usually such a poem opens with cries for help against fierce and persistent enemies who are conceived as seeking the poet's life and defying the poet's God. The poet, weary with weeping and wasted with tears, pleads for divine assistance. Suddenly, as if God had swooped down upon the enemies, the relief of mind is exhibited in expressions of confidence in God and defiance of the foes. Psalm 6 will exemplify this form of literature.

O Jehovah, rebuke me not in thine anger,  
Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Have mercy  
upon me, O Jehovah; for I am withered away:  
O Jehovah, heal me; for my bones are troubled.  
My soul is sore troubled:  
And thou, O Jehovah, deliver my soul:  
Return, O Jehovah, deliver my soul:  
Save me for thy lovingkindness' sake.

For in death there is no remembrance of thee:  
 In Sheol who shall give thee thanks? I  
 am weary with my groaning;  
 Every night I make my bed to swim;  
 I water my couch with my tears. Mine eye  
 wasteth away because of my grief;  
 It waxeth old because of all mine adversaries.—

(*Relief*) Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity;  
 For Jehovah hath heard the voice of my weeping;  
 Jehovah hath heard my supplication; Jehovah will  
 receive my prayer.  
 All mine enemies shall be put to shame and sore troubled:  
 They shall turn back, they shall be put to shame sud-  
 denly.

Psalms 57 illustrates the suddenness of this change:

They have prepared a net for my steps;  
 My soul is bowed down: They have digged a pit  
 before me;— *They have fallen into the midst thereof  
 themselves!*

—Ps. 57:6.

In Psalm 31 the changes are more numerous. It begins with confidence in God (verses 1-8), then distress (9-13), confidence again (14), distress again (15-18), and then final relief (19-24). Other varieties appear in many other passages.

Not to observe such changes is to find the poet inconsistent and his thought confused, and consequently to misinterpret his composition. Whether the poet has had such an experience in person or not, he conceives it clearly in his mind, and expects his reader to be impressed with the idea that God is a swift and sure deliverer and worthy to be trusted by faithful men. Such a poem is dramatic in the changing of its ideal scenes, though it is strictly a monologue.

Literary Spirit.
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A very important quality of a literary composition is its *spirit*. This does not mean the intent of the writer, which is elsewhere discussed under the head of the Purpose of the Author. The spirit of a piece is the peculiar soul-energy that it manifests. It may be devotion, hate, zeal, triumph, or a

desire to instruct, rebuke, threaten, celebrate, or inspire. It is the power behind the purpose, the very heat and heart of the whole production.

<p>Spirit of Nahum</p>
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The book of Nahum, designed presumably to encourage Judah at a time of oppression at the hands of the Assyrians, illustrates this element in literature. The book is a taunting threat of the overthrow of the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, and the downfall of the Assyrian nation, based on the character of Jehovah and His attitude toward Assyria. The Assyrians had defied and cursed Jehovah and treated His people with heartless cruelty. The prophet's own bosom burned with feelings which he ascribed to God. He introduces his book thus:

Jehovah is a jealous God and avengeth; Jehovah avengeth and is full of wrath; Jehovah taketh vengeance on his adversaries, And he reserveth wrath for his enemies. Jehovah is slow to anger and great in power, And will by no means clear the guilty.

Jehovah hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm,  
And the clouds are the dust of his feet.  
He rebuketh the sea and maketh it dry,  
And drieth up all the rivers:  
Bashan languisheth, and Carmel;  
And the flower of Lebanon languisheth.

The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt;  
And the earth is upheaved 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 wrath is poured out like fire,  
And the rocks are broken asunder by him.

Jehovah is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble;  
And he knoweth them that take refuge in him.  
But with an overrunning flood will he make a full end of her place,  
And will pursue his enemies into darkness.

From this character of Jehovah it follows, as the rest of the book recites, that Nineveh will be destroyed. Her assailants are conceived as being marshalled against her; her soldiers rally in vain; her scythe-chariots are ineffec-

tive; her walls will not protect her; the inhabitants will be led away in mourning; the city will be a waste of ruins, and her princes will be hopelessly scattered abroad. Jehovah is bringing all this to pass because of His wrath; and the prophet concurs and rejoices in Jehovah's indignation. If an interpreter were to regard the above quotation as merely a cool, didactic list of God's attributes, how very far would he miss its significance! It is fairly afire with resentment against the Assyrians, aglow with patriotism for Judah, and aflame with a zeal for Jehovah.

This is clear from passages throughout the book. Note a few of these:

*(To Nineveh)* Behold, I am against thee, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of my messengers shall no more be heard.—2:13.

*(To her assailants)* Take ye the spoil of silver, Take ye the spoil of gold: For there is no end of the store, The glory of all pleasant furniture. —2:9. *(To Nineveh)* Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and rapine; The prey departeth not.—3:1.

*(To Nineveh)* There is no assuaging thy hurt; Thy wound is grievous: All that hear the report of thee shall clap the hands over thee:  
For upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?

To interpret such a book without considering its literary animus, is to do injustice to the zeal of the writer and to miss the pith and power of the writing.

If the spirit of the book of Galatians be misconceived, a wrong interpretation is inevitable. The author marvels that his readers have so quickly turned aside unto a different gospel, and immediately pronounces an enathema upon any man or angel that should preach any gospel other than he had preached in Galatia (1:6-9). Again he says, "O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus

<p>Book of Galatians.</p>
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Christ was openly set forth crucified?" 3:1. It might be thought from these passages that Paul was very angry with his retrogressive converts and that he wrote in the spirit of hot displeasure and withering rebuke.

Such is not the case, and these passages and others in this letter will be misunderstood on that assumption. A careful study of the Epistle shows that the writer was grieved at the instability of his readers; that he spends pages in patient reasoning with them; and that he wrote in a tone of counsel, argument, exhortation, and even entreaty, "beseeching" them to follow his faith and life. Such a spirit is void of asperity and bitterness; and hence these passages must be interpreted as kindly and solicitous reminders of their serious mistake, rather than as harsh and acrimonious reprimand.

Two Psalms Compared.
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A comparison of Ps. I with Ps. CIX will disclose the difference in spirit between two writings in the same section of the Scriptures. In both there is a contrast between the godly and the ungodly; but in the former there is a quiet and unimpassioned tone, deliberate and almost judicial, while in the latter the feeling against the wicked is intense and seemingly vindictive. The former is to be interpreted at face value in every line; while the latter, being exaggerated and extreme in many of its utterances, must be interpreted with studied discreetness. The purpose of the two may be similar or the same; but the spirit, warns the reader that the two must be estimated very differently. The following quotations will show the passion of the latter Psalm against the wicked:

When he is judged, let him come forth guilty;  
 And let his prayer be turned into sin.  
 Let his days be few;  
 And let another take his office.  
 Let his children be fatherless,  
 And his wife a widow. Let his children  
 be vagabonds, and beg;  
 And let them seek their bread out of their desolate places!

Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with Jehovah;  
 And let not the sin of his mother be blotted out!  
 Let them be before Jehovah continually,  
 That he may cut off the memory of them from the earth!

**Literary  
Form.**

The meaning of a passage may turn on the form into which it is conceived to be cast. This might be illustrated by a great variety of forms in the Bible; but a few must suffice. In verse the Envelope form will serve the purpose. In this form a few lines at the beginning of the poem are parallel to a few lines at the end of the poem, and enclose the other lines which merely amplify the thought of the enveloping portions.

**The 23rd  
Psalm.**

In the 23rd Psalm the first two lines announce the principal idea, the last two present the conclusion, while all the other lines give reason or amplitude to the leading sentiment. As the relation of the lines to each other becomes more apparent, the meaning and value of the whole poem becomes more appreciable. The Psalm should appear thus:

Jehovah is my shepherd;  
 I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
 He leadeth me beside still waters.  
 He restoreth my soul:  
 He guideth 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 hast  
 anointed my head with oil: My cup  
 runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;  
 And I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever.

**Lord's  
Prayer.**

The interpretation of a portion of the Lord's Prayer must be determined by the form in which it is to be cast. In our common Bible it reads,

Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.

In this form the words "as in heaven, so on earth," must be construed only with "Thy will be done;" and not with "hallowed be thy name" or "thy kingdom come." But the passage may take the envelope form thus:

Our Father who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name,  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done, As  
in heaven, so on earth.

The words "in heaven" in both lines hint that the first and last are parallel; and in this case the words "as in heaven, so on earth" are construed with each of the three lines above. Then the meaning is, Hallowed be thy name, as in heaven, so on earth; thy kingdom come, as in heaven, so on earth; thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. While there may be room for divergent opinions on the two alternatives, the latter form suggests a fuller and richer meaning than the former.

Literary Quotations.

A Quotation is sometimes formally introduced in the Bible by the word "saying;" though very often it is omitted, especially in poetry where the quotation is purely a literary conception. If the reader does not discover that a certain portion of a given piece is a quotation, he will of course interpret it otherwise; and if it is quoted, he will surely misunderstand it.

Psalm 93:3,4.

As the passage is printed in our Bibles, the force of Ps. 93:3, 4, is almost lost. The floods that "lift up their voice" seem to say nothing. In the common version it reads:

3- The floods have lifted up, O *Lord*, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves.

4. The *Lord* on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, *yea*, than the mighty waves of the sea.

This is greatly improved in the American Revision; but many a reader will still fail to discover what the floods say:

The floods have lifted up, O Jehovah,  
 The floods have lifted up their voice:  
 The floods lift up their waves. Above  
 the voices of many waters, The mighty  
 breakers of the sea, Jehovah on high  
 is mighty.

In the margin of the Revised Version the word "roaring" is substituted for "waves," and makes much better sense. Now if we make this substitution, and mark with quotation points and small capitals the quoted part which is also the climax of the whole poem, we shall better secure the sense and have the true literary form.

The floods have lifted up, O Jehovah,  
 The floods have lifted up their voice,  
 The floods have lifted up their roaring  
 Above the voice of many waters, The  
 mighty breakers of the sea,  
 "JEHOVAH ON HIGH IS MIGHTY!"

Psalm 82.

Both the A. V. and the R. V. obscure the meaning of Ps. 82 by omitting all indications of the quoted sentences. The poet represents God as taking His stand in "God's congregation," which seems to be a company of judges acting under God's authority, and who, as persons exercising divine powers, are here called "gods." Two of God's speeches are followed by remarks by the poet who is supposed to represent the best public sentiment. The real construction and meaning will be apparent when it is printed in its proper literary form:

God standeth in the congregation of God;  
 He judgeth among the gods:  
 "How long will ye judge unjustly,  
 And respect the persons of the wicked?  
 Judge the poor and fatherless;  
 Do justice to the afflicted and destitute;  
 Rescue the poor and needy;  
 Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked."

They know not, neither do they understand;  
They walk to and fro in darkness; All the  
foundations of the earth are moved. "I said,  
Ye are gods,  
    And all of you sons of the Most High;  
    Nevertheless ye shall die like men,  
    And fall like one of the princes."  
Arise, O God, judge the earth; For thou  
shalt inherit all the nations.

The foregoing discussion elicits many literary traits that claim the interpreter's attention, and these might suggest many rules; but since it is impossible to cover all these features with specific statements, it seems better to sum up the whole in one comprehensive

*RULE:—Every literary peculiarity of a production must be considered before interpreting.*

## CHAPTER IV.

### RULES BASED ON THE GENERAL SENSE.

#### RULE VIII.—*The Author's Explanation.*

**Importance.**

It must be evident that an author knows his own meaning in any utterance which he may make better than any one else can know it. If, therefore, an author in any case gives his own interpretation of his words, it must be regarded as the most valuable key to his meaning that we can possess; for the true aim of the interpreter is to ascertain the author's meaning, and nothing else. See Axiom II.

**"Perfect".**

In Heb. 5:14, "But solid food is for full-grown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil," the word "fullgrown" (Margin R. V. "perfect") is explained in the clause "even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil." This explanation is final and decisive for this passage. The word "full-grown" or "perfect" may have another meaning in other parts of the Bible, or the interpreter may have been accustomed to some other sense of the word, or some distinguished person may have assigned it a different signification; but none of these considerations can set aside the writer's own statement of his meaning. Here it is not to have a full growth of body, a maturity of age, or sinlessness of character, whether by natural or supernatural gift or endowment; but it is simply to have acquired by practice a clear discernment of good and evil.

**"Perfection".**

This explains also the meaning of "perfection" in the next verse, VI. I, "Wherefore let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ, and press on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God." It is a full growth in moral discernment due to exercise of the conscience. Men are first taught the "first principles" of Christian doctrine, and then "go on to perfection" by training themselves to make accurate distinctions between good and evil. The writer's own explanation makes his meaning in this place clear and forceful.

**Rom 10:6-8.**

In Rom. 10:6-8, the writer's explanation is not complete, but it is sufficient to lead us to the full meaning. "But the righteousness which is of faith saith thus, Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down) or, who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach." Moses had taught that his commandment was not far off, so that the people should say, "Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, and make us hear it, that we may do it?" Nor, "Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us to hear it, that we may do it?" but that the word of the law was nigh, so that it was on every man's tongue and in every heart (Deut. 30:12). They had already a full revelation of their duty, and that right at hand. Now Paul in Romans has a thought similar to that of Moses, and adopts Moses' language to express it; but he modifies the wording, and explains his application of the quotation, to suit his own thought. We must not force Moses' thought on Paul, but accept his own explanation as far as it extends. In his last explanation, his use of "the word," he says, "that is, the word of faith, which we preach;" or, as we would say, the gospel—not Moses' commands as in Deuteronomy. Now he says this

gospel is at hand, so that no one need say, "who shall ascend into heaven?" which Paul explains to mean "to bring Christ down," as if some person might think it necessary to bring the great Teacher to us before we can fully know our duty. No one need say, "who shall descend into the abyss?" by which Paul says he means "to bring Christ up from the dead," as if some person might think Christ was in Hades, and must be brought thence to instruct us regarding our duty. We need not bring him from any place, for we have the gospel, and that supplies us with all the teachings we need, to reach salvation. It is right at hand, on our tongues and in our hearts. Thus easily a very obscure passage is interpreted by carefully heeding the writer's own explanation.

Not an  
interpolation.

We must be sure that the explanation in any text is the writer's, not some other person's. In John 5:3, 4, an explanation of the company of sick people at the pool of Bethesda is given in the text of the A. V., but set in the margin of the R. V., because it is probably an interpolation. It is wanting in nearly all the oldest copies. Such an explanation is not the author's, and not entitled to special consideration. In this case, it is no doubt only a Jewish superstition to which we should attach no importance whatever. Cf. Gen. 36:31.

Mark 10:23, 24.

Note how with one word of explanation Jesus relieves the obscurity of his remark about the difficulty of a rich man entering the kingdom of heaven, when he adds, "How hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter!" Not the possessor of wealth, but the worshiper of wealth, is excluded from grace. Mark 10:23, 24. Study also II Cor. 12:20,21; Dan. 9:20-27. From these examples we may frame the

*RULE :—Let an author's own explanation of his meaning take precedence of any other interpretation.*

RULE IX.—*The Author's Purpose.*

An Example:  
Luke 18:1-8.

We have seen in Axiom VIII that an author's purpose determines the character of his productions. From this it will follow that if we know an author's purpose, we have a clue to the meaning of his utterances. In Luke 18:1, the purpose of a parable is told us. It was spoken "to the end that men ought always to pray, and not to faint," that is, in every time of weakness, they should avail themselves of divine help, and not give up in despair. He then relates the action of an unjust judge who harkened not to a poor widow's plea until he was worried with her persistent cries; and the lesson was drawn thus: "And shall not God avenge his elect which cry to Him day and night, and He is long suffering over them? I say unto you, that He will avenge them speedily." Many have thought that this is intended to teach men to continue night and day to beg and beg, as did the widow, and that God will at last hear them for their much speaking. Not so; but on the contrary, it is intended to teach that God will much more, surely and promptly answer prayer than a reckless judge. If the judge reluctantly, but finally, responded, God will "speedily avenge his elect." This accords with the purpose to encourage men to pray rather than to despair when help is so near. That God is kinder than man, is taught all through the Bible.

How know  
the purpose.  
(1) By State-  
ment.

But how shall we know the purpose of a writer? There are several ways: (1) By direct statement of the purpose. Thus in John 20:31, "These are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." Here is the key to the Gospel of John; and we learn that the book is not intended primarily for Christians, but for unbelievers, and that it is designed to set forth the evidences of the divine Sonship of Jesus. In interpreting this book, we should look for the evidential

value of every chapter and paragraph. This makes clear much that might otherwise seem to be purposeless and dull. In Luke 1:4, we have Luke's purpose in writing his Gospel. "That thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed." Here the reader learns by direct statement that Luke aims to give a reliable account of the life of Christ, that the reader may have certain grounds on which to rest his faith. This object is similar to that of John. John's object was to produce faith, Luke's to confirm faith.

By Inference.

(2) By inference we may discern a writer's object. After noting the object of two of the gospels, it is a natural inference that the others had virtually the same purpose. Their matter and form are too similar to those of Luke and John for their object to be very different.' So also the object of the book of Acts may be inferred from its contents. It contains accounts of the beginnings of the church in the leading Jewish and Gentile lands, and especially of individual conversions. It is a necessary inference that the writer aimed to inform the reader accurately of the beginnings of Christianity and of the divine directions by which men turn to the Lord and form churches. To the end of time men must be guided in these matters chiefly, and almost wholly, by this book. Likewise, the intent of the book of Hebrews is gleaned from its trend of thought, and is found to be an effort to save the Jewish Christians from apostatizing from the Christian faith and turning back to Judaism. Accordingly, it begins with an exaltation of Christ above the angels, and hence far above Moses. It exhorts the reader to go on to perfection, warns him repeatedly against discarding the noblest, and now the only, sacrifice for sins, and commends the principle, and the heroes, of faith.

By Readers'  
Need.

(3) The purpose of a writer may some times be determined by considering the need of his readers. Many communications are made distinctly in response to certain special needs of the

persons for whom they are designed. A thoughtful speaker or writer endeavors to adapt his language to the need of his hearers or readers, and if we would best understand his message, we must discern as perfectly as possible the receiver's need of that message. This may require a knowledge of the circumstances of such a receiver, and it will be the office of the careful interpreter to ascertain as many of those circumstances as may be in any way related to the communication.

**Philemon's  
Need.**

In writing to Philemon, Paul says, "Having confidence in thine obedience, I write unto thee, knowing that thou wilt do even beyond what I say" (verse 21). What "obedience?" What will he "do"? If we knew what the Apostle purposed in writing this, we could answer the questions. Let us note the circumstances and need of the writer. Philemon formerly had a slave who had run away, and gone to Paul, under whose preaching he had become a Christian. Paul was returning the slave to Philemon, and writing this letter to the master, urging him to receive back the fugitive. Under these circumstances, Philemon needed encouragement to be merciful and kind toward the runaway. It is in accord with this need that the Apostle expresses confidence in Philemon's obedience, and in his doing more than the letter suggests to make the servant welcome and to treat him as a brother; and so we must interpret.

**Book of  
I Corinthians.**

In I Corinthians, the Apostle is clearly endeavoring to correct certain evils that had crept into the church, and to resolve certain doubts in the minds of the Corinthian disciples. Here, again, we must study the readers' need by noting their circumstances as well as possible. Thus, in the first chapter, the writer describes the divisions and strife among his readers; and this gives us the theme of the first four chapters, in which he attempts to correct the evil. Likewise, in the fifth chapter, he discusses the proper attitude toward a

corrupt man in their midst; and in the sixth, the evil custom of Christians going to law before unbelievers, which was prevalent at Corinth. So other evils are treated, almost to the end of the Epistle. Each chapter and verse must be interpreted according to the evident purpose to meet these several needs.

I Cor. 11:17.

Take as a sample one passage in this book. Let the meaning of "eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord unworthily" (1 Cor. 11:27), be sought. The readers' sins that must be corrected in this case are described in verses 17-21, where we learn that they were divided into parties, and these parties waited not for each other at the Lord's table, but some ate to gluttony and drank to intoxication, while others were wholly set at naught. In contrast with this dissipation and selfishness, the writer exhorts them to unite in an orderly memorial of the body and blood of Christ. Under these circumstances, when he speaks of eating unworthily, he must refer to their unfraternal and debauching feast into which the Lord's supper had been degraded. Here the reader's need shows the writer's purpose, and reveals his meaning.

(4) By Context.

(4) Often the context indicates the purpose of the author. Let us inquire into the object of Paul's writing that fine "Psalm of Love," the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. The context discloses it almost beyond question. Near the close of the previous chapter the writer refers to certain miraculous gifts which were very attractive to most men; but the apostle urges them to desire "greater gifts," and proposes "a still more excellent way." He then proceeds to point out the path of love. At the beginning of the fourteenth chapter he continues his exhortations to "follow after love" even if they seek spiritual gifts. We conclude, then, that the noted chapter on love was written to be set in shining contrast with what many supposed to be the greatest thing in the world, the power to perform miraculous deeds. This pur-

pose will also explain many statements in this famous chapter that are otherwise very obscure.

This valuable use of the writer's purpose in determining his meaning, leads to the

RULE:—*The interpretation of a passage must accord with the writer's purpose.*

RULE X.—*Simplicity and Naturalness.*

"Eye of a  
Needle."

Presumably the meaning of almost any passage was simple to the writer; otherwise, he would have attempted to simplify it by explanation or further development. The correct interpretation will therefore be a simple one, and any very intricate or devious method of interpretation may be reasonably suspected of error. For example, a very ingenious explanation of Luke 18:25, has come to hand. "It is easier for a camel to enter in through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." It is explained that in some city gates there were little gates, each known as "the needle's eye," through which a camel could enter, but the camel must be relieved of its burden, and then go through on its knees; accordingly, Jesus means to teach that a rich man can never enter the kingdom while his heart is carrying his wealth, and he is proud of his possessions; but that when the man turns over this burden to his Master, and humbles himself on his knees before God, he can enter the Kingdom! This may be a striking similitude, but it is too complicated for so simple a statement in the text. If Jesus meant all that, why leave so much of it out of the passage? Possibly there were such gates;\* but it far better comports

\*Note the following from *Hastings Bible Dictionary*, Art. Needle's Eye: "An attempt is sometimes made to explain the *needle's eye* as a reference to the small door, a little over two feet square, in the large, heavy gate of a walled city. This mars the figure without materially altering the meaning, and receives no justification from

with the Savior's simple words and the disciples' surprise, to understand that he means the eye of a sewing needle, through which, humanly speaking, a camel cannot pass at all. So the "*man that trusts in riches*" positively cannot enter the Kingdom of God.

Simon  
Bar-Jonah.

Jerome gave a far-fetched interpretation of the name by which Jesus addresses Peter in Matt. 16:17, "Blessed art thou, Simon, Bar-Jonah." The word *Bar* means "son," and *Jonah* means "dove," so that the full name means "Son of Dove." But since the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove (Matt. 3:16), the name means "Son of the Spirit," or "Child of the Spirit." How much more simple and natural to understand that Jonah was Simon's father, and that Bar-Jonah merely means Son of Jonah! It was a Jewish custom to mention the name of the father with that of the son; as, James the son of Zebedee, James the son of Alphaeus, Saul the son of Kish, etc.

"This  
Generation."

In Matt. 24:34, "This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished," the word "generation" has often been subjected to an unnatural interpretation. The usual, and hence natural, meaning is the people of the same period, or a single succession or person in a human genealogy. It is used in these senses in the New Testament. In this passage, however, some have urged that it must have a meaning of greater reach to make the prophecy suit the fulfillment. It is claimed that Jesus affirms that all the events foretold in the first thirty-three verses of this chapter will come to pass before that generation will be extinct. But the events include the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming of Christ. Therefore, "generation" must

the language and traditions of Palestine. There is no custom of calling this small opening 'the eye;' it is usually named 'the small door,' 'hole,' or 'window' . . . . Orientals never speak of *the eye* of a needle; it is simply the *slot* or *hole*. The literal meaning is therefore to be preferred."

have a meaning that will extend to the Second Coming, which, according to other passages, will be at the end of the world (see 1 Thess. 4:15-17). As Jesus says, "this generation," and looks so far forward, he must refer to the Jews as a race to the end of time, and assert that they will not be extinct till the Second Coming. Such an interpretation is wholly unnatural, for "generation" never has the meaning of "race" in the Scriptures. Such an unusual requirement in an interpretation should lead us to suspect that the error lies still deeper in a misunderstanding of the whole passage; and that is exactly the case. When we examine the passage closely, we observe that the words "all these things" do not include the Second Coming at all. These words are repeated from the verse just preceding (v. 33), where he says, "when ye see all these things, know ye that he is nigh, even at the doors." But in this verse (33) "all these things" cannot include the Second Coming, because he says that they will only indicate that "He is nigh." "All these things," then, must refer only to those matters relating to the destruction of Jerusalem. But all the matters pertaining to the fall of the city were accomplished within the lifetime of those to whom Jesus spoke. "Generation," then, may properly bear its natural meaning without conflict between prophecy and fulfillment. All this justifies the following

RULE:—*The simplest and most natural interpretation of a passage must be preferred.*

RULE XI.—*Clearness of Sense.*

Thought Clear  
to the Author.

We may now advance a little beyond the result reached in the last rule. Not only must an author be supposed to have put a simple and natural meaning into his words, but his meaning must have been clear to himself; otherwise, he must expect his language to be very obscure to others, and he would

feel self-condemned for the utterance. Rarely, indeed, such obscurity might be true of an author; but it must not be granted until it is forced upon our recognition. Accordingly, any interpretation that is not clear may be suspected of being erroneous. The same idea that was clear to the author should be clear to the interpreter if the latter be competent to consider the subject treated. If he be incompetent to comprehend the subject, he should not undertake to interpret.

<p>The Groaning of Creation.</p>
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A passage generally regarded as very obscure is found in Rom. 8:19-23, "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together till now. And not only so, but ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to-wit, the redemption of our body." If, now, we can reach a clear interpretation, we shall have strong reason to believe it is correct. One idea is the key to the whole passage. It is this, that Paul personifies Creation, which is the material world, all nature, except man, and poetically represents Creation as sympathizing with man, especially with the Christian, longing for a better state. Creation is waiting with earnest hope for man's final glorification at the end of the world. The "revealing of the sons of God," means the final state of Christian glory yet to be revealed. "The creation was subjected to vanity" in the sense that it was subjected to constant change, death and decay, which make it vain. God subjected it thus, but gave it hope of deliverance from such a bondage to corruption into the same freedom from death and decay that the children of God

shall have in the next world. The world is now groaning and struggling, just as Christians are groaning for their adoption into eternal glory. Thus the whole passage carries through clearly the longing of nature for deliverance from corruptibility. The idea of nature sympathizing with man is found also in the Old Testament. Isaiah (24:4) says,

"The earth mourneth and fadeth away, The world languisheth and fadeth away;"

and in Ezek. 31:15, God says,

"I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, And all the trees of the field fainted for him."

So also the Poet Keble in his "Christian Year" represents these "groans of nature" as a

"Strong yearning for a blest new birth,  
With sinless glories crown'd."

"Spirit and Truth."

Commentators have usually found difficulty in expressing clearly the meaning of "Worship the Father in spirit and truth," John 4:23. But a clear conception, and therefore probably the correct interpretation, may be reached by observing that Jesus was answering the Samaritan woman who had just raised the question, whether Jerusalem or Mt. Gerizim be the proper place to worship. The Jews contended for the former exclusively; but the Samaritans claimed the latter place. Jesus throws entirely a new light upon the question. The time is now at hand when men shall worship the Father in neither of these places; but the true worship will be in spirit and in truth. He teaches that it is no longer a question of *place* at all, but of *manner*; not *where*, but *how*. It might be that neither Jew nor Samaritan was right. The one might be too formal and spiritless, the other too far removed from the truth of God concerning Christ, to approach the Father through the Son as he directs. The true worshipper will avoid both of these evils, and worship

"in spirit and in truth." "In spirit" means in the proper condition of heart, with faith, sincerity and earnestness. "In truth" means under the direction of the truth as revealed in Christ. Some interpreters understand "spirit" to be the Holy Spirit; but this does not make the sense clear. The full meaning then would be, under the direction of the Holy Spirit and of the truth; but that would be the same direction, and there would be no need of the two words, "spirit" and "truth." The other interpretation is clearer, and hence preferable.

"Made Perfect".
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In Heb. 11:39,40, the writer speaks of the men of faith who lived and died before the coming of Christ, and affirms that they "received not the promise," and that "apart from us they should not be made perfect." To understand that no promise was made to them is to involve the matter in mystery, for we are clearly informed of the contrary in the Old Testament; but the case becomes clear when we understand that they received not the *things* promised, probably the things that were to be fulfilled by the coming of the Messiah. It is often attempted by some interpreters to make the perfection of these ancient worthies include an admission into the immediate presence of God, on the theory that the paradise in which they formerly dwelt was absent from God, and was abolished by the death and exaltation of Christ, so that when Christ ascended and entered heaven these entered with him. This is by no means clear from the passage, since the text does not express it, nor anything like it, nor is it in Hebrews anywhere. The text does clearly indicate that the faithful men of old found a certain perfection in connection with us of the Christian period. We are at liberty to look elsewhere in Hebrews to see what perfection is meant. We find it plainly expressed in x. 1-14, where we learn that the sacrifices of the law "can never make perfect them that draw nigh" (verse 1) ; for, as explained in verse 4, it is impossible that the blood of beasts "should take away sins."

This implies that the word "perfect" relates to the absolute remission of sins. In verse 10 we are told that we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Christ once for all, whereas, under Jewish offerings, sins were remembered against the people every year; and a clear statement is made in verse 14, that "by one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified." Now this offering belongs to our era, and is our offering; but it saved the faithful of the former times as well as us. They were not perfected "apart from us," but in connection with us. This makes the passage clear, and does not burden it with a theory, nor put more into it than is sufficient to satisfy its wording.

From these examples we adduce the

RULE :—*Interpret so as to make the sense clear.*

RULE XII.—*Harmony with Correctness.*

Probability of  
Correctness.

An author may be known to be habitually careless of his thought and speech, so that an interpreter cannot depend upon the grammar, or consistency of his production; but among creditable speakers and writers an example of this kind is very rare. Even a good author may err; but as a rule such an author must be presumably grammatical and consistent. Accordingly, the interpreter will naturally take language at its full grammatical and rhetorical value, and expect the correct interpretation to be logical and consistent, till he is forced by the nature of the case to regard it otherwise.

In Grammar.

In Eph. 2:8, Paul says, "By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God." We may ask, what is the gift of God? Many would answer, "grace;" many others, "faith;" some, "salvation." But what does the grammar require? In the Greek, the words for "grace" and "faith" are both in the feminine gender. The pronoun "it" is not

in the Greek, hence "it is" are in italics in the English Bible to show that these words are supplied by the English translators; but "it" is the same thing as "that" in the clause "and that not of yourselves;" and "that" in the Greek is neuter gender. Greek grammar requires that a pronoun should agree with its antecedent in gender; according to which the word for neither "grace" nor "faith" can be the antecedent of "that," which shows that neither of these is the "gift of God." The only other possible antecedent is the salvation expressed by the verb "saved." Some have objected that the Greek noun for salvation is feminine; but we must notice that salvation is here expressed, not by the noun, but by the verb, and Greek grammar again requires that a pronoun which refers to the action of a verb for its antecedent must be neuter. This exactly suits the case; and the meaning is, Ye are saved by grace through faith; but the salvation is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Here the interpretation that accords with the grammar is reasonable and satisfactory.

**In Rhetoric.**

In Matt. 16:18, Jesus says, "I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Let us inquire, What is the "rock?" Many will answer that it is Peter; but the rhetoric would be violated by that interpretation. In the author's figure of the Church as a building, he makes Peter the door-keeper, saying, "Unto thee will I give the keys of the kingdom." It will be rhetorically absurd to make of Peter both the foundation and the door-keeper. Others will say that Christ is the Rock; but that will involve us in the same confusion, for Christ is also the builder, and should not be both builder and foundation. It remains only to understand that the rock is the truth uttered by Peter, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God," a truth which Jesus emphasizes by saying that it was not revealed by flesh and blood, but by the Father in heaven.

This interpretation by the rhetoric of the passage is not affected by the meaning of the name Peter. The Greek *Petros* means a stone, a loose stone. The word for "rock" is *petra*, which means a rocky ledge, solid rock. It is often urged that Jesus means by the play on the name to call Peter the rock on which the church is built. The diversity of meaning forbids this. The testimony of Liddell and Scott's Unabridged Greek Lexicon on this point is decisive, not as an expression of opinion, but as a statement of a significant fact. "There is no example in good authors, of *petra* in the sense of *petros*, a stone" (Art. *Petra*). If Jesus had meant to make *Petros* the foundation, there was no need of violating the usage of all good authors to do so, since most buildings are not founded on rocks, but on stones. But the Savior meant to give his church a more substantial basis than a loose stone; and in this passage the name of Peter, is rather in *contrast* with the true foundation, than identical with it. These facts sustain the indications of rhetoric.

In Logic.

In Gal. 3:16, the Apostle Paul argues from the promise made to Abraham, concerning his seed. He says, "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Many interpreters understand the apostle to argue here that since in the promise to Abraham ("In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," Gen. 22:18; or, perhaps, "All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and thy seed forever," Gen. 13:15; 17:8) the word "seed" is singular, not in the plural form "seeds," God meant to limit the meaning of "seed" to one person, Christ. Now, as "seed" is a collective word, and may include many persons, just as the word posterity, the plural would not be needed to express any number of descendants. It is claimed, therefore, that Paul's reasoning on the singular form of the word is illogical and artificial, like much of the reasoning of the Jewish rabbins.

It would seem that Paul certainly knew that "seed" was often collective, and included many though the form was singular. Was not Paul familiar with Hebrew words? Would he be blind to so simple a fact as this? We should certainly not expect it when at least we know that the Jews of his time were familiar with this very word in this sense. John 8:33, 37. It would be much more reasonable to understand, as Ellicott does, that the apostle was not intending to reason on the number of the word, but was simply informing his readers on his God-given authority that the promise was limited to Christ. He elsewhere freely assumes authority to announce truth independently of all others.

But in fact, we are missing Paul's logic when in any case we understand him to be evading the collective meaning of "seed." He actually takes it to be collective in this very passage, as we see clearly in verse 29, where he says, "If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise." Evidently he includes an innumerable host in Christ as Abraham's seed. But if he takes the word as collective, as including a large class, how can he by the form of the word exclude all other classes of Abraham's descendants? That is just what, after all, seems arbitrary. That there were different classes or kinds of descendants of Abraham is clear in the book of Genesis, for several classes, as the Ishmaelites, Midianites and Edomites, were not included in the promise to inherit Canaan. Hence, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Gen. 21:12) ; and to Jacob God said, "The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed" (Gen. 28:13). Now, moreover, when a distinction of classes or kinds is understood, and this word "seed" is used to include more than one class, it is put in the plural. An example of this is seen in 1 Sam. 8:15, "He will take the tenth of your seeds (different kinds of grain), and of your vineyards, and give them to his officers." This is the only place where the

plural of this word is found in the O. T.; for in Daniel 1:12,16, the plural of really a different, though a cognate, word is used, translated "pulse," yet composed of different kinds of vegetable products. This same use of "seeds" is apparent in the only three passages in the N. T. where the plural occurs, Matt. 13:32; Mark 4:31; where the mustard seed "is less than all seeds," and in 1 Cor. 15:38, "God giveth it a body even as it pleased him and to each of the seeds a body of its own" (literal translation of the Greek). The Apostle, being familiar with this usage of the word, was reasoning logically when he concluded from the singular form of "seed" that only one class of Abraham's seed is meant; and it was his province as an apostolic teacher to designate the class in which the promise ultimately invests the richness of its content.

In Consistency.
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In Matt. 5 :38-41, "Ye have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil," many people think that they find an example of the Savior's putting his teaching in opposition to the law of Moses, since the law required retaliation by like injuries, and Jesus forbids retaliation at all. They probably overlook the fact that in so doing Jesus would be inconsistent with his own principle and purpose expressed in the same chapter, verses 17-19, "Think not that I have come to destroy, but to fulfill." The evident spirit of these words is not opposition to the law; but, on the contrary, he would not have a subject of his kingdom to break one of the least of Moses' commandments. It is doing an intelligent teacher a great injustice to interpret him so as to involve him in a manifest inconsistency. The truth is, the law did not require an injured party to retaliate with like injury, nor to retaliate at all. If we consult the three passages where the law occurs in the O. T., we shall see that it is intended to instruct judges to render decisions in court in cases of damages. In Ex. 21:23-25, this is listed among what are called

in the first verse "the ordinances which thou shalt set before them." In Lev. 24:19,20, the context shows that Moses was receiving instructions concerning judicial sentences. Likewise in Deut. 19:21, the principle is announced in connection with rules of court procedure. The law did not require nor encourage private or public retaliation. Accordingly, Jesus urges men not even to prosecute offenders so as to visit upon them the legal sentence, but rather endure damages with patience. This view of his meaning is abundantly confirmed by the fact that he continues to discuss the Christian's attitude toward causes in the law; and he teaches us not to contend in court for a coat, but rather to relinquish a cloak also. The plain purpose of his teaching is, to recommend endurance of evil without contentions for right or justice at law. The advice is wise as well as kind, and is-consistent with all the rest of the author's instruction.

<p>Consistency Continued.</p>
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In Matt. 10:34,35, Jesus makes a very remarkable statement apparently to the effect that his purpose in coming was to produce strife and enmity among men. He says, "I came not to send peace, but a sword; for I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law ; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." It would seem to be difficult to form a sentence more inconsistent with the whole tenor of Christ's teaching on the subject of forbearance, kindness, love and peace than this; and it seems equally at variance with his emphatic exhortation to "honor thy father and thy mother" (Matt. 15:3-6). Clearly we would do the Savior gross injustice to understand him so; but we are forced by this manifest contrariety of thought to understand that Jesus does not purpose strife because he approves the evil of it, but only because it is inevitable in the establishment of his kingdom of truth and right in the midst of a world of error and violence. If

children rise up against their parents, it is not because it is Christ's will, but because of a necessary conflict between faithfulness and loyalty to God.

Thus we are justified in suspecting an error in any interpretation that disregards good grammar, good rhetoric, good logic or consistency; and we may express this prevailing principle in the

*RULE :—Any interpretation must be in harmony with grammar, rhetoric, logic and consistency, if the nature of the case permit.*

### RULE XIII.—*Condition of Writing.*

Controlling Conditions.
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Almost every writer intends his production for contemporary readers, who are assumed to know many existing conditions which he does not need to explain, but which may greatly affect his thought and composition. A writer in England today would not be required to state in full every English law or custom to which he might allude. A person writing a letter to intimate friends will rarely explain personal conditions which his readers already well know; but he will probably often refer to some conditions in a manner which would be hard for a stranger to understand. If a stranger to such conditions should undertake to interpret the writing, he would find it necessary to subject many allusions to a diligent investigation. In the interpretation of the Bible, or any other ancient book, careful attention must be given to the attending circumstances.

Reference to a Law
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In Matt. 28:14, the chief priests of the Jews who had instructed the guards that watched the tomb of Jesus to report that the disciples stole him away while they slept, promise, "If this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and rid you of care." Here the speakers have in mind the existing Roman law that if guards are found asleep on duty they

shall be put to death; and the expression "rid you of care" is an allusion to their danger of execution. Also, the word "governor" here is an allusion to Pilate, the Roman Procurator then at Jerusalem.

**Other Laws.**

Another instance in which a knowledge of the law of the time enables us to interpret, is found in John 18:31, 32. Pilate told the Jews to take Jesus and judge him according to their law, but they replied, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." Here we must not understand that the Jewish law had no death penalties, for it had many; but this refers to legal restrictions which the Romans had placed on the judicial sentences of the Jews by which they were not permitted to put criminals to death without the command of the Procurator (see Jos. Ant. xvii:1, 1). John adds, "That the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying by what death he should die." This again refers to the Jewish and Roman laws for executing criminals. Had the Jews put Jesus to death by their law, he must have been stoned (Lev. 24:16); but the Romans often crucified, and the latter fulfilled Jesus' prediction that he should be crucified (Matt. 20:19). So, also, the Roman law that no Roman citizen should be scourged while uncondemned explains why the magistrates at Philippi were alarmed, and besought Paul and Silas to leave their city (Acts 16:35,39). It likewise explains how Paul escaped scourging at Jerusalem after he had been bound to the whipping-post (Acts 22:24-28).

**Customs.**

A knowledge of the customs of the Egyptians in the irrigation of their gardens explains an otherwise obscure statement in Deut. 11:10, "Where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs." They turned the water from a reservoir into the garden, and with the foot merely indented the soil on the side of the channel to lead out the water among the vegetables. Likewise, we may readily understand Eccl. 11:1, "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for

thou shalt find it after many days," by noting the custom of casting seed upon the flooded field, which received with the seed a layer of fertile deposit. There the seed fell, and sprouting up after the water had disappeared, brought a rich harvest to the sower. So the man who with a liberal hand distributes his wealth to the poor will lose sight of it for awhile, only to see it returned to him in due season in the form of some glorious reward. The custom of brides to veil their faces carefully from their bridegrooms till after their marriage, explains the act of Rebecca, alighting from her camel in the field and veiling her face before she meets Isaac (Gen. 24:64,65). It also explains how Jacob could be deceived by Laban, and not know that he had received Leah instead of Rachel till next morning (Gen. 29:23-25). The universal custom of having wine at feasts explains the favorable attitude of Jesus towards that drink, which good people now customarily avoid (see Luke 7:33, 34; John 2:1-10).

The custom of arranging marital unions affords an interesting explanation of John 3:29, "The friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled." Engagements for marriage among the Palestinian people are rarely made by the groom and bride, but by the groom's agent, a friend, with the bride's father. This friend of the bridegroom makes all preparation for the wedding; and after the bride has been brought to the bridegroom's home and all ceremonies and social festivities are concluded, the guests and servants all retire from the room, to allow the bride to unveil her face to the bridegroom, who now has the first opportunity to behold her beauty or deformity of features. The friend stands just outside the door, and listens for the bridegroom's voice; and if he utters an expression of satisfaction with the bride's appearance, the friend, "who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly." His work is then an assured success; and

such was John the Baptist's joy when his preparatory work for the Messiah was about to be completed.

Opinions.

Many passages are to be understood in the light of the prevailing opinions when and where the author lived. Thus the command to the sun to "stand still," and the statement, "The sun stayed in the midst of heaven" (Josh. 10:12,13), were based on the opinion at the time that the sun's movements produced the changes of day and night. If this is to be regarded as an historical, and not a poetical, account, the phenomenon was probably not due to a suspension of the sun's movements, but to an increased refraction of light by which the sun remained apparently above the horizon after sunset. The statement, "The sun stayed in the midst of heaven," took its form from the appearance and current opinion.

There seems, likewise, to have been a general opinion among the Jews that the land is underlaid by a flood of water. This perhaps explains the words, "The water that is under the earth" (Ex. 20:4), and "To him that spread forth the earth above the waters" (Ps. 136:6). Possibly some of these expressions are due to the idea that the land is above the sea merely in altitude. In Prov. 3:20, "The skies drop down the dew," the prevalent opinion of the origin of dew is clearly expressed, quite contrary to the true process of its formation. Inspiration did not furnish information on scientific matters, which man might discover for himself. Theologically, the writer of Proverbs was right, the dew, so valuable in Palestine, owes its origin to the knowledge of God (see text in full). No doubt, also, Jewish opinions must account for many such expressions in the Scriptures as, "The four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11:12, et al.), "The four winds" (Mark 13:27), "Foundations of the world" (Ps. 18:15, *et saepe*), "Ends of the earth" (Ps. 48:10, et al.), "Pillars of heaven" (Job. 26:11), "Pillars of the earth" (Ps. 75:3) ; although some of these may be simply poetical. So all literature reflects more or less the opinions of authors.

**History.**

In Isa. 37:37, 38, we find a notable statement that must be interpreted in the light of history more fully developed in other records. "So Sennacherib, king of Assyria, departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his son smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon reigned in his stead." We might from this passage suppose that the death of Sennacherib occurred soon after his return from Palestine; but the king's own record (the Taylor Cylinder) shows that he lived to conduct five military campaigns after his return. These were in the North, East and South, some of them against Babylonia, but none of them concerned the Jews. The Assyrian chronology shows that Sennacherib lived twenty years after his campaign in Palestine. Sharezer, Assyrian Shar-utsur, is thought to be an abbreviation of Nergal- (Ashur- or Bel-) Shar-utsur; for the Assyrians sometimes thus abbreviated names (see Schrader on II Kings 19:37). Abydenus tells us that Sennacherib was assassinated by Adramelus, and was succeeded by Nergilus (Assyrian, Nergal), who was slain by Axerdis (Asarhaddon). If Sharezer's full name was Nergal Shar-utsur, Abydenus has one part of it and Isaiah the other, and Nergilus and Sharezer are the same person—Neriglissor. Esarhaddon tells us in one of his inscriptions that at the conclusion of a battle he was proclaimed king. If this battle was with Sharezer, his brother, as is generally supposed, we can see good reason for his not naming his antagonist. We are assured by many brick inscriptions that Esarhaddon was a son of Sennacherib. Thus in many ways this passage is confirmed and supplemented by profane history, without which a full interpretation would be impossible.

Another example of the value of history in interpretation is found in the parable of the Ten Pounds. Luke 19:12-

27. The whole parable is a picture of the method by which Archelaus received the kingdom of Judea. On the death of his father he left home interests in the hands of friends, and went to Rome to get an appointment from Augustus Caesar. A strong deputation followed him, and protested bitterly against his accession, but in vain. When he returned, he executed many of his citizens who had not supported his cause. While Jesus would not approve the character of Archelaus, yet the history furnished a beautiful parallel to the intended departure of Christ to heaven to be crowned king, and his return at the end of the world to judge his citizens according to their faithfulness.

In like manner the greater part of the O. T. prophets based their addresses to the people on the historical conditions of the times, and much of Paul's epistles is devoted to the application of Christian truth to the need of his readers in their peculiar historical circumstances. In all such cases the better the history is known, the more accurate will be the interpretation.

**Country.**

A study of the question of the extent of the deluge as set forth in Gen. 7:11,19, involves a knowledge of the country. It is generally conceded that man's earliest dwelling-place was western Asia, and this is confirmed by the location of Mt. Ararat where the ark rested. A glance at the map of that district reveals a circle of seas around the land, the Caspian, Black, Mediterranean, Red, and Arabian Seas, and Persian Gulf. It is probable that man had not extended beyond this territory, and it was not necessary that the flood should be more widely extended. The sacred writer tells us that there were forty days of heavy rain, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up. If we may conceive the land sunken as a part of the miracle, all is plain. The heavy rain would furnish a vast amount of fresh water for all fresh water fishes and amphibians, while the sea water pouring in from all sides would quickly and effectually

submerge the highest hills. The statement, "The waters were on the face of the whole earth" (8:9), does not imply a universal flood; for the word for "earth" may be translated "land," and mean a limited country—all that was in sight. So, "All the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered" (7:19), would not indicate a greater extent than we mean when we speak of clouds over the whole heaven.

So the language of the writer (Gen. 19:28) that Abraham looked toward Sodom and saw that "the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace," is better understood by noting that Abraham stood on the height west of the Dead Sea, and looked toward the heights on the other side of the Sea, while the plain in which Sodom was located was hidden far down in the deep gorge of the Jordan, out of which a great volume of smoke rolled as from a dreadful furnace.

**Biology.**

A familiarity with biology may be needed to interpret statements relative to plants and animals. An example is found in Prov. 30:24-28,

"There are four things which are little upon the earth,  
But they are exceeding wise; The ants are a people  
not strong, Yet they provide their food in summer; The  
conies are but a feeble folk, Yet make they their  
houses in the rocks; The locusts have no king, Yet go  
they forth all of them by bands; The lizard taketh hold  
with her hands, Yet is she in king's palaces."

The "ants" are abundant in Palestine, and the species are numerous; and there is no doubt that ants are meant in this passage. It has been denied that ants in Palestine lay up food in summer; but this is erroneous, as several species are very diligent in this respect, and even take care to dry their grain in store when it is wetted by heavy rains. This diligent provision of certain species of ants has been scientifically assured. See Jour. Linnean Soc, Vol. vi. No.

21, p. 29, where it is certified that one species annually cultivates, harvests and preserves a crop.

The "conies," however, are not rabbits, as the English word would indicate; for there are no rabbits in Palestine, and naturalists say they never were there. These "conies" are Syrian hyraxes, not rodents, although their front teeth are much like those of the rabbit. They are covered with brown fur, are very active, live in holes and clefts of the rocks, and are well suited to exemplify the wisdom of weak persons living in safe conditions. The Jews were mistaken in supposing that this animal chews the cud (Deut. 14:7) ; for while it constantly moves its jaws, whetting its teeth, it does not ruminate. The sacred writer does not correct the error, but as in other cases puts the apparent for the actual; this is the same to his purpose, since anyway by the unclown hoof he properly classifies the animal as unclean.

The "locusts" of Scripture are the migratory locusts, which in America are properly called "grasshoppers." They travel in search of food in great swarms that strip all vegetation as they go. They may be seen in the morning marching into a field of tender, growing wheat, moving in strong columns almost as regular as an army; and again in the evening they march out of the field with such order and unanimity as fully to warrant the words of this passage, "The locusts have no leader, yet they go forth all of them by bands." What a lesson of unity to man, who has a leader divine!

The "lizard" ("spider" in the Authorized Version) has been identified by naturalists with the Palestinian gecko, a small lizard that creeps through crevices, haunts houses, and with its prehensile feet from which a venomous secretion exudes, catches flies, upon which it feeds; hence this passage well says that it "takes hold with its hands, and is in kings' houses." This may be intended to suggest to men that if they would live in elegant residences, they must take hold of life's labors with industrious hands.

In Gen. 25:29, 30, an account of the pottage which Jacob sold to Esau for his birthright is given. When Esau saw it, he said, "Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage." The pottage must have been made of some red plant, and this is easily identified with the red lentiles which are abundant in Palestine. This circumstance led to Esau's receiving the name Edom, meaning Red.

Another passage requires a knowledge of trees, Nah. 3:12, "All thy fortresses shall be like fig-trees with the first-ripe figs: if they be shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater." Here the fact that the fig-tree readily drops its ripe fruit when shaken, illustrates the readiness of the strongholds of Assyria to fall when attacked; and the fact that the first-ripe figs are edible early in the summer when other fruits are rare, and the eaters are crowding beneath, anxious to swallow every one that falls (Isa. 28:4), illustrates the anxiety of Assyria's enemies to seize her fortresses at the first opportunity.

<p><b>Circumstances of the Author.</b></p>
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Often a knowledge of the circumstances of an author helps to interpret. Thus: Isaiah bade King Ahaz to ask a sign of Jehovah, to ask it either in the depth or the height above; but Ahaz said, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt Jehovah" (Isa. 7:11,12). What does Ahaz mean by the refusal? The circumstances make it clear. It was a matter of politics. Samaria and Syria are tributary to Assyria, and have formed an alliance to throw off their yoke of allegiance. But they need Judah's help, which thus far Judah has declined. They attempt to force her to assist them by declaring war and threatening invasion. King Ahaz is now alarmed, and has decided to form an alliance with Assyria, and that against the protest of Isaiah, who expresses the divine advice. Ahaz persists in his policy, claiming that his land will otherwise be overrun in spite of Jehovah's promise that it shall be safe. Isaiah meets the king, and tells him to ask a sign from Jehovah that His word is true.

This is reasonable enough; but Ahaz is obstinate, yet pretending to have a good excuse for refusing to ask for a sign—he will not "tempt Jehovah." All the while his stubbornness is a greater indignity to God than asking a sign, and to this stubbornness he adds his refusal to consider divine evidence.

Likewise, circumstances will explain Paul's singular remarks about his own foolishness. "Would that you could bear with me in a little foolishness" (1 Cor. 11:1). "Let no man think me foolish; but if ye do, yet as foolish receive me, that I may glory a little. What I speak, I speak not after the Lord, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of glorying" (verses 16,17). "Yet whereinsoever any is bold (I speak in foolishness), I am bold also" (verse 21). "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as one beside himself) I more" (verse 23). Here the apostle was defending his apostolic authority against accusations preferred against him in the church at Corinth to which he was writing. They had said that he had not made the lordly pretensions that should be expected of an apostle. Paul had, indeed, been very humble when in Corinth. He had even labored with his hands to support himself while preaching to them. He had exalted Christ, and said little of himself, and that always in a modest way. He regarded self-assertion and all boasting as foolishness; but now that some of the Corinthians are disposed to set at naught his apostolic office, and to exalt less worthy persons to a superior rank greatly to the detriment of the cause, Paul finds it necessary to boast a little, and so to deal in "foolishness." Accordingly, he does state his superiority over any ordinary minister with such earnestness that he speaks of himself, not only as foolish, but even beside himself.

Character of the Author.
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The meaning of Pilate's question, "What is truth?" (Jno. 18:38) may be estimated partly by the character of the man. He was a heathen, and little accustomed to seek truth, but trained

to disregard it, especially as an abstraction. Moreover, his violation of justice in the case of Jesus shows that he would be hardly disposed to ask this question with intent to learn. It is more probable therefore, that he asks with a sneer. He would say as much as, "Well, what is truth to me?" This view of his thought is confirmed by the fact that Jesus does not make a response, as we should expect if Pilate had asked for information.

A parallel to this is found in the answer of Agrippa to Paul (Acts 26:28), "With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian," which the A. V. renders, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." The revisers understand these words to be uttered with an air of contempt or banter, "You think you can make a Christian of me in one little speech, do you?" Paul appropriately replied in all earnestness that he wishes that not only Agrippa, but every person present, were as much of a Christian as himself, whether it were brought about by little or by much persuasion. The reckless and dissolute life of Agrippa both before and after this occasion makes it almost certain that he was mocking at Paul's personal appeals. The character of his associates at the time was bad, and hence most unsuited to encourage a serious sentiment in his heart and an open avowal in their presence.

From these examples we deduce the

RULE :—*An interpretation should conform to known laws, customs, opinions, history, country, biology, circumstances and character of the author at the time.*

#### RULE XIV.—*Preconceived Opinions.*

An interpreter is not a reviser or corrector of an author's teaching, and has no right to modify the author's thought to suit his own. It is his office merely to ascertain what the author meant, whether the meaning conform to the inter-

<p>True Office of an Interpreter.</p>
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preter's views or not. Let the author stand responsible for his own meaning, true or false, consistent or inconsistent, whether in the Bible or in any other production. The interpreter's only question is, What does this author mean to say? The moment he begins to consider how well the author agrees with his own views or with any standard whatever, he ceases to perform the duties of an interpreter, and assumes the role of a commentator, theologian, or critic. An interpreter's view may be right, and an author's wrong; but that must not affect the interpretation. The interpreter is a judge to decide what the meaning is, not an advocate to plead for this or that teaching; he deals with hermeneutics, not dogmatics. Accordingly, the interpreter must not permit his interpretation to be influenced by a preconceived opinion.

**An Example.**  
**Luke 5:36-39**

An example of a familiar passage which is notably misinterpreted by most people who approach it with a mistaken opinion, is Luke 5:36-39, where Jesus conveys his thought by the figure of putting a new piece of cloth on an old garment, and putting new wine into old wineskins. What is his thought? His purpose reveals his thought (according to Rule viii). The Pharisees had asked him why his disciples did not fast as others did; and he had answered that now while he was with them it was not a suitable time to fast; but that when he should be taken away it would be a time of mourning, and hence an appropriate season for fasting. The Pharisees had the absurd custom of fasting at set times, certain appointed days of the week or month (see Luke 18:12), whether at a time of mourning or a time of joy. Their tradition about fasting was worthless. It was not a part of the Mosaic Law, which did not require fasting;\* but was a foolish self-infliction of later times. Many

\*The only exception to this is the command "to afflict their souls" on the day of atonement. The regular Hebrew word to fast (*tsum*) does not occur in the Pentateuch. The Jews had by tradition twenty-nine annual, and two weekly, fasts. See Reland, "Antiq." p. 270.

fasts had indeed been observed by divine direction or approval in time of grief, but no *regular day* had ever been divinely fixed for periodical observance. Accordingly, Jesus set their fast days at naught as inappropriate till a time of mourning. To enforce this thought of inappropriateness, he illustrates it by the inappropriate use of a new patch on an old garment, which made the garment worse, and the new wine in old wineskins which only bursted them. He follows with a third illustration of the same point, "No man having drunk old wine desireth new; for he saith, The old is good." The new is out of place when one has just been drinking what is better; so fasting is out of place when one is happy.

How all this is changed when the interpreter reads into the passage a preconceived opinion that the illustrations ought to relate to Judaism and Christianity! The subject must be suddenly dropped at the end of verse 35; and the close connection of verse 36 indicated by "and . . . also," must be disregarded, so that a new theme not under consideration may be illustrated in an abrupt way, and without the least hint of what is meant. The fasting of the Pharisees had nothing to do with the old law except as a corruption, and could not properly suggest to the Savior that it was necessary to contrast the new; but rather he saw the need of correcting a perversion of a custom with which the law was not concerned. Questions of the independence of Christianity and Judaism had not yet arisen when this passage was uttered. Even the Lord's explanations of the law in his sermon on the mount were after this; and had not discussions sprung up later on this subject, it may be doubted that this interpretation could ever have been advanced.

Rom. 9:11-13

Another passage that has been often turned aside from its original intent by a theory of interpreters is Rom. 9:11-13, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or

bad, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. Even as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." The true interpretation cannot be gained by an appeal to the passage to prove or disprove any theory of election and foreordination; but by a careful study of the three chapters (9 to 11) in which the subject in hand is discussed. It is apparent in all these chapters that Paul is explaining the fact that many Israelites have rejected Christ and salvation, although they were God's chosen people. He affirms in 9:6 that this does not indicate that God's word, that He had chosen Abraham's seed, has come to naught; for not all of Abraham's sons were chosen, but Isaac only (verse 7) : and not both of Isaac's sons, for Esau was rejected and Jacob chosen. God was not even obliged to choose between these, but did so freely before their birth, before they could do anything to put God under obligation to either of them. This point was important to Paul's purpose, which is to show that *God is free to reject*. God was also free to spare Pharaoh till he was fully ready for destruction. So God was free to do what he would with Israel, as they deserved His good or ill treatment. If they proved faithful, God was free to accept them; if they proved unfaithful, He was free to reject them. In 10:21, the *reason* for rejection appears: "All the day long did I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

Another feature of the choice of Jacob and rejection of Esau is, that it pertained to an office, and not to salvation. Possibly Esau may be lost and Jacob saved; but this choice did not look to that end at all, and God never makes a choice to that end without regard to character and deeds. Jacob was elected to be the head of a people, just as George Washington was chosen to be the first president of the United States. The question of salvation is not involved in such elections. The Jewish people were chosen to prepare

for the Messiah and bring Him into the world; but if they rejected this Messiah, their election would not avail for salvation.

No opinion or discussion should turn the interpretation of any word aside from its original intent even by the slightest shade of difference. It is, therefore, necessary to interpret without any regard to preconceived opinions. We may accordingly state the

*RULE:—An interpretation must not be influenced by a preconceived opinion.*

**RULE XV.—*Parsimony of Miracles.***

**Rarity of Miracles.**

It is an indisputable fact that the natural world is under natural laws; and man has no right to expect frequent departures from their uniformity. A miracle, however, is not a suspension or violation of these laws, but a direct act of a supernatural, and hence superhuman, power to accomplish what natural forces may not do. When a man lifts a book, no law of nature is suspended or violated; rather the force of gravity is all the while constant. If God should lift a mountain by direct act, it would be a miracle; but gravitation might remain constant as before. It would be only a superior force modifying the results of natural forces. It is agreed by all that such occurrences are rare; and hence for only rare and important reasons. It follows that any author who relates an event is presumably referring to a natural event, unless he ascribes it to a supernatural source, or the character of the event clearly exceeds natural causes.

**Joseph's Recognition.**

The account of Joseph in some parts clearly implies superhuman knowledge, as when he interprets Pharaoh's dreams, and foretells the seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine; but when in Gen. 42:8, we are told that his brethren on meeting him in Egypt did not know him, but

he recognized them, are we to assume a miracle? Not at all; for while they were not expecting to find Joseph in such an exalted position, he had good reasons to expect them, and would the more readily recognize them by their shepherd dress and manners, and by their number. Moreover, he was only seventeen years old when he was sold, just at an age to change appearances most in some twenty-two years; but some of his brothers were much older when he had last seen them, and would change less. Under such circumstances, only a natural memory would be needed to recognize them. We may be sure that supernatural knowledge will not be given where it is not needed.

**David's  
Victory.**

In I Sam. 30:17, David's victory over the Amalekites is recorded. "And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day; and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men who rode upon camels and fled." No doubt the providence of God, if not also His miraculous power, was sometimes exercised in David's behalf; but it is not necessary to assume divine help in this case. Many such victories by leaders in no sense devoted to God have been won; and no person would ascribe them to supernatural forces. What David and his men could do themselves, God did not need to do for them; and, doubtless, did not do.

**The Draught  
of Fishes.**

An event is not miraculous just because it is connected with another event that is miraculous. In John 21:1-11, the apostle relates the visit of Jesus to his disciples at the Sea of Galilee early one morning after they had been fishing all night and had caught nothing. Jesus said, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find." They obeyed, and were hardly able to draw the net for the multitude of fishes. Here the writer clearly regards Jesus' knowledge as supernatural in contrast with the experience of skilled fishermen; but we may not infer that the presence of the

fishes was a miracle. On the contrary, many travelers have described great shoals of fishes in that sea, such as this, which may have come along in a way entirely natural just as Jesus was speaking. See Wilson's *Recovery of Jerusalem*, p. 341.

These principles and examples suggest what is known among scholars as the "Law of Parsimony," expressed in the following

*RULE:—An event is to be regarded as miraculous, only when it may not be consistently interpreted otherwise.*

## CHAPTER V.

### BULES FOR MEANING OF WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS.

#### RULE XVI.—*The Context.*

Meaning  
of Context

The *Context* of a word or expression is that part of a discourse which is immediately connected with it, or that precedes or follows it. The parts which are closely connected are the *immediate context*; while those of another paragraph or chapter form the *remote context*. In most writings and utterances there is such a connection of thought in clauses, sentences, and paragraphs, that one part will to some extent indicate the meaning of another part. In a list of proverbs or collection of unrelated scraps of thoughts, the preceding or following parts may not furnish any clue to the meaning of any sentence, or word in the sentence.

Words and  
Adjuncts.

Often the meanings of words are clearly implied by their adjuncts. This will appear in a study of a few passages containing the Greek word *pistis*, usually translated *faith*. In Matt. 8:10, Jesus says of the Roman Centurion, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Here confidence is meant, as the adjuncts "found" and "great" clearly imply. But in Acts 17:31, Paul is speaking of the judgment of the world "by the man whom God hath ordained," and he adds, "whereof he has given assurance unto all men in that he has raised him from the dead." Here *pistis* is not translated "faith," but properly "assurance;" for the adjuncts "hath given" and "unto all men," cannot be affirmed of "faith," but are well suited to such "assurance" as an

indisputable proof furnishes. In Jude 3, "Exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints," the word translated "faith" is the same *pistis*, but the adjuncts show a meaning very different from those in the previous examples. Here it is something to be "contended for," and something "delivered once for all to the saints;" and this can be only the system of Christian truth which was to be believed. Thus the adjuncts of a word in the context indicate its meaning.

Statement and Reason.
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A passage obscure to many persons, but not difficult, is found in John 8:47, "He that is of God heareth the words of God; for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God." The thought turns on the word "hear." A statement, "ye hear them not," is followed by the reason, "because ye are not of God." The word "hear" cannot be literal in the sense of receiving sound by ear", for any one not deaf could do that; and the reason, "ye are not of God," would not apply. But "hear" clearly means "heed;" and hence their being "not of God," but disposed against God, furnishes a good reason. It is an every day truth that a man indisposed toward the good will not heed the words of divine admonition.

Question and Answer.
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An answer often explains, the meaning of a word in a question. A simple example of this is in Luke 10:29-37, in which a lawyer asks, "Who is my neighbor?" and the Savior answers by relating the parable of the Good Samaritan. The lawyer had inquired what he should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus told him to love the Lord with all his heart and his neighbor as himself. The lawyer, "willing to justify himself," not for information, asked, "Who is my neighbor?" Evidently Jesus perceived that the man loved his neighbors only within a narrow circle; and gave the parable to illustrate to him the broad meaning of "neighbor" as including the worst of enemies. Even a despised Samaritan might be

more of a neighbor to a Jew than his own priests and Levites.

Conversely, the question in this case helps to interpret the answer. Some have thought Jesus meant to illustrate his own merciful mission by the good Samaritan. No doubt Jesus' mission was to help fallen men; but this parable was not intended to teach that fact, but to answer that lawyer's important question, "Who are included in the word 'neighbor?'" The parable answers, everybody that needs our love and help.

**Antithesis.**

An antithesis is an expressed contrast; and the opposition of thought implied in words contrasted may serve to show the meaning of a word in doubt. Thus the word "simple" in Rom. 16:19, "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple unto that which is evil." To be "wise unto what is good" is to know much of the good by experience. The opposite of this is to be inexperienced; and this is the meaning of "simple" in the passage. This agrees well with the etymology of the Greek word "simple" in this passage—*akeraios*, not-mixed, innocent.

In Rom. 10:20, 21, "I was found of them that sought me not; I became manifest unto them that asked not of me. But as to Israel he saith, All the day long did I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people," we have, "them that sought me not" in contrast with "Israel." The former cannot, then, be Israel nor Israelites; and this proves them to be Gentiles. The thought of the passage becomes clear: The Gentiles who were not seeking God before the gospel came, are now accepting salvation; while the Jews, who should have honored their privileges with holy lives, are disobedient, as in Isaiah's day, and lost by the rejection of Christianity.

Note Rom. 2:13, "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Here the contrast between "hearers" and "doers," shows

that "hearers" are not those who heed, for they would be doers. The "hearers" are those who have opportunity to know the law, but do it not.

**Parallelism.**

Since Hebrew poetry is almost always in this form, it is not surprising if parallelism be an important factor in Sacred Hermeneutics. The nature of parallelism has been seen under Rule VI. An example of its interpretation is seen in Job 31:26, 27,

"If I beheld the sun when it shined, Or the moon walking in brightness; And my heart hath been secretly enticed, And my mouth hath kissed my hand: This were an iniquity."

Here kissing the hand is parallel to secret enticement of the heart. It must have a related meaning, but not necessarily the same. From the reference in the previous lines to the "sun" and "moon" as the enticers it is clear that he means an enticement to idolatrous worship of these objects. If now the enticement is idolatrous, the parallel kissing is probably idolatrous. This is correct, for we are informed in history that kissing the hand was an early and common practice among the Syrians in the worship of false gods. Job avows that he never indulged in that wickedness.

Isa. 46:11, "Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country." Here the "ravenous bird" is explained by the parallelism to be a "man." By comparison with 45:1, we refer this prophecy to Cyrus.

**Repeated Words.**

When a word is repeated in a passage or context, the writer may be presumed in each repetition to have the same idea in mind and to use the word in the same sense. The very principle of continuity of thought which underlies all contextual interpretation applies in this case. The word "eternal" is repeated in Matt. 25:46, in which the R. V. imitates the Greek, "And these shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." Whatever may be the exact

nature of this punishment, it is here virtually affirmed to be as limitless as the life of the saints. Another instance of this same word is found in Hebrews 9:14,15, "Who through the eternal spirit offered himself . . . that . . . they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." Here also the inheritance is deemed as durable as the Spirit of God.

A double instance of a repeated word meets us in Rom. 8:1-13, where "flesh" occurs nine times in the sense of a disposition to evil prompted by bodily desires; and in Rom. 9:3, 5, 8, where "flesh" occurs three times in the sense of natural descent. In neither context does the word deviate from its meaning.

A notable example is found in Matt. 3:10-12, "Every tree that bringeth forth not good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire . . . He shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost and in fire . . . He will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire." Here "fire" occurs three times, and in the first and third places it refers to the punishment of the wicked. What is the baptism of fire? Only for a very strong reason could we understand it to be anything else than that which shall consume the fruitless "tree" and the worthless "chaff" mentioned in the context.

Another case is so important that we may not pass it by in silence. The Greek word *diatheke* is translated "covenant" everywhere (about thirty times) in the Revised Version of the New Testament, except in Heb. 9:16,17, where it is rendered "testament;" and in the context (verses 15, 20), of this passage the word is repeated three times, and rendered "covenant." The question is, should the word in the same connection be translated three times "covenant" and twice "testament"? Why not "covenant" everywhere? The answer is, Because the passage seems to imply that Jesus made a *will* by which the eternal inheritance is disposed to his people. Note the language, "And

for this cause he is mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it; for a testament is of force where there hath been death; for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth. Wherefore even the first *covenant* hath not been dedicated without blood." The word *covenant* throughout the Bible means a contract, not a will; but here seems to be a general principle, true not of contracts, but only of wills, that "there must of necessity be the death of him that made it," that it does not "avail while he that made it liveth." How can death be necessary to a covenant? and why must he that made it die? This is regarded by many scholars as very strong proof that *diatheke* means a will in verses 16,17. But it must mean covenant in verse 15; for the new covenant is contrasted with the "first covenant" which is the Mosaic covenant (compare 8:5-7), and *it* was not a *will*, but a *contract* (Ex. 24:3-7). From these considerations it would seem that the writer uses *diatheke* in two senses in the same connection.

But this is strongly contested for the following reasons: (1) The argument in the whole connection relates to the two covenants, the Mosaic and Christian; and it would be illogical to apply to covenants as a general principle what is true only of wills, hence illogical to introduce wills here. (2) The word *diatheke* does not elsewhere seem to mean testament in the N. T., nor in some 200 occurrences in the LXX. (3) The change of meaning from covenant to testament and back to covenant (verse 20) without warning, is abrupt and unnatural. (4) The testament was not a Hebrew idea, but Greek; and this epistle is almost thoroughly Hebraistic in thought. It may be doubted whether the Hebrew language had a word for testament. The

Hebrews *did not make wills*. (5) The death in verse 15 is expiatory, "for redemption of transgressions;" but the death of a testator in verse 16 would not be so at all; so the latter could not be a general principle covering the former as the logic seems to require. (6) The whole connection is incongruous: if we understand a testament in verse 16, Jesus must be the testator that dies (see verses 14, 15) ; but the most emphatic idea in verse 15 is that he is a mediator; but a testator being one of the parties is not a mediator. (7) The word "covenant" throughout the passage will make good sense. In the Jewish idea of a covenant he that made it died, probably in the sense that he agreed to die if he should not keep the covenant, or counted himself dead to any alteration of it; and this was represented by the killing of animals as in Gen. xv and Ex. 24:5-8. So Jesus as the representative of men dies, and his blood seals the covenant as at Sinai. This explains the phrase "the blood of the covenant" which it was fatal to despise (Heb. 10:29). It also explains Paul's remark about drinking condemnation in taking the Lord's supper unworthily (1 Cor. 11:28-29), seeing that the wine represents the "the new covenant in Jesus' blood" (verse 25). These considerations account for all the requirements of the text; but it leaves out of the New Testament the idea of a *testament* altogether, and suggests that the Apostolic writings might more appropriately be called the New Covenant.

Exceptions.
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There are exceptions to the principle that a word repeated in close connection must have the same meaning. For example, in Matt. 8:22, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead," where "dead" means first the spiritually dead, and then the naturally dead. Another example is in Luke 8:20,21, "Thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to see thee. But he answered and said unto them, my mother and my brethren are these who hear the word of God, and do it."

Here "mother" and "brethren" are used in two senses, the natural and the spiritual. Most cases of the kind are plays on words; and the nature of the case usually reveals the change of meaning.

<p>Trend of Thought.</p>
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The most important of contextual aids is the trend of thought, which, while most valuable as discerned in the immediate context, may be profitably studied in the more remote. If a proposed meaning of any word does not accord with the evident drift of ideas in the passage, it may well be suspected of error; and the interpreter should seek a more appropriate significance. If we inquire into the meaning of "work" in 1 Cor. 3:15, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet as through fire," we shall see at once that "work" cannot be a bodily or mental exercise; for that could not be burned. It must be the result of effort, that which is produced; but this cannot be a mental product, for the trend of the thought through verses 5-15, relates wholly to the work of preachers of the gospel. Still one might doubt whether this work is the preacher's doctrine or his converts. To decide this we must again observe the trend of thought. "I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (verse 6). God does not give an increase of doctrine, but of converts. "Ye are God's husbandry, God's building" (verse 9). The building must be that which is built, and that is the work, the gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble, the "ye," the converts who shall be "tried by fire" (verses 12:15). But how they be burned? The fire of trial, persecution and temptation, quickly disposes of those converts that are unworthy, as literal fire consumes literal stubble. But how the worker suffer loss, and yet be saved? Just as a man in a burning building may lose the building totally, but he may escape by running through the fire; so the minister may lose all his converts, and yet by his own virtue avoid condemnation by a very narrow escape.

For another example, let us seek the meaning of "sin willfully" in Heb. 10:26, "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remain-eth no more sacrifice for sin." Does the writer mean that any willful sin is hopelessly fatal? Certainly not, for who could be saved? But note the context: "After that we have received the knowledge of the truth." This means after we have become Christians. But is every willful sin fatal to a Christian? The context again will show. "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin," implies that the willful sin in the writer's mind is one that sets aside Christ's sacrifice. In verse 29 he is speaking of such as have "trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing." This shows that it is the sin of apostasy from Christianity. This conclusion is confirmed by the drift of the thought throughout the first eleven chapters of Hebrews, all of which seems to have been written with the main intent to prevent Jewish Christians from forsaking Christianity and relapsing into Judaism.

<p>Summary of Principles.</p>
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These numerous examples reveal the following principles: 1. The meaning of a word should harmonize with its *adjuncts*. 2. If a *reason* is connected with a statement, the meaning in one part may be manifested by the thought expressed in the other part. 3. An *answer* will often disclose the meaning of a word in a question. 4. A word in one part of an *antithesis* or *parallelism* will usually be interpreted by the corresponding words in the other part. 5. If a word be *repeated* in close connection with its former occurrence, its meaning should be regarded the same, unless the nature of the case forbid. 6. The meaning of any word or expression should accord with the *trend of the thought* in the discourse.

All these principles may be included in one RULE:—*An expression must be interpreted to suit the context.*

RULE XVII.—*Usage.*Etymological  
Meaning.

We have seen in Axiom IV the influence of usage on the meaning of words. In a careful study of a word, it is proper to begin with what scholars call its *etymon*, its root and earliest significance. This root meaning is called the *etymological* meaning. Most English words have been derived or transferred from some other language; and, hence, their etymological meaning must be sought in the tongue in which they arose. An example is this word "etymological;" from the Greek *etumologikos*, an adjective based on the noun *etumologia*, the analysis of a word to find its origin; and *etumologia* is composed of *etumos*, real, true, and *logos*, a word. Thus the etymological meaning of the word "etymological" is, pertaining to the *real word* (the root-word). The etymology often helps to understand an author, especially if we have reason to believe that he considered the etymology when he wrote. In Isa. 7:14, it is said that a child should be born whose name should be "Immanuel," *El*, God, *immanu*, with us. The fact developed in the context that the child should be associated with a deliverance of Judah from Syria and Ephraim, suggests strongly that the name was to memorialize God's presence with Judah.

## Drift by Usage.

Under usage a word may drift from its etymological meaning. The word "angel," Latin *angelus*, Greek *angelos*, meant a *messenger* as early as the days of Homer, 900 B. C. When the LXX. was written the word was applied to the messengers of God, and came to be the regular word for the heavenly messengers. Current usage has almost limited the word to the latter meaning.

Some words drift entirely away from their significance. For example, the Romans had a threshing-sledge, consisting of a platform studded underneath with flinty or iron

teeth, called a *tribulum*. From this arose a Latin verb *tribulo*, to press, to oppress. From this came the word *tribulatio*, our word *tribulation* (Matt. 13:21, et al.). The threshing instrument has been lost from view, and in the word which remains the idea of human affliction has entirely taken its place.

*Pneuma*, from *pneo*, to breathe, originally meant *breath*; then came to mean a zephyr, a wind; and finally was used for *spirit*, in which sense, with rare exceptions, it is used throughout the N. T. where it is not once used in the original sense.

The word *religion*, found only three times in the Bible (Acts 26:5; James 1:26, 27), has been the subject of much etymological discourse by preachers and writers. It is a Latin word, and from Augustine (430 A. D.) to the present has generally been derived from *re*, again, back, and *ligare*, to bind; which would mean a binding back to God. If this were the correct and the final meaning, the holy angels would not have a religion; for they were never separated from God. Now Cicero (Nature of the Gods, 2, 28, 72) derives it from *re-legere*, to go through again, to read over, to recite; as, prayer, praise, etc. But how much light does all this shed upon the passages in the N. T. where the word occurs? None; for they do not relate to binding back, nor to reciting" prayer or praise, but to duty, to a benevolent and useful life. Thus the usage in Scripture sets aside the etymological meaning. Perhaps many who have dwelt much on the etymology of this word in their effort to get the Apostle's thought, quite forgot that the Apostles did not write in Latin, and hence did not use this word at all—that it is only a translation. The original word was the Greek *threskeia*, which simply means devout service to God. It is probably from *treo*, to tremble; and we may compare the thought in Isa. 66:2, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that *trembleth* at my word."

From all these examples we may properly conclude that while etymology is valuable in word-study, and sometimes evolves a clear interpretation, it is always only the germ from which usage develops the flower and fruit. Hence we may form the

RULE:—*In interpreting, the etymological meaning of a word must give place to the current established usage.*

RULE XVIII.—*Determining the Usage.*

Consulting  
Occurrences.

The primary importance of usage in seeking the meaning of words demands a consideration of the principles on which we may determine the usage. It is clear that the usage cannot be ascertained without consulting the occurrences of the word in literal or oral speech. But it must also be evident that all occurrences are not equally valuable. If we should wish to determine the meaning of *logos*, translated "word" in 1 John 1:1, "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the word of life," we might study every place where it occurs (337 times), and be confused to find that the meanings are not always the same, but that it is translated, "word," "saying," "account," "work," "matter," "reason," "cause," "doctrine," etc. Close examination, however, reveals that the usage of the word in many other passages is very different from the usage here, and that they will not at all help to interpret this passage. Here *logos* is a something that may be seen, heard and handled. It manifests life, and "was from the beginning." Nowhere else, except in one passage, do we find a similar use of *logos*. In John 1:1-18, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . the Word became flesh and dwelt among us . . . And John bare witness of him . . . This is He that cometh after

me . . . the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father," the *Logos* is clearly the Son of God. This passage is from the same author as the one in hand, is in the same style, has many similar statements, and points evidently to the same *Logos*. From this we may learn that the most valuable occurrences are those on the same subject, by the same author and in similar style.

Another  
Example.

Let us seek the meaning of "Comforter," John 14:16, "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth." The immediate context defines it as the "Spirit of Truth," who shall be with the disciples, but whom the world of unconverted persons "cannot receive." This might mean the Holy Spirit, or a disposition for truth; it is not decisive. In verse 26 of the same chapter we have, "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you." Here we learn that it is the Holy Spirit, and that He shall be a teacher and a reminder to the apostles. This passage being in the remote context is more valuable than if written in some other book. But why is the word "Comforter" used for the Holy Spirit? We find the word in John 15:26, "When the Comforter is come . . . which proceedeth from the Father, He shall bear witness of me." This must be the same Comforter, for this chapter is clearly connected with the former; and we here learn that He is also a witness of Christ. In 16:7, He is again mentioned, and His work of convicting the world is noted. This cannot be by the Spirit going directly to worldly men, for we learned in 15:17, that the world cannot receive Him. It must be through the preaching of the Apostles. We next find the word in 1 John 2:1, where the Revised Version translates, "Advocate" instead of "Comforter," but it is the same word in the Greek (*parakletos*). Here the word is applied to Christ in heaven.

This suggests that while the Spirit is advocating the cause of God in the Christian, Christ is advocating the cause of the Christian with God. This last passage is by the same writer, and is a valuable test of his usage of the word. In none of these texts has the idea of comforting been prominent. We may next consult occurrences in other writers; but we do not find this word elsewhere in the New Testament. Outside the New Testament, the LXX. and the writings of Philo are similar in style and language to the New Testament. In Philo this word occurs often: "I grant you full forgiveness . . . you need no other intercessor" (Joseph to his brethren, *De Josepho*, c. 40, vol. ii. p. 75) ; "It was necessary that he (the High Priest) who was consecrated to the Father of the world should employ as his intercessor the Son who is most perfect in virtue" (*Vit. Mos.* iii. 14, vol. ii. p. 155) ; and it usually means an advocate or intercessor, sometimes merely a helper. In classic Greek it usually signifies, an advocate, an attorney at law. Probably helper or advocate is the meaning in John, rather than comforter. Thus we might trace the word farther and farther from the passage with which we began. But the more distant occurrences are less likely to give the same meaning than those more closely related. This prepares us to state the general

RULE:—*To determine the usage of a word, consult its occurrences in literature, and depend most on those nearest the passage in point of context, authorship, date and character of composition.*

RULE XIX.—*Rare Words.*

"Azazel."

Some words are so rare that if the context does not suggest their meaning, the interpreter may be perplexed to discover it; for no other occurrences can be found that will assist him. In this case

recourse must be had to other sources of information perhaps not so reliable, but the best that remain. The word "*Azazel*" in Lev. 16:8, 10, 26, is used nowhere else in the O. T. Aaron was to cast lots over two goats, one lot to be for Jehovah, the other for Azazel; the latter goat was to be sent away for Azazel into the wilderness, "and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a solitary land; and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness" (verse 22). Nothing in the context gives a certain clue to the meaning; and with no other occurrences, we can consult no other context. The A. V. translates it "scape-goat;" but Azazel was not the goat itself, but one goat was for Azazel as the other was for Jehovah. In the antithesis one "for" must mean the same as the other "for." Some regard Azazel as a demon or the devil; but no other passage in the Bible hints at any ceremonies for the devil by divine command, either in respect, or in disrespect for him. To render formal service to satan or to any demon is not the genius of Judaism or of Christianity. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Hebrew etymology furnishes no information of value in defining *Azazel*. The ancient versions imply that it is the goat (LXX., *apompaios*, the averter of ill; Vulgate, *caper ernisarius*, the goat sent away; and so virtually Theodotion Symmachus and Aquila), which we have seen to be an unscientific interpretation, not a translation. There is an Arabic word *azazel* of rare use meaning an evil demon. The Arabic tongue is akin to the Hebrew; but this use of the word may have arisen from a misunderstanding of this very rite among the Jews, for the Arabs corrupted many Jewish ideas. Probably the Arabic affords us a key in the etymology. The Arabic verb *azal* means to remove, to separate; and the noun may be simply reduplicated, *az-azal* and mean *separation*. This will make good sense throughout. The one goat was for Jehovah, as a sin offering; the other for separation, as a symbolic bearer of the sins away

from the people. We may thus trace a word through its etymology, versions and kindred tongues.

**R'em.** Another doubtful word is *r'em*, which occurs nine times (Num. 23:22; 24:8; Deut. 33:17; Ps. 22:21; 29:6; 92:10; Job 39:9,10; Isa. 34:7); and while the contexts show that it was a strong, wild untamable, active animal with more than one horn, they do not show exactly what species of animal it was. The A. V. has "unicorn," which is a fabulous animal with one horn, but this is inconsistent with Deut. 33:17, which says, "horns of the r'em." The etymology adds little. The verb *ra'arn* means to be high, but does not identify the animal. The Versions give no assistance, for they commit the error that was copied by the A. V.: LXX., *monokeros*, one-horned; Vulgate, *unicorn*. In kindred tongues, the Arabic *rimu* is a large antelope; but this does not suit the great strength, fierceness and power of horns implied in our passages. The Assyrian *rimu* means a wild-ox, which exactly suits all the conditions of our word. As the Assyrian was closely related to the Hebrew, the R. V. has with good reason adopted this translation. These examples sufficiently illustrate the

RULE:—*The meaning of a rare word, not decided by usage, should be sought first in the etymology, then in early versions, and lastly in kindred tongues.*

#### RULE XX.—*Technical Terms.*

**Their Nature.** A technical word is one which is used with a certain meaning only in a particular science, art, or occupation. It is apparent that such a meaning cannot be discovered by noting either general usage or the etymology; but that nothing less will avail than a careful observation of the usage among persons engaged in the special sphere where the technical meaning is employed.

Book of  
I Corinthians.

The word *euangelion*, gospel, originally meant a *reward for good news*, and later it meant *good news*; but in strictly Christian usage it came to mean the particular *message of Christ* to man. We may readily discern this meaning in Matt. 26:13, "Wherever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world," compared with Matt. 4:23, "preaching the gospel of the kingdom." The latter passage and others like it explain the meaning of the word in the former by adding "of the kingdom." So in 1 Cor. 15:1-4, the writer speaks of the gospel which he had preached, and plainly sums up its leading facts, "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." This meaning of "gospel" is not in use aside from Christianity, and is therefore technical.

"Saint."

Another example is the word "saint" as used often in the Bible. The original Hebrew and Greek words carry the general meaning, *not common, dedicated, hallowed, sacred*; but in the technical use as applied to persons it is, one devoted to God, one enjoying divine favor, a Christian. This sense is apparent in Rom. 1:7, "To all that are in Rome, called to be saints," and in 1 Cor. 1:2, "Them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints."

Other examples are: "sound," to cast forth the lead, to test the depth of water, as used in Acts 27:28, "They sounded and found twenty fathoms." This term belongs to navigation. "Coming" (Greek *parousia*, presence) is applied to the return of Christ to occur at some time future to the N. T. writers. The word is used in 1 Cor. 16:17; 2 Cor. 10:10; Phil. 2:12, in the usual sense of *presence*; but in many passages it has the technical sense, the Second Advent of the Lord, which shall be attended with the resurrection of the righteous dead and the transformation of the living (1 Thes. 4:15-17).

In all such cases, the specific meaning is learned, not from the etymology, nor from current usage, but from a direct observation of the usage among writers on the subject in which the specific meaning is found. Hence the

RULE :—*The meaning of a technical word must be ascertained by its usage among authors in its particular sphere.*

RULE XXI.—*Linguistic Peculiarities.*

It's Communica-  
tions and  
Authors.

In almost every production there are some peculiarities; and in some speeches and writings there are many linguistic features rarely met elsewhere. Thus, in II Cor. 9:9,10, the word "righteousness" is clearly used in the sense of beneficence; but it is not so used elsewhere in the New Testament, nor in the Old Testament, except perhaps Ps. 112:9 and Dan. 4:27, where the Aramic *tsidekah* has that sense. But Paul's thought is important: God, who supplies seed for sowing and bread for food, will supply His people with the means of benevolence if they will use it, and make them rich in happy results.

The same word "righteousness" is used by Paul in Rom. 5:21, in another peculiar sense. He lends us the key to this meaning by informing us in 4:5 that "faith is reckoned for righteousness," and afterwards (verse 11) calling it "the righteousness of the faith." He means then not innocence, as if one had never sinned at all, but an imputed righteousness, or disregarding of guilt on account of faith, and especially faith in Christ. This peculiar meaning of the word is found often in Romans and Galatians, but not in the writings of other authors.

Compound  
Words.

Sometimes the peculiar customs of a language respecting compound words will furnish a key to their meaning. In Col. 2:23, we find the word "will-worship" (Greek *ethelo-threskeia*) in which the later part of the compound is the main word

and the former part a modifier, telling what kind of worship, one that proceeds from the personal will of the worshipper without consideration for the will of the divinity; this is true of the Greek word also. In Col. 2:14 we have the Greek word *cheiro-graphon*, hand-written; and in this word again the latter part is the main part of the compound, while the former is the modifier. In 1 Peter 3:8, occurs the word *tapeino-phron*, humble-minded, in which the first part modifies the second. This, although there are some exceptions (as *phil-adelphia*, brotherly love), is the general law in Greek and English compounds. But not so in Hebrew words. Thus, *tsalmaweth*, Ps. 23:4, "Though I walk through the valley of the *shadow of death*," the former part of the word means shade, the latter part death, the whole means *death-shade*, i. e., a very deep shadow or sorrow; so that the latter part modifies the former. The same is true of the word *mapel-Yah*, darkness-Jehovah, darkness of Jehovah, very great darkness (Jer. 2:31). Compare also *shalhebeth-Yah*, flame of Jehovah, a terrific flame, probably lightning. In all these Hebrew compounds the latter part is the modifier, which is the general rule; and Hebrew compounds otherwise doubtful in meaning must be supposed to follow this analogy.

Idioms.
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By an idiom we mean any usage or construction peculiar to a certain language, especially a form of expression or a phrase adopted by the usage of a language with a signification other than its grammatical or logical use. An example of such an idiom is found in 1 John 2:22, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is not the Christ?" Such is the literal of the Greek original; but in English the meaning is the reverse, and the word "not" must be omitted. There is a negative implied in the word "deny," and it is a Greek idiom to emphasize the negative thought by inserting other negative words freely; but in the English each added negative reverses the meaning. We must interpret according to the

idiom of the original, rather than from a literal translation and according to our own custom.

An idiom of the Hebrew language which has a prominent place in the interpretation of important passages, is a repetition of a verbal idea for emphasis; as, "In blessing I will bless thee," meaning, I will greatly bless thee; "In multiplying I will multiply thy seed," meaning, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly (Gen. 22:17). Another notable example is in Amos 9:8, "I will destroy it from off the face of the earth, saving that I will not (destroying destroy) utterly destroy." God will destroy Israel, but He is not disposed to exterminate the nation, but chooses to reserve a remnant to bring to pass His age-long purpose.

Sometimes the repetition indicates repeated action; as, when Lot expostulates with the violent men of Sodom, he is met with the taunt, "This fellow (Lot) came in to sojourn (in Sodom), and he (judges judging) is always playing the judge!" (Gen. 19:9). The Hebrew often expressed the idea of continuance by adding the verb *go* to the principal verb; as, "the waters were assuaged, going assuaging" (Gen. 8:3). Translating literally, Abraham "was growing great (rich) and went, going and growing great, until that he was exceeding great (Gen. 26:13).

These are only a few idioms out of a numberless host that might be found in the Greek and Hebrew texts as well as in the English Bible. Only a careful study of lexicons and grammars will make the reader familiar with the most important of them. The meanings of special forms of nouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs, and participles; the force of tenses, moods, and other forms of verbs, and the rare combinations of words with peculiar significance, are too numerous even to classify in this connection. Every Bible student will feel a deep need of a knowledge of the original tongues till he has acquired it.

The Greek word "*numphe*," bride, is used by Jesus, Matthew (10:35) and Luke (12:53) in a sense which the Word does not bear in classic Greek, "daughter-in-law."

This meaning is clearly borrowed from the LXX., where it is used indiscriminately to represent the Hebrew *kallah* which means either bride or daughter-in-law. It is also used thus in Josephus. It therefore belongs to the Hellenistic dialect, which is the style of Greek spoken and written by the Jews. There are many such dialectic meanings in the N. T. Greek; such as, *diatheke* regularly in Attic Greek meant a will, a testament; but in the N. T. it means a covenant, which in Attic was *suntheke*; so *anathema*, not merely what is consecrated to God, as in Attic, but also what is to be destroyed, as in Rom. 9:3, "I could wish myself *anathema* from Christ for my brethren's sake;" where it is clear that Paul is moved, if it were possible, to allow himself to be destroyed by a separation from Christ rather than see his kinsmen, the Jews, perish. So the word *glossa*, tongue, is used in N. T. to mean people, nation (Rev. 5:9, et al.), not so used in Attic. Such dialectic meanings must be observed in the interpretation given to such words. From such examples as the foregoing, we may frame the

RULE:—*An expression must be interpreted in harmony with the linguistic peculiarities of the communication, of the author, of the language, and of the dialect, in which it originated.*

#### RULE XXII.—*Synonyms.*

Principle Involved.
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Every language has words with nearly the same meaning, from which an author must take choice in his composition. As a speaker or writer is presumably familiar with his own language, and able to select the word that suits the precise meaning intended, it is just to credit him with meaning the very shade of thought which his words properly convey. This assumption may be set aside in the case of any author only by clear evidence of his disregard for precision.

## Examples.

The three Greek words *logos*, *rema*, and *epos* are used in the N. T. to mean *word*; yet they are essentially different. *Rema* means a mere vocable, an utterance, a spoken word. *Epos*, a saying, an expression; as in the only passage where it occurs in the N. T., Heb. 7:9, "and, so to say," as the saying is, if the expression be allowed. *Logos* means, not a grammatical word, not a form of expression, but speech or discourse as embodying a conception, language as the vehicle of ideas; as in a passage often misunderstood, 1 Cor. 2:13, "which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth." Here the contrast with the style of "man's wisdom" implies that the "word" which the Spirit teaches stands for the argumentation and rhetoric, the manner of putting ideas. The Spirit "suits spiritual things to spiritual men," and does not indulge in speculative composition, nor in pompous style of expression. The writer here does not mean that the Spirit dictates the very words and phrases of the apostolic writings; else he would have used *remata* instead of *logoi*.

Another example is the word *love*. *Agapao* means that love which springs from esteem or veneration; while *phileo* is that which springs from desire and emotion. Hence *agapao* is used when we love God (Matt. 22:37), love neighbor as self (verse 39), love enemies (Luke 6:27); so God loved the world (Jno. 3:16), Jesus loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus (Jno. 11:5), and "the disciple" (Jno. 19:26); so by loving one another we fulfill the law (Rom. 13:10). But *phileo* was used when they said, "Behold, how he loved him!"—with intense feeling (Jno. 11:36); when they spoke of love for relatives (Matt. 10:37), or of God's love for His Son (Jno. 5:20), or of loving and making a lie (Rev.- 22:15). We find the two words used in Jno. 21:15-17, where Jesus twice calmly asks Peter, "Lovest (*agapas*) thou me?" and once more tenderly, "Lovest (*phileis*) thou me?" and Peter with warm personal friendship answers every time, "I love thee" (*philo se*).

Three different words are sometimes translated *teach* in the N. T. *Didasko* means to teach in the general sense of the term, to instruct, to inform. This is the word used of Jesus' teaching in the synagogues (Mark 1:21; Luke 4:15, et al.), and that of which the Sermon on the Mount is a sample (Matt. 5:2). In this sense, we teach and admonish in song (Col. 3:16). This shows what value should be attached to Christian song; and one important feature of this part of worship is that it is addressed to man as well as God. The same word is used in respect to women teaching in the church (1 Tim. 2:12), and makes clear what function they were then incompetent to exercise. *Paideuo*, means to train children; hence, this word is used concerning Moses who "was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," trained from childhood in their wisdom (Acts 7:22). So of Paul, who, "was instructed according to the strict manner of the law" (Acts 22:3). But as child-training often includes chastisement, this word often partakes of that idea, as in Rev. 3:19, "As many as I love, I reprove and chasten" (cf. Heb. 12:6). It is this meaning that colors the advice to Timothy that the "Lord's servant must . . . correct them that oppose themselves" (2 Tim. 2:25). *Matheteuo* means to make disciples; and this is clearly the meaning in Acts 14:21, "When they had preached the gospel to that city, and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra." So in Matt. 13:52, "Therefore every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven." This explains the word teach in the A. V., Matt. 28:19, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them." This should read as in the R. V., "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations." "Teaching them" (*didaskontes*) properly follows making disciples, and hence does not precede baptism; for it is a process of life-long instruction.

Great confusion of synonyms exists in the minds of many people otherwise intelligent, concerning the words,

*hell, sheol, hades* and *gehenna*. The changes introduced by the R. V. have temporarily added to this mixing of terms. Many have noticed that the word "hell" in the A. V. has been displaced by *sheol* and *hades* in the R. V., and have imagined that "hell" has been taken out of the Revised Bible. *Sheol* and *hades* are simply the Hebrew and Greek words for the unseen world, the region of the dead, and often mean the grave, when used of the body, but the abode of the soul between death and resurrection when spoken of spirits. These two words never mean the place of the final punishment of the wicked. The Greek word *gehenna*, English "hell," means the place of final torment. The word "hell" in this sense is not omitted from the R. V., but occurs twelve times (see Matt. 5:22, 29; Mk. 9:43, 45, 47; *et al.*). The word *gehenna* was derived from *ge*, valley, and *henna*, Hinnom, valley of Hinnom just south of Jerusalem, where horrid fires were kept burning to consume the filth of the city; and this was used by the Savior and apostles as a figure of the more awful place and fires of perdition.

These examples illustrate the necessity of noting well the exact meanings of synonyms, and force upon us the

RULE:—*Carefully note distinctions in synonyms, and, if consistent, give an author credit for using the term most suited to his meaning.*

#### RULE XXIII—*The Broad Meaning.*

Writers' Customs.
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There are many words which have a comprehensive meaning in some connections and elsewhere a more restricted meaning. In the use of such words a writer will consider whether he needs to restrict their meaning; and if he desires to communicate the broad significance, or regards the meaning sufficiently restricted in the nature of the case, he will put in no restrictive clause. The reader, accordingly, will sup-

pose the meaning broad, unless he knows some good reason for regarding it as limited.

"Whole  
Creation."

A question may arise respecting the extent or meaning of the expression "whole creation" in Rom. 8:22, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Shall we understand here a reference to all nature in the broad sense of the term "whole creation"? or, may we limit it to human beings, or to a certain class of men? Let us study the context. In verse 19, the "creation" is distinguished from "sons of God," and hence must have a broad meaning. On the other hand, there is nothing in the context that limits the "creation" to any class of God's creatures. But in any case, the passage is a poetic conception, and not literally true; for no beings, except Christians, can be literally said to have an "earnest expectation" that "waits for the revealing of the sons of God"—certainly unbelievers do not have it, nor do any lower animals. In a poetic or imaginary sense the entire realm of nature may be said to have such an expectation,\* and to be "subject to vanity," i. e. constant decay and change, not by its own choice, but by the Creator; all nature may have a poetic hope of deliverance "from the bondage of corruption into the liberty" of such glory as awaits the children of God, and thus it may groan and travail in pain. Paul's conception of the whole world partaking of the sorrows and longings of Christians, is a very fitting one in the midst of this highly wrought passage that leads up through the entire chapter to the Christian's triumph in Christ. The passage cannot be satisfactorily interpreted without this poetic view. The "creation" is here unlimited by anything in the context or by the necessities of the case, and should be taken in its broad sense.

\*For fuller discussion of this point, see p. 82.

"All Kingdoms."

In Matt. 4:8, "The devil taketh him unto an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," we have the very broad terms, "All the kingdoms" and "the glory of them." How could Jesus see all these from a mountain-top? In Luke 4:5, the writer tells us that was done "in a moment of time." This indicates that the vision of the kingdoms was either a supernatural or a mental one, and hence it may as well be a world-wide vision as limited to a very few contiguous lands. The nature of the temptation of Jesus in which his ambition to universal supremacy is involved, favors the broad meaning.

Restrictions:  
1. By Context.

We may note the kinds of restrictions that are possible. First, the *context* often develops a restriction to a term. An example of this may be found in Matt. 5:48, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Apparently, here the word "perfect" is unlimited; but a reference to the preceding context shows that the subject under consideration when these words were spoken, was love for enemies; and it is illustrated by God's causing His sun to shine on the evil and good and sending His rain on the just and the unjust. Thus God loves all in the sense that He is willing to do good to all. It is therefore in the light of this limitation, and in respect simply to love, that we are to be perfect even as God is perfect.

2. Nature of the Case.

In Matt. 3:5, 6, we have another kind of restriction by *nature of the subject* treated. "There went out unto him Jerusalem and Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins." Here the context does not clearly indicate any limitations; but in the very nature of the case it is evident that not *all* the people of the whole country of Judea were baptized by John. Many people could not go to him, and

many others would not; and if all had gone, John would not have been able to baptize so many.

Another example of this kind is to be found in Heb. 2:17, "Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren." This is spoken of Christ, and while in all matters pertaining to his humanity this is true, we know that in matters involving his divinity this cannot be meant. The two-fold nature of Christ, in which the writer of Hebrews surely believed (see 1:2; 2:9), is a necessary limitation to the "all things" in this passage.

3. Parallel Passages.

A third kind of limitation that must not be disregarded is that furnished by *parallel passages*. Thus in I John 3:6, we read, "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth him." In verse 9, the writer adds, "Whosoever is begotten of God hath no sin, because his seed abideth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God." It would seem from these statements that John teaches that Christians never commit sins, and cannot do wrong of any kind. But when we consult 1:10, we see a clear limitation. He says to Christians, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;" and so in 2:1,2, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father . . . and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Here the apostle speaking of himself and other Christians, most clearly implies their possibility of error, and points out the way of regaining divine favor. This shows that in the first passage he means that the true Christians cannot lead lives of sin, cannot regularly practice sin; and in the latter passage he refers to occasional errors in life. Thus his terms in the former passages are restricted by those in the latter, and all are harmonious.

By these examples we are prepared to state the general RULE:—*Choose the broad, meaning of a term, unless it be restricted.*

RULE XXIV.—*Emphatic Words.*

<b>Methods Indication.</b>
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In oral speech, the greater stress of voice on some words than on others adds much to energy and vivacity, and often contributes to a clearer expression of thought. In writing, the emphasis may be entirely lost, or may be supplied by the discerning reader, or may be indicated by a special arrangement of the words or form of the letters. The ancient Hebrews and Greeks knew nothing of italicizing words for emphasis, for they wrote altogether with capital letters. Accordingly, in writing they emphasized words mainly by repetition or unusual position in the sentence.

<b>Hebrew Emphasis.</b>
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The Hebrew writers often marked their emphasis by repetition; as in Deut. 16:20, "Justice, justice, shalt thou follow." This is much stronger than our English translation in the R. V., "That which is altogether just thou shalt follow;" in which there is no special indication of emphasis, except the obscure word "altogether." Another example is Gen. 7:19, "The waters prevailing mightily, mightily, upon the earth." Another is Isa. 3:1, where the word is masculine and is repeated in the feminine, "The Lord of Hosts doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah support (m.) and support (f.), which the R. V. imitates by "staff and stay." In Ez. 6:14, the word is repeated in a cognate form, "I will stretch out my hand upon them, and make the land a waste (*shemamah*) and wasteness (*meshammah*)." Our English "desolate and waste" is much tamer. So by synonyms in Gen. 1:2, "The earth was without form and void" (A. V.), where the R. V. is better, "waste and void;" but both words are nouns, "wasteness and emptiness." In some cases a word is repeated twice for very great emphasis; as in Jer. 22:29, "O *earth, earth, earth*, hear the word of Jehovah," and this is followed by a most important message. Sometimes the Hebrews placed a word out of its natural

order to attract attention; as, in 1 Sam. 17:36, "Even the *lion* and the *bear* did thy servant smite." This emphasis is mostly lost by the translation. "Thy servant smote both the lion and the bear." Often by repeating a pronoun emphasis is placed; as, in Ps. 27:2, "*Mine* adversaries and *mine* enemies, *mine*, they stumbled and fell." Also in Job 1:15, 17, 19, when each servant tells Job of a disaster, he adds, "And *I* am escaped *only I, alone*, to tell thee."

Greek Emphasis.
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In the N. T., examples abound where the English translations do not give any hint of the original emphasis. In John 6:57, the word "sent" is emphatic, where most readers lay stress on "living:" "As the living Father *sent* me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me." Here the *sending* is fundamental in the thought; for this sending is the occasion of Jesus living "because of the Father" (by the Father's help), and the occasion of others eating him and living because of him. The emphasis is seen in the Greek by placing "sent" at the beginning of the sentence.

An emphasis on the word "men" is apparent by contrast, but more by position, as in 1 Cor. 14:2, "For he that speaketh in a tongue, not unto *men* speaketh, but unto God." Paul is urging them to seek the gift of prophecy rather than of speaking with tongues, and assigns the reason that no one understands the tongues, unless the speaker can interpret, and he will be speaking not to *men* at all; whereas, they should "follow after that love," which would lead them to do for their fellow-men all that they could do.

In Luke 9:20, we note the emphasis on "you," where the order of the Greek is, "He said to them, *You*, now, who do you say that I am?" One would hardly get the force of this from the English, "But who say ye that I am?"

In some places two gospel writers place emphasis differently; as, in Matt. 15:34, "How many loaves have you?"

And they said, Seven, and a *few* fishes." Here "few" is in antithesis with "seven." But in Mk. 8:6,7, "And taking the seven loaves, he blessed and brake . . . and they had *fishes* a few," the "fishes" are in antithesis with the bread and the number is less important. Even in the Sermon on the Mount, this diversity appears: Matt. 6:32, "For after *all* these things do the Gentiles seek;" but in Luke 12:30, "For after *these things* do all the nations of the world seek;" the reason for this variation is not so easy to discover.

The reader has perhaps often emphasized "leaven" in reading 1 Cor. 5:6, "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump;" but the original emphasis is on "*little*"—just a *little* leaven is enough to leaven a whole lump.

It is apparent from these passages that emphasis has an important place in hermeneutics, and we have abundant grounds for the

RULE:—*Due weight must be given to emphatic words when interpreting a sentence.*

RULE XXV.—*One Meaning.*

<p>Double Meaning.</p>
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In the ordinary communications of men only one meaning is attached to a word in a given connection. This principle has been very fully illustrated in connection with Axiom IX. The application of this principle may be seen in a few examples. Many writers have been misled into a violation of this law by a study of figurative language and by the assumption that since a metaphor or a parable presents an analogy, the meaning of which is often of a spiritual character, all statements in the Bible are analogical. From this it would follow that if any passages are historical and have a literal meaning, they must also have a spiritual meaning, and so we have a double sense. Thus the words "light" and

"darkness" in Matt. 6:23, "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!" are certainly used as figures, representing probably a sincere and corrupt conscience, at least some good and bad traits of a moral or intellectual kind. But when the Scripture states that the Egyptians sat three days in a darkness that might be felt, and that the Israelites had light in their dwellings (Ex. 10:21-23), we have plain history; and the literal meaning conforms to all the circumstances of the case. If, now, we must find a spiritual meaning, such as that the "darkness" stands for the ignorance or sinfulness of the Egyptians, and the "light" for the intelligence or devotion of Israel, then we have two meanings. Such a double sense would be spurned from any other historical works, and there is no good reason to believe that it was intended by the Sacred Writers.

Many Meanings.

Not a few ancient interpreters believed that the Scriptures should be understood differently from other books in respect to the number of possible meanings, as the following quotations will show: "The ancient interpreters of the Bible were persuaded and firmly believed that it contained, besides the plain and obvious meaning, mysterious and concealed truths."\* "If Scripture has not an undercurrent of meaning, double, triple, quadruple, or yet more\* manifold, I confess that my work is a mere waste of labor."† From these words it is clear that there are, as there have for ages been, those who are bold to affirm this radical distinction between the Sacred and profane writings.

An Unscientific Method.

But it is an unscientific method of interpretation. 1. It assumes without evidence that the writers of the Bible were not revealers, but concealers, of truth; for many of the meanings are hidden rather than manifested by the authors. 2. It assumes that it were better for man that God should

\*Hurwit's Essay on Uninspired Literature of the Hebrews.

†Neal's Mystical and Literary Interpretation of the Psalms, p. 377.

cover up much of the truth than that He should openly declare it. 3. It turns all Biblical interpretation into the realm of fancy and fiction; for, since only one meaning appears in the text, the fancy of the interpreter must supply the others. 4. It affords no limit to the distortions which hermeneutical dreamers may produce in Biblical exegesis. 5. It fails utterly to develop any new truth, since the interpreters must bring to each passage from some other source all the spiritual meaning which they allege that it should bear.

These facts, that are apparent to every unprejudiced reader, lead us to the only natural and scientific ground, which we may express in the

*RULE:—Any expression in any given connection should yield but one meaning.*

## CHAPTER VI. THE USE

### OF PARALLEL PASSAGES.

#### *Degrees of Affinity in Parallels.*

##### **Possibility of Degrees.**

In mathematics, if two lines are parallel, they cannot be more so or less so; but it is otherwise in the case of parallel passages. By parallels we do not mean passages whose parts exactly correspond to each other; but we mean those which have something in common, especially words or thoughts that are the same. It is natural that there should be more in common with some parallels than with others; and on this account we may form a classification.

Without attempting great exactitude, which in this case would be impossible, we distinguish four classes.

1. *An important word recurring in different contexts.* The word "Christian" is an important word in every context in which it occurs. It is found in Acts 11:26, "The disciples were called *Christians* first in Antioch;" in Acts 26:28, "Agrippa said unto Paul, With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a *Christian*;" and in 1 Pet. 4:16, "But if any man suffer as a *Christian*, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name." Now these passages are in many respects very different; but on the use of a single important word, they are clearly parallel.

2. *The same or similar thought, but different words.* Thus, the thought of comfort administered to saintly spirits is found in Luke 16:25, where it is affirmed of Lazarus in Abraham's bosom that "now here he is comforted;" and in

Rev. 6:11, where it is said unto the souls of martyrs under the altar that "they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled." Here the language is wholly different, and only the thought is parallel. Another example is the thought of discipleship found in Matt. 10:37, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me;" and in Luke 14:26, "If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother . . . he cannot be my disciple." Here the thought is parallel but there are notable diversities of language.

3. *Similar language referring to the same thought.* An example may be found in Acts 2:38, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit," and Acts 3:19, "Repent ye, therefore and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." In this case the words, though not exactly the same, are from the same author, under similar circumstances, and with the same purpose to exhibit the terms and promises of God to sinners who may seek divine favor.

4. *Quotations, or matters from a common source.* This is illustrated in Isa. 2:2-4, and Micah 4:1-3, where almost the same words are found, "And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all the nations shall flow into it: and many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem: and He shall judge between the nations, and shall reprove many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their

spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." In this long passage there are only three or four words different in the two prophecies. This similarity could not be an accident, but must prove one to be the copy of the other or both copies from a third writer. As Micah and Isaiah lived at the same time (Mic. 1:1; Isa. 1:1), and the passage seems about equally natural and appropriate in the two writings, we cannot decide which copied from the other, and many believe the words belong to a third author. This represents, of course, the closest degree of parallels that we can have. Such close parallels occur often in Kings and Chronicles and among the Gospels.

RULE XXVI.—*Harmony.*

Credibility.

Writers presumably aim to tell the truth and are competent to state facts on their several themes. Accordingly, if two passages appear to be inconsistent, a reasonable effort should be made to harmonize them. If two witnesses in court testify differently, a wise judge will use all legitimate means of accounting for the divergences before accusing either of perjury. Especially, in case the witnesses bear a general reputation for honor and veracity, a good jurist will even resort to conjecture to provide the necessary conditions to reconcile conflicting testimonies. In no case will a rightminded court devise means to bring into greater conflict and discredit the statements of men which admit of reasonable credibility. On the other hand, an author known to have bad motives, standing in bad repute, and whose testimonies are positively irreconcilable, not only forfeits his reader's confidence, but falls below all respectable consideration. Between these extremes are many degrees of credit and discredit.

**Biblical  
Writers.**

Among the writers in the Bible there is not one whose veracity can be assailed. So far as these writers are known to us, they were men of strict moral character, of bold and self-sacrificing opposition to all wrong, and of devotion to the God of truth,—traits wholly inconsistent with intentional false representation. In such a case, for passages apparently in conflict, harmony will be sought by a scientific interpreter even at the expense of some pains. Nevertheless, in no case should a forced or unreasonable method of reconciling discrepancies be adopted. But, logically, if the truthfulness of such records be questioned, the assailant is required to prove that reconciliation is impossible; while the defender of their credit needs not to prove any particular explanation correct, but simply to show that harmony is possible.

**An Example:  
Hour of  
Crucifixion.**

In Mark 15:25, it is distinctly stated that "it was the third hour, and they crucified him." According to the Jewish method of counting the hours of the day beginning at six o'clock in the morning, the third hour would be about nine o'clock a. m. But John (19:14) informs us that "it was about the sixth hour" when Jesus was condemned by Pilate, which must have been two or three hours before the crucifixion; so that the latter could not have occurred much before the ninth hour, which according to Jewish count would be three o'clock p. m. Mark and John were both Jews, and both apparently write for Gentiles as well as Jewish readers. How then can we reconcile these passages? There appears to be no evidence of an alteration of the text, no reason for either writer to be ignorant of the facts, and no motive in either for a misrepresentation. Nevertheless, we cannot accuse either; for, though we have no trace of it, some copyist may have changed the numbers; or, it is possible that one of them followed the Roman method of reckoning civil days, from midnight. Canon Westcott has given a strong proof that John counted from

midnight, and cited evidence that this method of reckoning was used in Asia Minor where John's Gospel was written. See Bible Commentary on John, Note after chapter 19. See also McClellan, New Testament, I. pp. 737 ff.

**Genealogies.**

The genealogies of Jesus as given by Matthew and Luke are hard to reconcile. Matt. 1:15, 16, says, "Matthan begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus;" while Luke 3:23, 24, says, "Jesus . . . being as was supposed the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat," etc., giving a different lineage back to David. No good reason can be assigned for the discrepancy. The writers were faithful men, they both had good opportunities to know the facts, and had no apparent reason to misrepresent them; yet both cannot be exhibiting the true paternal lineage of Joseph, as the texts seem to affirm. There are three proposed solutions: 1. That Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph, and Luke that of Mary; in which "son" in Luke before the name "Heli" means son-in-law, according to the free use of such words among the Jews. One objection to this view is that the names Salathiel and Zerubbabel occur in each list, and we must also account for different ancestors of Salathiel. 2. That both genealogies are Joseph's, but that Jacob and Heli were sons of the same mother by different fathers, that Heli was Joseph's legal father, and Jacob his real father by having married his half brother's widow. This also leaves unexplained the parentage of Salathiel. 3. That Matthew gives the royal lineage or heirship to David's throne, and Luke the actual descent. Although this must assume that the royal line became extinct in Jeconiah, so that the right of succession passed to the collateral line of David's son Nathan in Salathiel, and similarly this new royal line became extinct in Eleazar or in Jacob, and the succession passed to another line in Matthan or Joseph the son of Heli; nevertheless, it seems to be less liable to objection than any other view.

Without discussing these explanations further, or attempting to decide definitely among them, we easily reach our legitimate conclusion, that we cannot pronounce the records erroneous when there are so many possible methods of reconciliation.

From these examples we deduce the

*RULE:—Two or more statements by honorable authors relating to the same thing should, within reason, be interpreted harmoniously.*

**RULE XXVII.—Differences of Authors.**

**Variations  
Allowable**

We have seen in Axiom V that two writers do not independently express thought alike. This fact will necessarily affect our interpretations of dissimilar parallels. It follows that two writers may describe the same event differently without being in conflict. One writer will mention items which another will neglect; two writers will quote the words of a third person a little differently, especially if they quote from memory; they are likely to vary in the order of events, the use of synonyms, expression of time, and their own opinion of things. On such matters no writer should be ruled to exactness, and no two writers accused of contradiction, unless the variation should be very great.

**Honoring  
Parents.**

An example of this principle may be found in comparing Ex. 20:12, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," with Luke 14:26, "If any man come unto me, and hate not his own father and mother . . . he cannot be my disciple." The variation here is great, yet there is no contradiction. The lawgiver thinks only of filial duty; while the Savior thinks chiefly of the disciple's duty of faithfulness to his Lord. In the latter there is clearly a comparison of duties

in which the duty to the Lord transcends that to the parents. It is this transcendence that brings about the difference. The Savior wishes to state strongly the greater duty; and this leads him, after the Hebrew style, to magnify the one duty by minifying the other. Nevertheless, in this case, the word "hate" is not exactly the same as "love less than;" for the speaker anticipates the probability that it will be necessary for the disciple to forsake his parents, to disregard their preferences and even perhaps their personal wants, as if they were hated, in order to accomplish the higher duty. With all this, the Savior is not in conflict with the commandment in Exodus, which he emphatically defends against the violations of the Pharisees (Matt. 15:3-6). The difference is only in the form of conception and expression by different speakers with different purposes.

Who Asked  
the Favor?

Another example is seen in comparing Matt. 20:20, with Mk. 10:35. In the former, the mother of Zebedee's sons is represented as making a request with her sons that they might enjoy a certain pre-eminence in the new kingdom; in the latter, the sons themselves make the request. How shall we understand this? Simply that Matthew notes the presence of the mother and her intercession for her sons, which Mark neglects without vitiating his account. Both are true, both satisfactory; but the different writers were impressed differently with the details of the event.

Who Addressed  
Pharaoh?

In Ex. 9:13-16, we are told that the Lord sent by Moses a message to Pharaoh that he had raised up Pharaoh for a certain purpose; but in Rom. 9:17, we read, "For the *Scripture* saith unto Pharaoh, For this very purpose did I raise thee up." In the one passage Pharaoh is addressed by the Lord, in the other by the *Scripture*. How can this be? Simply a different mode of putting the same fact. The former is the direct historical statement. The latter is a reference

to the record of the fact in Exodus. When Paul says, "the Scripture saith to Pharaoh," he means the Scripture records the statement to Pharaoh.

From such examples arises the general

RULE:—*In harmonizing parallels, allow for a different conception and expression of thought by different writers.*

RULE XXVIII.—*Explicit Parallels.*

Their Value.

In comparing parallels, every interpreter has observed that in many cases one of the two passages will be much more definite and explicit than the other. In such cases the indefinite passage will generally be the one to be interpreted; and the explicit passage will furnish the key to the interpretation. If they relate to the same thing and are not clearly contradictory, any light from one passage will be useful in understanding the other.

Abraham's Faith.

In Rom. 4:3, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness," the nature and accompaniments of faith are left wholly indefinite; but in Heb. 11:8-10, 17-19, they were more clearly expressed, "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance . . . by faith he became a sojourner . . . in a land not his own. By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac." Here his obedience in leaving Mesopotamia promptly at the command of God, his faithful waiting as a mere sojourner in a land to be his, but still in the hands of others, and his heroic sacrifice in offering his son, are vital elements in his faith, not by way of setting it aside, but by way of confirming it and giving it value. So in James 2:21-23, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the Scripture was fulfilled which saith,

And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." The very same justification is contemplated here as in Romans, but James is more explicit regarding the works that attended the justifying faith. These are not meritorious works, as if by them justification is earned or purchased; but, as the author distinctly states, they are the perfecting elements of the faith itself, hence the emphasis in the text on their importance. Thus the more definite passages in Hebrews and James help to interpret the more indefinite one in Romans.

**Violence to  
the Kingdom.**

In Matt. 11:12, "Until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force," we are not definitely informed how men of violence take the kingdom of heaven by force, whether in persecution or in zeal to advance its interests. In Luke 16:16, we have a hint on this in a report apparently of the same remark, but in different words, "From that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man entereth violently into it." This points to zeal in gaining admission into the kingdom as by its friends. In John 6:15, we read, "Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force, to make him a king, withdrew again into the mountain himself alone." This seems to be an example of the violent measures adopted by the over-zealous disciples to usher in the long-hoped-for kingdom, probably with the anticipation that thereby they would be fully relieved of Roman oppression. If we are correct in deeming the last passage a parallel, it clears away the vagueness of the other two.

**Earlier and  
Later Books.**

Often in the earlier books of the Bible certain truths are stated or referred to in very indefinite terms, which are more clearly and fully presented in later books. An example is the resurrection of the dead. Job (14:14) asks, "If a man die, shall he live again?" This is very indefinite; but compare John 5:28, "Marvel not at this; for the hour cometh, in

which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." This is much more explicit; but the subject is fully discussed in 1 Cor. xv, where Paul plainly affirms a resurrection and discusses the manner of it and the condition of those that rise. Accordingly we may adopt the

RULE:—*The more explicit and definite of two or more parallels should explain the more general and indefinite.*

RULE XXIX.—*Essential Differences.*

The Founda-  
tion..

Passages may relate to the same theme, and yet be very different in purpose or manner of presentation; and those differences may greatly affect the interpretation. As an example of this, we may cite Matt. 16:18, "And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." With this we may compare 1 Cor. 3:11, "For other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus." In the former passage the question, What is the foundation? has arisen, and requires great care in answering. In connection with Rule XI, after a careful examination of the rhetoric of the passage, we concluded that the foundation was neither Peter nor Christ, but the truth that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. In Corinthians, however, the apostle clearly affirms that Christ is the foundation. Either our former conclusions were wrong, or the latter passage is not a perfect parallel to the former. There are, in truth, essential differences between the two passages. The one uses the figure of a city, while the other presents the figure of a house. In the one, also, Christ represents himself as the builder while in the other, the apostle and his fellow-laborers are the builders. Accordingly, the Savior does not represent himself as the foundation, since he has another office in the figure; but Paul

having no other place for Christ in his figure, appropriately announces him as the foundation. While these differences are strictly rhetorical, they are vital to the interpretation. In Eph. 2:20, we have another passage that might be thought parallel to these: "But ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone." Here again we meet essential differences. The apostle is discussing the union of Jewish and Gentile Christians as parts of a building, and without reference to a builder. In this case, the writer is free to speak of the apostles and prophets as the foundation without conflict with any other office in this figure. In this case Christ's position is also different; for in representing the Jews as one wall of the building and the Gentiles as the other wall, he may speak of Christ as the cap-cornerstone by which the two walls are bound together. Thus the figure is complete rhetorically, and yet not contradictory to the other passages.

The "First Last."

In Matt. 19:30, after Jesus had made the promise of eternal life to those of his disciples who made great sacrifices in this world for his sake, he said, "But many shall be last that are first, and first that are last." In this place he means that those who are last in the enjoyments of this life may be first in the eternal blessings; or, in other words, those who enjoy the least wealth here may have the greatest wealth hereafter. In Mk. 9:35, after some of the disciples had contended with each other about pre-eminence in the kingdom, Jesus said to them, "If any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and minister of all." Here he teaches that those who seek to be first in honor must be last (i. e., most humble) in service. In Matt. 20:16, the Savior relates the parable of the laborers that went into the vineyard at different hours of the day, and all received the same wages at night, and then adds, "So the last shall be first, and the first last." In

this passage he clearly means that those who are last in amount of labor may be first in proportionate reward, while those who endure more for the kingdom in this life will be last in proportionate reward. Also, in Luke 13:30, where the Savior is rebuking the Jews for rejecting him when they were the best prepared of all people to appreciate his work, he tells them that many from all parts of the world will enter into the kingdom from which those Jews will be cast out, and he then closes his remarks by saying, "Behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last." Here a very different thought is presented. The "first" are those faithless Jews who had the best opportunity to appreciate the kingdom, and they shall be last in the enjoyment of it; while the Gentiles who were "last" in point of preparation, will be "first" to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God.

The vital differences in these passages, which may be properly called parallels, must not be neglected by the interpreter; but, on the contrary, they furnish him the very material by which he determines the author's meaning in each case. The necessity of giving attention to these differences, therefore, affords good ground for the following

RULE:—*Essential differences between passages thought to be parallel must be duly regarded.*

#### RULE XXX.—*Quotations.*

Variations
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In quotations there are different degrees of exactness in the reproduction of the original: 1. The precise language and thought. 2. The language modified, but the thought the same. 3. The thought modified to suit a new context. This variance requires the attention of the interpreter, and he must note the extent of difference and its bearing upon the interpretation. In any case, it will not be his duty to magnify the differences, nor to make them appear inconsistent; but to

discover the reason for each variation, that the true harmony may be conserved. Here, however, as in other kinds of discrepancies, no passage must be forced out of its evident meaning to make it harmonize with another passage.

<p><b>Bible Quotations.</b></p>
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Quotations in the Bible may be distributed into four classes: 1. Those in the Old Testament made by the later writers from the earlier books. Of these we may mention the genealogical tables in 1 Chr. 1:17-27, quoted from Gen. 11:10-26; Ps. xviii, which is substantially the same as in 2 Sam. xxii; 2 Kings xviii-xx and Isa. xxxvi-xxxix; also 2 Kings xxiv, xxv and Jer. lii; likewise many portions of Samuel and Kings repeated in Chronicles. Most of these are nearly verbatim, but in some respects modified in copying or to suit the special purpose of the later writer. 2. New Testament quotations from the Old Testament. Many of these are taken, not from the original Hebrew text, but from the Septuagint; yet in some cases the Hebrew text is reproduced. A careful examination of all these quotations show's that the New Testament writers were not careful to quote the exact language of either text. They must have quoted often from memory; and they frequently adapted the language to their own thought without strict attention to the thought of the Old Testament writers. These quotations are made for the purpose of pointing out fulfillments of prophecy, or for proofs of doctrine, or for rebuking opponents and unbelievers, or for rhetorical purposes and illustrations. 3. Quotations in the New Testament from other New Testament sources. There are many parallel portions of the Gospels, which must have been received from common sources; but aside from these, we have few quotations of this class. In Acts 20:35, Paul quotes a saying of the Lord which is not found elsewhere. 4. Quotations from sources outside of the Bible. The historical writers in the Old Testament quoted freely from records existing in their day.

Such were the "Book of Jasher," the "Acts of Solomon" (1 Kings 11:41), and the "Book of Shemaiah" (2 Chr. 12:15). In the N. T., Jude 14 is quoted from the Book of Enoch; Acts 17 :28 is found in both Aratus and the Hymn of Cleanthes; 1 Cor. 15:33 is from Menander; and Tit. 1:12 was said to come from Epimenides, but is now found in the Hymn of Callimachus (3rd Cent. B. C).

**Remarkable  
Differences.**

As examples of differences in quotations, we may refer to Matt. 8:17, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bear our diseases;" but this is very different from the passage from which it must have been taken, Isaiah 53:4, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried Our sorrows. So, 1 Cor. 2:9, "But as it is written, Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him," is not found in these words in any part of the Old Testament, but a passage somewhat similar occurs in Isaiah 64:4, "For from of old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen a God beside thee, which worketh for him that waiteth for him." It requires but a glance to see that the apostle has greatly modified the language, and has rendered it more easily comprehensible, while he has also suited it better to his own purpose. Aside from his apostolic privilege to do this, he has done no violence to the principle involved in the passage. In such a case, the interpreter must consider each passage in the light of its own construction and context.

**The "Nazarene."**

A very peculiar example is presented in Matt. 2:23, "And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, that he should be called a Nazarene." The source of this quotation cannot be found, for the name Nazarene does not occur in the Old Testament. How then shall we interpret Matthew's statement? Scholars

have usually regarded the name Nazarene as a term of reproach, and have referred to various passages in the Old Testament wherein the reproach of the Messiah seems to be predicted. This explanation does not account for the direct manner in which the writer says that he shall be called by this name. Also, it cannot be established that the name Nazarene was a term of reproach until after the disciples came to be called Nazarenes by their enemies, who held *them* rather than *Nazareth* in contempt. The passage in John 1:46, "And Nathanael said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" is often cited to prove the disrepute of that city; but it can be made to establish no more than the mere obscurity of the place among the cities of the Jews, and the rarity of great men who had arisen from that locality. There appears to be, however, a more natural interpretation. The name Nazareth, and consequently *Nazarene*, means a *branch* in the language usually spoken in Palestine in Matthew's day. As Matthew wrote for the Jewish readers, this meaning of Nazarene would be well known to them all. If the name Branch had come down to us instead of Nazareth, we would readily recognize the prophecy. In Isa. 11:1, the prophet says, "There shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit." In Zech. 6:12, we have the very direct form of prophecy which Matthew seems to quote, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch." The passage in Isaiah uses the very Hebrew word (*nezer*) from which the name *Nazarene* is derived; while in Zechariah the most perfect equivalent is employed. From these facts it seems better to regard Matthew's quotation as actual and literal, based on the well known etymology of the name Nazarene.

<p>Quotation in Parts.</p>
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In some cases a quotation is formed from parts of two passages in the Old Testament. Thus, Rom. 9:33, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence" (taken from Isa.

8:14), "and he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame" (from Isa. 28:16). In like manner, in 1 Peter 2:7,8, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner" (Ps. 118:22) ; "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence" (Isa. 8:14). Such quotations violate no principle of logic or doctrine; and while they do not inform the reader of their double source, they do not in any way tend to mislead him.

On the basis of these examples, which might be indefinitely multiplied, we may frame the leading principle involved in the interpretation of quoted material into the following

*RULE:—If possible, interpret a quotation as parallel and consistent with the original; but always in harmony with its own setting.*

## CHAPTER VII.

### FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE.

#### *Nature and Use of*

#### *Figures.*

##### Definitions.

When a word has been appropriated by usage to one thing and is transferred to another, it is said to be used *figuratively*. When a word is used in its primitive or most usual sense, it is said to be *literal*. A figure, therefore, is a departure or deflection from the primitive or usual meaning of a word, or the usual manner of expressing ideas. In all languages figures are necessary to express adequately some of the thoughts of intelligent people. Literal terms may be readily found in almost any language to express such ideas as, *cold* iron, *stony* pavements, *hard* wood, *soft* clay, and the like; but there is probably no language capable of expressing literally the ideas *cold* heart, *stony* heart, *hard* heart and *soft* heart. As applied to the heart all these adjectives must be figurative. This is due to the fact that literal meanings are given to words as applied first to material things; and when conceptions of immaterial things arise, they can be expressed only by analogous uses of the words at hand.

##### Close Relations.

It follows from the foregoing that the figurative meaning of a word is necessarily a secondary sense. If this latter sense should become very usual, and especially if the primitive meaning should become obsolete, the secondary sense will be regarded as literal. Accordingly, it is not always easy to fix the exact boundary line between the literal and the figurative. This will require a careful study of language, a vigilant observa-

tion of the usage of words and a good judgment and training in literary matters.

**Consistency  
the Test.**

It may be often important to distinguish between the literal and the figurative; and therefore a reliable test will be desirable. Perhaps no absolute test can be applied; but it is usually sufficient to inquire in any case of doubt, Does the literal make good sense? If the literal proves to be *absurd*, or in any way *inconsistent*, either with other parts of the sentence or with the nature of the things discussed, we may conclude with tolerable certainty that the language is figurative. This test will require a careful study of the adjuncts associated with any word that may not seem to be literal, a careful examination of the general context, and perhaps a comparison of parallel passages. Sometimes a knowledge of the subject treated or of historical or doctrinal matters related to it, will reveal the inconsistency which marks a word or sentence as figurative. Great familiarity with all kinds of figures, so that the reader will readily recognize and classify them when he meets them, will often save much hesitancy and doubt. Moreover, the custom of a writer or class of writers in respect to a free use of figures or their employment in the discussion of particular subjects, will prove a valuable guide in distinguishing between the literal and the figurative.

**RULE XXXI.—*Preference for the Literal.***

**Baptism for  
the Dead.**

Since the literal is the most usual signification of a word, and therefore occurs much more frequently than the figurative, any term will be regarded as literal until there is good reason for a different understanding. A very important example of this principle is the word "baptize" in 1 Cor. 15:29, "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized

for them?" The word "baptize" is used often in the *literal* sense, as when John baptized the multitudes, or when under the apostolic command men are everywhere required to be baptized upon their admission into the kingdom of Christ; but sometimes it is used *figuratively*, as when John speaks of some being baptized in the Holy Spirit and in fire (Matt. 3:11), or when Jesus informs the sons of Zebedee that they shall be baptized with His baptism, which must refer to the persecutions that they were about to endure.

But how shall we understand the word in this passage? At first view it would seem that Paul refers to some Christians who had been literally baptized in water for their friends who had died without baptism; but against this may be urged the improbability that the Apostle would appear to countenance such a departure from the principle of individual responsibility which is everywhere characteristic of Christian teaching. Besides this, it is not historically certain that the practice of baptism by proxy for the dead prevailed in that day. This apparent inconsistency has led many good scholars to seek a figurative meaning for the word.

Observing that the next verses refer to severe persecutions, some suggest that this is a baptism of sufferings. This, however, is not a necessary conclusion. The writer is arguing that the dead will rise again, and produces one proof after another in quick succession. He has mentioned several reasons for his doctrine in the earlier part of the chapter; and it is reasonable and logical that he should present the argument from baptism for the dead in verse 29 and another argument from persecutions immediately afterwards. Further, this view does not account for the simplicity of style in which this baptism for the dead is introduced. In an argument, and especially in approaching a new point as here, figurative language is not to be expected. If in such a case a figure be employed, the writer should prepare the reader to recognize the figure either by

highly wrought emotion in advance or by some clear indication of unusual meaning.

However, the literal will make good sense. The "dead" here cannot mean Christ who died, as some have thought, for the original word is plural (*nekron*) ; whereas, if it referred to Christ, it would be singular. It must then refer to the dead in general, or, perhaps more accurately, to those who are "dead in Christ." When men are literally baptized in water on entering the church, they look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and undergo their burial and resurrection in water with the hope and intent to share in the final resurrection and immortality. Accordingly, "for the dead" need not mean *in behalf of* the dead, as in the case of proxy, but may mean *with reference to* the dead, i. e., with a view to their resurrection. This meaning of "for" (Greek *huper*) occurs elsewhere (II Thess. 1:4, Rom. 9:27), and is therefore allowable; and if the figurative meaning of baptism in sufferings were understood, this same use of "for" would be required to complete the thought. This passage illustrates the importance of looking carefully for a literal meaning before accepting one that is figurative.

Mt. Zion.
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In many psalms the poet praises Zion as the mountain or city of God. An example is Ps. 48:2,

Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth,  
 mount Zion, on the fides of the north,  
 The city of the great King.

Many interpreters have understood Zion to be a figure, and the Christian church to be really meant. This is purely a surmise, as the Psalm makes no allusion to a future development, nor to any characteristics of the church that would not better apply to the literal city of Jerusalem. This Psalm is a fine hymn of praise to the sacred capital of the Jewish nation; and a figurative view robs the piece of its beautiful patriotism.

Many other examples might be offered to illustrate this inevitable principle, which leads to the following

RULE:—*The literal or most usual meaning of a word, if consistent, should be preferred to a figurative or less usual signification.*

RULE XXXII.—*Nature of Imagery.*

Imagery in  
Figures.

Many figures present truth under the form of images implied or described. The mind takes pleasure in contemplating similarities of objects; and often the pleasure is increased by the fact that the objects compared have also great dissimilarities. It is in the nature of a surprise to the mind to discover a likeness where it might be least expected. If the point of similarity be not distinctly pointed out by an author, it may require some care to identify it. In such a case the nature of the image must be well considered; and the nature of the truth intended to be conveyed must be compared with the image, so that the feature which the two have in common may be clearly discerned.

Similes.

Some figures are based on similitude or analogy, and are therefore subject to this method of treatment. A *simile* is a formal comparison of two objects by the use of some adverb of comparison, such as, *like, as, so*, etc. Thus, in Matt. 28:3, in describing an angel it is said that, "his appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow." Here it is necessary to observe the nature of lightning, to discover the point of the comparison, which is not definitely stated by the author; but in the comparison of raiment to snow the point of similitude is indicated by the word "white." Probably allusion is made to the brightness of the lightning. In Cant. 2:9, "My beloved is like a roe, or like a young fawn," the point of comparison is not expressed; and it is necessary for the reader to consider the characteristics of a roe or fawn, and select

the most fitting trait that the "beloved" might have in common with it, perhaps neatness or fleetness. Even when the point of comparison is expressed, the imagery must be studied to appreciate the beauty or force of the simile. Thus in Matt. 7:24-27, the Savior likens the man who hears and obeys his words to a house founded upon a rock, and states the point of comparison, that it falls not in time of storm and heavy rain. Again, he compares the disobedient to a house on the sand in the point that it falls in the time of flood. In these cases the force of the similitude is felt by the reader only as he comprehends the calamity of a home, wrecked in the midst of a dashing torrent. In Jer. 23 :29, "Is not my word even as the fire, saith Jehovah, and as a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?" the point of comparison is implied by the words "breaks the rock in pieces;" and the meaning is, that the divine word has the power of a fire and a hammer for the destruction of the false prophets and their works, which are mentioned in the preceding context. A beautiful figure is found in Ps. 1:3, "He shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also doth not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Here the points of comparison are expressed; yet the value of the simile is hardly realized until the reader contemplates a tree planted by the irrigating streams, and therefore covered with foliage and fruit when all the other trees in the vicinity are barren.

**Metaphors.**

A *Metaphor* is a figure in which the name of one thing is applied to another because of resemblance. It is unlike the simile by having no formal comparison by *like, as, so,* or other such word. In Luke 13 :32, Jesus says, "Go and say to that fox;" and thereby implies that Herod was in some respects like a fox. A moment's consideration leads us to discover the similitude. Herod was cunning and destructive as a fox. In Jer. 2:13, we have two metaphors: "They have forsaken me, a foun-

tain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." It is easy to see how Jehovah was like a fountain of water to Israel, since He had ever been the source of their strength and prosperity. It is not difficult also to discern the likeness of Israel's conduct in turning away from Him to the folly of a man who neglects a flowing fountain to hew out a leaky cistern. In Gen. 49:9, "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up," the point of comparison is the power with which Judah overcomes an enemy and seizes booty, as a lion is more able than any other animal to do. In verse 21, "Naphtali is a hind let loose; he giveth goodly words," there is probably an allusion to the elegance and beauty of the hind, to which are compared the beautiful sayings, proverbs and songs of Naphtali. In like manner, verse 27, "Benjamin is a wolf," refers to his devouring disposition shown in taking the prey of his enemies. A fine example based on the legal requirements at the time of the Jewish passover to put away all leaven from their houses, is found in 1 Cor. 5:7, 8, "Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened; for our passover also has been sacrificed, even Christ; wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." The necessity of considering the imagery is apparent in Matt. 5:13, "Ye are the salt of the earth." The value of salt consists in the one notable power that it possesses, that of preservation. Accordingly, the disciples of Christ are the preservers of the world; for without their saving power the race would come to destruction as a result of its sinfulness.

Allegory.
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An *Allegory* is a fictitious narration to illustrate truth. Its nature is similar to that of a metaphor; but its imagery is extended to many details and analogies, so that it is often defined as an extended metaphor. One of the most notable examples in

the Bible is found in Ps. 80:8-15, in which a vine from Egypt was taken up and replanted in a new land, where it took strong root, covered the mountains with its shade, sent out its boughs unto the sea, its tender shoots unto the river; but its walls are broken down, it is plucked by every passing stranger, and wasted by swine and beasts of the field, so that the Lord is called upon to visit this vine arid protect it with His right hand, because He planted it and nourished it for Himself. In reading this passage no person who is acquainted with the history of Israel can for a moment think of a real vine; but by numerous similarities to the fortunes and misfortunes of that people, he readily discerns here a plain chapter of national experience. It was Israel that was brought up from Egypt, and planted in Palestine, made to fill the land with its growth; but on account of violence and idolatry, was forsaken of God, and laid open for every passing enemy to waste at will. Another important allegory representing a slightly different class occurs in Gal. 4:21-31, for in this the history of Abraham is used to present analogies bearing upon the attitude of Jews and Gentiles toward the gospel of Christ. The handmaid Hagar represents the unconverted Jews in bondage to the law of Moses; and her son, cast out from the family of Abraham, represented the Jew rejected of God for unbelief. Sarah and her son Isaac represent Christians enjoying the liberty of the gospel and complete acceptance with God. This differs from the usual allegory in presenting an historical, rather than a fictitious, narrative. In either of the allegories the nature of the imagery which the narrative affords must be carefully considered before the points of analogy are selected by the interpreter.

In the light of the method employed in interpreting these figures, we may frame the

*RULE :—When interpreting figures based on similitude or analogy, the nature of the imagery must be well considered.*

RULE XXXIII.—*Points of Comparison Few.***Reason.**

In approaching a comparison of two objects the mind naturally contemplates very few similitudes or analogies. This is especially true in brief figures, such as similes and metaphors; but if the mind dwells on the comparison, so as to extend it into an allegory, the number of similitudes may be increased. In view of these facts, we ought to expect only a small number of analogies; and increase our estimate only as the nature of the comparison necessitates.

**Simile and Metaphor.**

A simile that illustrates this principle appears in Isaiah 55:10,11: "For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." While this is an extended simile, it contains really but one point of comparison. As the rain and the snow do not fall upon the earth *in vain*, so the word of the Lord must accomplish His purpose. In like manner we have a long metaphor in Eph. 4:22-24: "That ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, which waxeth corrupt after the lust of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth." Since this is a double metaphor, it has two points of analogy, but no more. The former wicked manner of life tended to corruption, as an old man tends to weakness; and the converted mind takes on new elements of character, as a new man would be expected to have fresh powers and aptitudes. Thus each part of the metaphor presents but one analogy.

**Nature of  
a Parable.**

A *parable* is an allegory true to human experience, given in a spirit of deep earnestness, and designed by analogy to teach an exalted truth. It differs from other allegories, (1) in being true to human experience, (2) in its necessary spirit of earnestness, and (3) in the exalted character of the truth to be conveyed. Usually allegories include some hints of the things which they represent; but a parable usually excludes all indications of its meaning. Such indications, however, may precede or follow the parable. This feature adapts the parable to conceal truth as well as to reveal it; and on this account it is well suited, when delivered to a mixed audience of friends and enemies of the thought to be presented, to test the character of the hearers. The Savior appears to make this very use of some of his parables (Matt. 13:10-16).

**Three Parables.**

The principle just illustrated by the simile and metaphor applies also in the interpretation of parables. In Luke XV, we have three parables evidently intended to teach the same truth. The Pharisees and the Scribes were murmuring because Jesus received sinners and ate with them. He turns to them with the parable of the man who might lose one of a hundred sheep, and who would leave all the rest to seek the one which was lost; and having found it, would rejoice over it more than over all those that went not astray. In this there is just one leading truth to be taught, that God greatly rejoices over a penitent sinner. This is immediately followed by the parable of the woman, who, having lost one of ten pieces of silver, sought it diligently until she found it; and then called her friends to rejoice with her over the piece that had been lost. Here again the Savior's application is the rejoicing in heaven over a returning sinner. In both of these parables there are many details which form no part of the lesson, except to add naturalness and force to the parable.

The parable of the Prodigal Son follows immediately after that of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin. Its main lesson is the same. The boy has wandered from home, has spent his possessions in riotous living, has come to the deepest want and shame; and, at last, penitent of his reckless life, he returns to his father's home with confessions of humility and purposes of reformation. All this prepares for the leading point, the *father's welcome* to his returning son. Even the part of the elder brother in complaining at the festive reception given the prodigal, is introduced only to heighten the effect of the leading thought. The father's explanation, "It was meet to make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found," is the key and core of the entire parable. The parable contains many details that have perhaps some subordinate analogies (compare next Rule), but these are trivial in comparison with the leading purpose, to illustrate God's eagerness to meet and bless returning sinners.

From these examples we deduce the following

RULE :—*In figures of similitude or analogy, very few points of comparison must be expected.*

RULE XXXIV.—*Major and Minor Analogies.*

Statement.

While we have seen in the preceding Rule that analogies in figures are rarely numerous, it is often true that there are a few leading points accompanied by some subordinate analogies. One object of an extended comparison, such as an allegory, is to afford an opportunity to develop subsidiary points of similitude. We need not be surprised, therefore, if some of the parables of Christ present many lesser likenesses to the kingdom.

**Parable of the  
Sower and the  
Tares.**

The Savior's own explanation of the parables of the Sower and the Tares develops several points of comparison (Matt. 13:18-23, 36-43). In the former the seed is the gospel; the wayside is the heart from which satan snatches away the word; the rocky places represent him who is easily turned from the gospel by persecution; the ground infested with thorns is he who forsakes the word for the cares and riches of the world; and the good ground represents the soul in which the word of God becomes fruitful. In the latter parable the main points are the result of sowing good seed and of sowing the tares; the one yields a harvest of glory, and the other a gathering unto destruction. In conjunction with these main points are some minor ones: the field is the world; the *good* seed represents the sons of the kingdom; the tares are the sons of the evil one; the enemy is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

**The Great  
Supper.**

The parable of the Great Supper (Luke 14:15-24) furnishes another illustration of this principle. At a feast one said to Jesus, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." This implied an eagerness to enjoy the kingdom, and seems further to imply a conviction that there will be no poor and maimed and lame and blind, which Jesus had in the previous paragraph recommended as proper guests for a feast (verse 13). Jesus sets aside this notion by the parable. A man invited many to a supper; but when it was ready they made excuses to avoid attending. The man then sent into the streets and the lanes of the city for guests; and still having room, he sent into the highways and hedges of the open country to fill his house, and denied the supper to those first bidden. Here undoubtedly the leading thought is, that those to whom the kingdom was first offered reject it and lose it, while those who are least prepared for it enter into it. But there are some minor analogies: the host is

God; the supper is the kingdom; the first invited are the leading Jews who were expecting the kingdom; the excuses are in a general way their foolish reasons for rejecting Christianity; those in the streets and lanes are the sinners, despised of the Jews, and possibly those outside of the city represent the Gentiles. These subordinate analogies are interpreted in the light of the main lesson; but care must be exercised not to imagine correspondencies where they were not intended by the author.

<p>The Wicked Husbandmen.</p>
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The parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (Matt. 21:33-41) has both major and minor points of comparison. The husbandmen to whom the vineyard was let undoubtedly represent the Jewish people upon whom God had bestowed the blessings of His revelations and mercies. The servants who were sent to receive the fruits, signify the prophets and messengers of God to the Jewish nation, who had warned the people of the duties that God required at their hands. The son, sent last of all, and cruelly slain by the husbandmen, is Christ put to death at the instigation of the Jews. The overthrow of the husbandmen signifies the fall of the Jews, either from divine favor, or politically by the dissolution of their government. These may be regarded as the major points, and the death of Christ with the consequent guilt of the Jewish people as the most important of all. The hedge, wine-press and tower, by which the vineyard was prepared, doubtless stand for the manifold means by which God prepared the nation of Israel for their important office in the accomplishment of His great purposes. The beating and stoning, as methods of killing the servants, are strictly Jewish methods of execution, and doubtless recall the very manner in which the prophets were slain. The other husbandmen to whom the vineyard will be let out signify the Gentile world invited to become citizens of the new kingdom in the stead of the Jews who refused its blessings. These are among the minor analogies of which the interpretation seems fairly assured.

These examples sufficiently illustrate the very natural and scientific principle which may be expressed in the following

*RULE :—In extended figures based on similitude, interpret first the major points, from which, work out the minor points reservedly.*

*RULE XXXV.—Embellishments of a Figure.*

**Definition.**

In the foregoing parables some elements were not interpreted at all, because they are designed not to bear any analogies, but to complete the figure itself. We may properly term such features of a parable the embellishing parts. It usually requires some descriptive matter to bring a person, or an object, or an action vividly to the apprehension of the hearer. Such descriptive matter may or may not have any corresponding feature in the subject illustrated. The careful interpreter, therefore, will not hastily impose analogies upon such parts, otherwise, he may be certain that in many cases he will burden the parable with lessons which the author never intended it to convey.

**Riddles.**

A *Riddle* is an analogy offered as a puzzle. Sometimes it is very brief, but often more extended. If it be very long, it will have the same general features as an allegory. In that case the principle set forth in the previous paragraph may be illustrated; as in the riddle found in Ezek. 17:3-21, in which a great eagle took the top of the cedar of Lebanon, and carried it into a land of traffic, where it grew as a low vine, and its branches turned toward the eagle; and another great eagle attracted the roots and the branches of the vine toward itself; whereupon the question is raised, Shall it prosper? The Jews were asked by the prophet what this meant. He then explains that the first eagle represented the king of Babylon, and the second eagle the king of Egypt. The top of the

cedar is Jehoiachin who was carried a captive to Babylon. The vine is Zedekiah who was placed on the throne in Jerusalem, and put under oath of allegiance to the king of Babylon; but who, being desirous of independence, sought an alliance with Pharaoh of Egypt against Nebuchadnezzar. The prophet urges that such a violation of the oath of allegiance cannot prosper, and that Nebuchadnezzar will carry Zedekiah and his supporters into captivity. In this riddle there are many items of description, such as the wings, pinions, feathers and colors of the eagle, which at most can only in a general way refer to the greatness of Nebuchadnezzar. The description of the vine, its soil and waters, its branches and sprigs, and the beds of its plantation, are purely descriptive, and ought not to be pressed into particular analogies.

The riddle of Samson, Judges 14:14, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness," is too brief to have embellishing elements which are not essential to the analogies.

**Jotham's Fable.**

A *Fable* is an analogy presented in fancied words and acts of beings not possessing reason. Judges 9:8-20, affords an example, and at the same time illustrates the use of embellishments. When Gideon, a great judge in Israel, died, Abimelech, a son of his maidservant, conspired with his mother's people against the seventy sons of Gideon, and slew them all but Jotham, the youngest, and proclaimed himself king. Jotham stood on the top of Mt. Gerizim, and propounded to the men of Shechem who were supporting the usurper the fable of the trees: "The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to wave to and fro over the trees?" In like manner the fig tree and the vine declined the regal offer; but the bramble accepted it on the condition that all the other trees

come and put their trust in its shadow. Here the trees are represented as reasoning and speaking as men, which marks the allegory clearly as a fable. The trees represent the people of Israel desirous of a king; the bramble, the weakest and most detestable of the trees, represents Abimelech. The nobler trees that declined to reign over the forest signify the sons of Gideon, that were not ambitious for pre-eminence. Almost all the rest of the material is descriptive; and while it contributes much to the proportions, beauty and force of the fable, it is not designed to bear special analogies.

<p>Parable of the Friend at Midnight.</p>
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The parable of the Friend at Midnight well illustrates the use of embellishing features. "Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine is come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him; and he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee? I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will arise and give him as many as he needs" (Luke 11:5-8). There are very few parables in the Bible that teach lessons by contrast; but here the one principle of importunity is set forth, with which God's great willingness and readiness to answer prayer is presented in sharp contrast. The midnight, the number of loaves, the friend from a journey, the shut door and the children in bed, have no correspondencies in the interpretation; but these are all valuable features of the narrative, and lend much of vividness and strength to the effect. Extreme care must be taken by the interpreter not to press these parts into an imaginary service, and so violate the author's natural purpose. These examples afford a sufficient induction to warrant the following

*RULE :—In figures of analogy distinguish essential from embellishing parts.*

RULE XXXVI.—*Indications by the Author.***Statement.**

An author's explanation of his own meaning, as we have seen under Rule VII, must take precedence of any other interpretation; and this is especially important in the study of figures of similitude. In extended figures of this class there are so many items which may admit of erroneous interpretation, that an author's own suggestion in regard to his meaning, even if it be but a hint, will often save serious mistakes. If a parable or other figure have no indications of the author's meaning in the context, the interpreter must depend upon a careful comparison of the nature of the figure with that of the subject illustrated; but if the author indicates his own meaning, the interpreter is obliged to follow such indications.

**The Rich Fool.**

This principle may be illustrated by the parable of the Rich Fool of Luke 12:16-21. Jesus is discussing the subject of covetousness and the folly of laying up wealth. He describes a certain rich man whose ground yielded great harvests, and who pulled down his barns to build greater ones, saying to himself that his soul might take its ease, for it had much goods laid up for many years; but that night his soul was required of him. All his wealth must then be distributed to others. This parable is followed by the Savior's explanation, "So is he that layeth up treasures for himself, and is not rich toward God." By this we are assured of the leading point of the parable.

**The King's Servant.**

In like manner, when Jesus is answering the question of Peter, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?" he propounds the parable of a king whose servant owed him ten thousand talents, but had nothing with which to pay, and the king showed him mercy in response to an earnest appeal, and forgave him the whole debt. But when this servant met a fellow servant who owed him an hundred

pence, he thrust him into prison, and despised his earnest entreaty for mercy. The king then called his servant, reminded him of the compassion he had received and of the cruelty which he had inflicted upon another, and then committed him to the tormentors until he should pay his debt. To this Jesus adds the application by which the parable must be interpreted: "So shall also my Heavenly Father do unto you if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." Matt. 18:35. It would do this parable great injustice in the light of the author's application to understand the first servant to represent the Jewish people, and his fellow servant to represent the Gentiles, and so turn the entire meaning aside from the evident intent.

**The Talents.**

Sometimes the author indicates his meaning, not by a formal declaration of it, but by putting the parable in connection with other parts of his discourse the bearing of which is unmistakable. An example of this is the parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30). It is preceded by the warning, "Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour;" and it is followed by a description of the coming of Christ in glory and the judgment of the world on the basis of faithfulness to duty. With these thoughts the parable is in perfect accord. The parables of the Sower and the Tares, which are explained in full (Matt, xiii), are further illustrations of the value of the author's own interpretation. Any interpretation which in any point might conflict with that given must be regarded as grossly irrelevant. We may therefore deduce the

*RULE—In the interpretation of figures based on similitude, follow carefully the indications given by the author.*

**RULE XXXVII.—Relation to History.**

**Relation Stated.**

Very rarely a figure of similitude is strictly an historical narrative; but usually, and in the case of parables almost invariably, they are true

to human experience. It is not unscientific, therefore, to study such figures in the light of the history and customs of the age in which they are produced. This will often be the more valuable, because the force of the figure must depend in a large measure upon the estimate placed upon the conditions described in it.

**The Ten Virgins.**

In illustration of this truth we may cite the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1-12). The account of the virgins at night with their lamps waiting for the bridegroom to a very late hour, exactly corresponds to the custom preserved by the Arabs of Palestine to this day. The necessity for the trimming of their lamps and a supply of oil would be well appreciated by persons with such customs. Even the inexorable rule to close the doors after the bridal party has entered the house, and the stout refusal to be annoyed by admitting late comers, are as true to the custom as if taken from actual history. This faithfulness to the manner of life well known to the people to whom the parable was first uttered, gave it an interest and force which must have carried the lesson with great effect into their minds.

**The Nobleman.**

A *very* notable instance in which a parable is almost a reproduction of history is found in Luke 19:11-27. The nobleman who went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return, represents Christ; but so true is it to the political conditions of that age, that it almost describes the visit of Archelaus to Rome to secure the office of king over the Jews from the Emperor Augustus. The citizens that hated the applicant for the throne, and sent an embassy after him remonstrating against his receiving the crown, represents the Jews who opposed the reign of Christ; but this again is a clear reflection of an urgent petition sent to Augustus urging him to refuse the request of Archelaus. At the close of the parable the execution of those who had actively opposed the kingdom, stands for the punishment of

such men as rejected Christ; but this is also true to the history of Archelaus, who slew many of the Jews that had withstood his appointment (see Josephus' *Antiq.* xvii. II. I, ff.)- We do not know that all of the details of the parable pertaining to the pounds delivered to the several servants are part of the history of Archelaus; but their reasonableness and fitness under such circumstances render even this fairly probable. Such a parable must have made a deep impression upon the minds of the Jews in that day; and even with us the historical basis imparts a deep interest to the narrative. The lessons of the parable remain the same as if it were wholly imaginary; but they are more vivid and effective for their imitation of real events.\*

<p>Details not Supplied.</p>
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While all such figures are closely related to history, the interpreter is not at liberty to supply any details of the account from his own imagination, as he might properly do to complete a partial narrative in pure history. In actual history, certain intervening events not handed down by the historian must necessarily have occurred; and the reader must supply them for himself. In a parable it is otherwise; for the narrative itself is an analogy, and just so much of it is related as serves the author's purpose. If the reader should add any items, he will run a serious risk of marring the author's work; and especially if he bases any comparisons upon parts thus supplied, he will be illustrating truth on his own responsibility instead of interpreting the work of another. He will be in this case an author and not an interpreter. In harmony with these examples and conclusions we may frame the following

*RULE :—Study a figure of similitude carefully as if pure history, in the light of the times, but supply no details by imagination.*

\*On this parable, see also pp. 95-6.

RULE XXXVIII.—*Disconnected Particulars.*

Not to be  
Interpreted.

In preceding rules, we have observed that each figure is designed to convey a few main thoughts, but that there may be some subordinate points of comparison. It must be clear that inasmuch as such figures are prepared chiefly to convey the main thoughts, all subordinate ones must have an intimate connection with the main thoughts themselves. Any particulars in a parable which do not seem to be closely related to the principal lesson, ought not to be interpreted at all. The very lack of connection which they manifest is the clearest indication that they were not intended to bear analogies.

The Good  
Samaritan.

An example of this appears in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:30-37, in which the main thought is suggested by the Lawyer's question to Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" There is one main lesson to be conveyed, which is that a neighbor may be a man's supposed enemy as well as the one whom he presumes to be the best of friends. The man that fell among thieves is uncared for by the priest and Levite, who should be the foremost of his countrymen and the best of his neighbors; but they pass him by with disdain. On the other hand, the Samaritan, hated as an enemy, bends over him in sympathy, takes him up in kindness, lodges him in safety under the care of an inn-keeper, and provides for his future needs. All this sets forth clearly the main thought, that an enemy as well as a friend is to be regarded as a neighbor, and treated with neighborly kindness. There are some particulars in the account of the Samaritan which have sometimes been interpreted out of connection with this leading thought. The *oil* poured into the wounds has been supposed to represent the anointing of the Holy Spirit; but this has nothing to do with the question, Who is my neighbor? The *wine* also has been thought to symbolize the

blood of Christ; but this too is disconnected from the main lesson. Some have regarded the *inn* as a figure of the church, and the *two pence* as the two sacraments, or the two testaments; but these interpretations violate the same principle as the others. The Samaritan *charged* the host at the inn to care for the wounded man, and *promised* a satisfactory reward; and these have been interpreted to represent the charge which Christ gave to Peter and the other apostles to feed his sheep, and his promise to reward them for their sacrifices in behalf of the kingdom. This also is out of accord with the main thought, and must for that reason be rejected as not part of the author's purpose.

The Leaven.
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The parable of the Leaven which a woman hid in three measures of meal until all was leavened (Luke 13:21), contains two elements which have sometimes been interpreted with little relation to the leading truth. Evidently the parable is designed to illustrate the gradual progress of Christianity among men. This is signified by the nature of leaven at work in meal. But what is meant by the woman and by the three measures? Some have suggested that a woman is mentioned because the Holy Spirit is the sanctifying power in humanity, and a woman is better suited than a man to represent this spiritual influence. Others urge that she represents the church whose influence goes out into the world. Either of these interpretations has little to do with the main lesson, which remains in full force without any interpretation of the woman. After all, it is God who has placed the kingdom in the world as the woman placed the leaven in the meal. The woman did not exert the leavening influence as it proceeded in the meal. For these reasons, either of these interpretations is wide of the mark. The number three cannot be interpreted in a way to make the parable more complete or useful. Augustine's reference to the three sons of Noah as representatives of the whole race, interprets one figure by another, and introduces an idea foreign to the main thought.

<p>Laborers in the Vineyard.</p>
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In the parable of the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16), laborers are invited at different hours of the day to work in a vineyard; and although the first were to receive a penny for their whole day's labor, the rest received at night the same amount. Here the main lesson is, that the rewards of Christian service are not in proportion to the amount of service. While there may be some subordinate points of comparison, the greater number of particulars are not intended to convey special analogies. For example, the lord of the vineyard told his steward to call the laborers, and give them their hire, which does not exactly correspond to anything in the Christian institution. To insist that the steward is Christ is not only unnecessary to the main lesson, but makes Christ a subordinate at the end of the world. So the order of payment, "beginning from the last unto the first," has no correspondency in the reward of Christian people. Again, a certain expositor remarks that the denarius or penny was of different kinds, double, treble, and fourfold; of brass, of silver and of gold. So he assigns to the Jew a penny of the meaner metal, his earthly reward; and to the Gentile the golden penny, a spiritual and eternal reward. This may be very ingenious, but there is not the slightest evidence that such thought was intended by the author. In all such cases items that are not vital to the parable should not be interpreted, unless there be good reason for believing that the author so intended. Accordingly, we may form the general

RULE:—*Interpret no particulars out of connection with the main thought, unless indicated by the author.*

RULE XXXIX.—*Elements Apparently Inconsistent.*

<p>A Class of Figures.</p>
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There is a large class of figures of speech which seem to involve some absurdity or inconsistency by which the attention of the reader is arrested, and in the solution of which the mind

naturally takes pleasure. Such figures are usually very forcible; and the more absurd they appear, if easily solved by the reader, the greater is the emphasis placed upon the thought to be conveyed. The interpreter must so understand the figure as to reach a harmonious meaning; otherwise, the language will remain an absurdity, and the author's purpose will be wholly defeated. Many of these figures are so frequently used and familiar to the reader that he has no difficulty in solving them; but some are so rare that he may be perplexed to discern their meaning. He must in all such cases seek a meaning for the language in which the elements that seem meaningless or inconsistent with each other, are harmonized in an interpretation which is also in accord with the writer's apparent purpose.

<p>Definitions and Illustrations.</p>
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The principle may be illustrated by examples of some of the most important figures of the class. A *paradox* is a statement apparently absurd for emphasis. An example is found in Matt. 13:12, "But whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away that which he hath." Here the absurdity appears in the suggestion to take something away from a person that has nothing; but the meaning is that there shall be taken away the little that he might have.

An *Oxymoron* is an apparent inconsistency between an epithet and its noun; as in Prov. 12:10, "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." Here the epithet "cruel" is inconsistent with the noun "tender-mercies;" but the meaning is not difficult to discern, for this can only suggest the tenderest mercies that a wicked man has. Literal language would not call such feelings tender mercies. Compare also Matt. 6:23, "If the light that is in thee be darkness."

*Irony* is an assertion of the opposite of what is meant; as in 1 Kings 18:27, "Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is musing, or he has gone aside, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he is asleep

and must be awaked." In this passage the prophet was mocking the god Baal whose worshippers were vainly calling upon him to send down fire from heaven. When he says, "He is a god," he means to imply that in his opinion he is not in any sense a divinity. When he speaks of his musing, or being in a journey, or being asleep, he means that this is the very opposite of what a god is doing or ought to be doing. Irony is almost always used in mockery. Another example is found in Job 12:2, "No doubt ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you." Paul uses irony many times in his epistles, and especially in Corinthians. A sample is seen in 1 Cor. 4:8, "Already ye are filled, already are ye become rich, ye have reigned without us." That he is speaking ironically here is plain from the following sentence, "Yea, and I would that ye did reign, that we also might reign with you." He intends to remind them of how much they lack in all these respects.

The figure of *Vision* is a representation of the distant as at hand, of the past as present, or of the imaginary as actual. Thus: 1. The distant future appears at hand in the prophecy of Balaam, Num. 24:17, "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not nigh: there is come forth a star out of Jacob, and a scepter is risen out of Israel, and smites through the corners of Moab, and breaks down all the sons of tumult." While the tense of these words is future in the R. V., they are perfect in the Hebrew, as if the objects and actions were at hand. 2. An example of the past as present may be found in the word "cometh" in Matt. 26:40, "And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" 3. An example of the imaginary as actual occurs in Isa. 10:28-32, where the prophet is describing an imaginary invasion of an Assyrian army; "He is come to Aiath, he is passed through Migron; at Michmash he layeth up his baggage; they are gone over the pass; they have taken up their lodging at Geba; Ramah trembleth; Gibeah

of Saul is fled. Cry aloud with thy voice, O daughter of Gallim! hearken, O Laishah! O thou poor Anathoth! Madmenah is a fugitive; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. This very day he halts at Nob; he shaketh his hand at the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem."

*Personification* is a figure in which animate attributes are ascribed to inanimate things. Ps. 114:3, "The sea saw it, and fled; Jordan was driven back," may be cited as an example. Other examples are: Num. 16:32, "The earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up;" Hab. 3:10, "The mountains saw thee, and were afraid . . . the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high;" Matt. 6:34, "The morrow will be anxious for itself."

*Aphophasis* is a pretended suppression of what is really being said; as in Phile. 19, "I say not unto thee how that thou owest to me even thine ownself besides." This is a cogent figure, since the very effort apparently made to conceal a matter always awakens a curiosity to know it, and tends to emphasize it by attracting to it greater attention.

A *Paranomasia* is a play on words, a pun. In Matt. 8:22, Jesus said to a man, "Follow me; and leave the dead to bury their own dead." Here the word "dead" is used in two senses. Those who were dead spiritually were to be left to bury those who were dead literally. In Matt. 16:18, a play on words is evident in the Greek: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church." Here in the Greek the name Peter is *petros*, and the word rock is *petra*. A play on similar words is found in Phil. 3:2, 3, "Beware of the concision; for we are the circumcision." Concision in the Greek is *katatome*, and circumcision is *peritome*. Compare Isa. 5:7, "And he looked for judgment (Hebrew *mish-pat*), but behold oppression (Heb. *mispach*) ; for righteousness (Heb. *tsedakah*), and behold a cry (Heb. *tse'akah*); and Luke 21:11, "Famines and pestilences" (Greek *limoi kai loimoi*) ; and Rom. 1:29,31, "full of envy, murder"

(Greek, *phthonou, pkonou*), "without understanding, covenant breakers" (Greek, *asunetous, asunthetous*). It can be hardly an accident that Paul brings together the Greek words *en panti pantote pasan*, Acts 24:3, "in all ways, in all places, with all thankfulness."

*Anthromorphism* is an ascription of material forms to God; as in Ruth 2:12, "The God of Israel under whose wings thou art come to take refuge." Likewise, when Moses requested to see the glory of the Lord, he was told, "I will put thee in a cleft of a rock, and will cover thee with my hand until I have passed by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back; but my face shall not be seen" (Ex. 33:22, 23). Here the entire description represents God as if He had material forms like those of a man. We have every reason to believe, however, that a spirit has not physical shapes, and that such language is an accommodation to human forms of thought.

*Anthropopathy* is an ascription of the passions of man to God. An example of this may be found in Job 21:20, "And let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty." While we often read in the Scriptures of the wrath of God, we cannot understand that He literally exercises this passion of men; but that it is a figure used to represent the necessary attitude of infinite justice toward the disobedient. Another example is in Zech. 8:2, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great fury." Here the passions of jealousy and fury are human, but ascribed to God, not because He may be supposed to enter into a rage as a human being, but because the results of His disposition toward Israel in her idolatry are similar to those of a man acting under these passions.

A *Hyperbole* is an exaggeration for emphasis; as in 2 Sam. 1:23, where the poet says of Saul and Jonathan, "They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions." Another example is Luke 13:33, "For it cannot be

that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." Also, in Ps. 6:6, "I am weary with my groaning; every night I make my bed to swim; I melt my couch with my tears." A Hyperbole differs from a falsehood by having no intention to deceive; and if it be properly composed, it furnishes no occasion to deceive an intelligent reader.

A *Litotes* is a weaker for a stronger expression, or a mild affirmation of a fact by denying its contrary. An example may be found in Acts 21:39, "But Paul said, I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city." By "no mean city" he means a city of very great importance. So in Rom. 5:5, "Hope putteth not to shame," is really an affirmation that hope brings us great honor. Likewise, in Matt. 6:13, "And bring us not into temptation," means, deliver us from temptation.

A *Synecdoche* is the use of a part for the whole, the whole for a part, a definite for an indefinite, a genus for a species, a species for its genus, or other similar substitution because of the relative magnitude of the things concerned. In Luke 6:19, "And all the multitude sought to touch him; for power came forth from him, and healed them all," clearly the whole multitude is mentioned where only a part can be really meant. The reverse is seen in Ps. 46:9, "He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariots in the fire." Here the bow, spear and chariots stand for all weapons of war, which the Lord is able to put aside. In Luke 12:52, we have definite for indefinite numbers: "For there shall be from henceforth five in *one* house divided, three against two, and two against three." An example of genus for species is found in Mk. 16:15, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation." Species for genus is exemplified in Rom. 1:16, "Salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Here Greek is comparatively a small class in the whole Gentile world, which is meant. An example of a prudential for a spiritual reason

may be seen in Matt. 5:25, "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art with him in the way; lest haply the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison." We cannot understand that arrest and imprisonment are the highest considerations in maintaining peace.

In any of these figures there is some inconsistency apparent which must be harmonized by a proper interpretation; and this principle leads us to the general

*RULE:—If elements apparently inconsistent with each other or with the nature of the subject appear in the passage, the intended force must be carefully sought till a reasonable meaning is discovered.*

*RULE XL.—Omissions.*

**Need of Supply.**

Some figures of speech involve omissions of parts of sentences, which the interpreter must supply, in order to complete the sentences grammatically, and to arrive at the full meaning intended by the author. Naturally much care must be taken not to supply wrong materials, and thereby modify the meaning. To make the proper supply the interpreter must consider well the context and the purpose of the author. Sometimes it may not be necessary to supply words and interpret them, but merely to notice the reasons for the omission and its bearings as an evidence of the author's thought.

An *Ellipsis* is an omission of words necessary to the construction of the sentence, but not to the meaning. An example may be found in Matt. 14:13, "Now when Jesus heard ( ), he withdrew from thence in a boat to a desert place apart; and when the multitudes heard ( ), they followed him." In this sentence the transitive verb "heard" grammatically requires an object; and the word "it" might be supplied to complete the construction. The meaning, however, is clear without filling the ellipsis. In

Matt. 16:3, "Ye know how to discern the face of the heaven; but ye cannot ( ) the signs of the times." Here the omission might be supplied by the word "discern," which will make good grammar, but which may be unnecessary to make the meaning clear. Some interpreters understand the ellipsis of the word "born" in Jno. 3:8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is (born) every one that is born of the Spirit." Whether this be correct or not, it certainly makes the interpretation simpler and easier.

*Aposiopesis* is a sudden break in a sentence as if not able to finish. For an example, see Ex. 32:32, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." Here Moses in his deep emotion does not finish the first part of his sentence, but omits some clause, such as, "it will be well." Another example appears in Luke 19:42, "If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace—; but now they are hidden from thine eyes." A notable example occurs in Eph. 3:1,2, "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of you Gentiles,—if so be that ye have heard," etc. In this case the sentence is broken by the introduction of a parenthesis so long that the writer appears to forget that his sentence is incomplete. In such cases we are hardly at liberty to supply the omission, since it is exceedingly uncertain what the writer intended to say.

The figure of *Interrogation* is a question asked to argue the contrary. In John 8:46, Jesus asks, "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" This implies that none of them can convict him, and the question is asked to argue the contrary of any just conviction. In Heb. 1:14, another example is presented: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?" Here the question is asked to affirm that they are

ministering spirits. Likewise, Job 11:7, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Another example occurs in Rom. 8:31-33, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" So in verse 35, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" In all these examples the questions are not asked for information, nor even for a direct reply by the author or his readers, but for the purpose of putting the contrary thought in a forcible manner. In this way the figure of interrogation may be readily distinguished from other questions.

In all these figures something is omitted which must be supplied by the reader. It may be merely one or more words, or it may be a whole clause, or it may be the entire answer to a question. Usually the interpreter can readily perceive what is omitted, and supply it without any risk of modifying the intended meaning; but it is clear that he should exercise a careful judgment not to supply the wrong material or more than the nature of the case will warrant. Accordingly, we may frame the

*RULE:—If a part of a passage appears to be omitted, supply only what is essential to express the evident intent of the author.*

**RULE XLI.—*The Extent of Meaning.***

Not in the  
Figure Alone.

The extent of the meaning of any figure, unless the explanation is contained within it or in connection with it, may not be determined by the figure itself. A figure may present its own statement or narrative; and unless the nature of the subject discussed or some other indication of the thought of the

author reveals his intent, the reader may have no means of knowing that an analogy or other departure from the usual method of speech is intended. This fact requires the interpreter carefully to study an author's subject as well as his language.

Illustrations By Metonymies.
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A *Metonymy* is the application of the name of one object to another because of relation. There are many classes of Metonymies, according to the relations that the objects whose names are exchanged may sustain to each other. 1. The name of a cause may be used for its effect; as in Luke 16:39, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." Here Moses and the prophets are mentioned when their writings are meant; for the writers themselves had been dead many centuries, but they were the causes of the writings which remained in the hands of the people. This figure illustrates the principle announced in the previous paragraph; since if we did not know the nature of the matters presented in this figure, we could not know but that the Moses and prophets referred to were literally present with the people, nor would we know that they had any writings. 2. The name of an effect may be used for its cause; as in 1 Samuel 15:29, "The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for he is not a man, that he should repent." The word "Strength" is used for the God of Israel, because He was the cause or source of their strength. Just what might be meant, however, may be determined only by knowing the nature of the subject treated by the author; for the figure itself would not show what strength was meant. 3. Often the name of a progenitor is used for that of his posterity; as in Num. 23:7, "Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel." This language is uttered hundreds of years after the man Jacob, also called Israel, was dead; and the language is applied to his posterity, the Israelites. This could not be ascertained from the figure itself, but must come from a study of the circumstances

under which the language was spoken. 4. An attribute may be substituted for its subject; as in Lev. 19:32, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary heads" (Hebrew, hoariness). In this case the attribute hoariness is used for the person who may have a hoary head; and it is so used in many passages. 5. A place may be put for its inhabitants; as in Lam. 1:8, "Jerusalem has grievously sinned;" and in Nah. 3:9, "Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength." Of course the inhabitants of Ethiopia and Egypt are meant. 6. The container may be put for its contents; as in Matt. 16:9 10, "Do ye not yet perceive, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?" The baskets here mean the fragments of bread by which the baskets were filled. So in 1 Cor. 10:21, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons; ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of demons." Here the cup stands for the wine in the cup, and the table for the food on the table. 7. A sign may be substituted for the thing signified; as in Rom. 3:30, "He shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith." In this passage circumcision is a sign of the Jews, and uncircumcision a sign of the Gentiles. Only the nature of the subject discussed by the apostle shows us that the words are used in this figurative sense.

<p><b>Illustration by Metaphor.</b></p>
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In Matt. 3:10, we have a metaphor by which the same principle as that shown above may be illustrated. John says, "Even now is the axe laid unto the root of the trees; every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." There is nothing in the figure itself to indicate that any analogy is intended; and if the interpreter did not consider the subject of the speaker, this passage might be interpreted literally. Similar attention must be given to many of the parables; as in Matt. 13:44, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth

and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." While it is distinctly stated here that the parable illustrates the kingdom of heaven, the interpreter must carefully study the nature of the kingdom before he can accurately determine the points of analogy. Again in Matt. 13:31, 32, the parable of the Mustard Seed cannot be interpreted from the contents of the parable alone. The Savior says, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which is indeed less than all seeds; but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs; and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the heaven come and lodge in its branches." The point of comparison appears in the parable to be a great growth from a small beginning; but the force of this as applied to the kingdom cannot be felt until the interpreter observes that the kingdom of Christ began with a very few adherents, and that it gradually extended until it has become an immeasurable power in the world.

These examples are sufficient to illustrate a very important principle of interpreting figures, and to justify the

*RULE :—The extent of the meaning of any figure must be determined by the nature of the subject and intent of the author as well as by the figure itself.*

#### RULE XLII.—*Single Function.*

Principle and Example.
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We have already seen that all parts of a figure must be interpreted in harmony with its leading idea. We have also considered in Axiom IX the principle that by one expression only one thought is conveyed. It remains to observe that in the interpretation of a figure no part of it can stand for more than one thing in the analogy. Under Rule ix, in considering the language of the Savior in Matt. 16:18, we found application of this principle to the interpretation of the word "rock." Peter cannot be the rock, for in the figure of

the building he cannot be both the foundation and the door-keeper; but his office is distinctly indicated by his receiving the "keys" of the kingdom Likewise, Jesus cannot be the rock, for he is the builder, and must not be also the foundation. To make the same person or thing fill a double office in a figure, is to destroy all order and reliability in our interpretations.

<p>Exception Only Apparent.</p>
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Some have thought that an exception to this law is found in the figure of the sheep- fold and shepherd, John 10:1-18. In the first ten verses Jesus twice affirms that he is the door; but in the last eight verses he repeatedly calls himself "the good shepherd." At first thought it does seem that he assigns to himself a double position in the figure; but in fact there are two figures, but closely associated in character. The first is that of the Sheepfold, but the latter is the figure of the Shepherd. In each figure Jesus has but one part. In the former, he is the door of the fold, by whom thieves and robbers do not find admittance to the sheep; but the true shepherd of the sheep enters in, and leads his sheep forth to pasture. Thus he becomes a test for the shepherds (who in verses 2-5 represent true disciples), barring out the false and injurious, and admitting the genuine and helpful ones. In the latter figure the Savior speaks of himself as the guide of his people, and maintains throughout the one position of shepherd. He contrasts the hireling who is a stranger to the sheep, and claims to be well known to them, and that he has other sheep that must be brought into the same fold with the Jews to whom he was speaking. Thus we have in the very passage that appears to be exceptional, two illustrations of this principle, which may be framed into the following

*RULE:—But one function must be assigned to any part of a figure in its interpretation.*

## CHAPTER VIII.

### POETRY.

#### *Definition of Poetry.*

##### Definition of Poetry..

Poetry may be defined as *a concrete and artistic expression of imaginative ideas in emotional and rhythmical language*. This definition involves five notable characteristics.

##### 1. Concrete.

It is *concrete* in thought. While in prose many abstract ideas are allowable and often necessary, poetry deals almost exclusively with the concrete. Truths and principles, whether philosophical or moral, are represented in poetry by figures and persons, and so exemplified in the character and actions of these rather than by abstract assertions. True poetry presents truth in the form of a picture; and accordingly, addresses itself to the imagination more than to reason.

##### 2. Artistic.

It is *artistic* in form. Not only are accent and melody sought; but the length of lines and their grouping into stanzas, the arrangement of rhymes, the recurrence of choruses or refrains, and many other artistic features are often introduced. The Hebrew parallelisms and the alphabetic arrangement of verses and paragraphs in many of the Psalms, are illustrations of this feature.

##### 3. Imaginative.

It is *imaginative* in substance. It is the province of prose writings to deal with the historical and actual; but this is not the true realm of Poetry. Poetry is the choicest fruit of the imagination. It is a fiction in substance, not a formation, but a creation, by

the mind. It may teach valuable lessons; it may make many historical references; it may deal with the most important laws of thought or principles of action, and thereby become a valuable instructor as well as captivator of the mind; but its own office is to remove the reader's thought from the real and the commonplace, and bear him forth into the sphere of the fanciful and beautiful.

**4. Emotional.**

It is *emotional* in spirit. The prose writer *may* deal with emotional themes; the true poet *must* do so. It is on this account that poetry involves many examples of passion, fervor, highly wrought figures, and imaginary scenes. The poetry of the Bible is by no means exceptional. No people indulged more in imagination or were more extravagant in their poetical utterances than the Hebrews.

**5. Rhythmical.**

It is *rhythmical* in movement. The arrangement of words in a poem is designed to place the accent, or the heavy and light syllables, in an orderly succession, so as to be pleasing to the ear. Even the consonants and vowels of the words are carefully disposed so as to make the utterance smooth and melodious. While this may in some measure be observed in prose, it is not so strictly enforced, nor reduced to an invariable law.

It is true that not all productions which are called poems adhere strictly to these characteristics; but it is equally true that by all their departures from these they lack just so much of being *pure poetry*.

RULE XLIII.—*The Artistic Character.*

**Value to Interpreter.**

The importance of observing the metre of English poetry and its arrangement into stanzas, choruses and refrains, is very apparent to a careful interpreter. It is evident that a poet must be allowed some license in the expression of his thought, and that he will often depart from the usual forms

both in grammar and rhetoric, in order to accommodate the laws of his versification. The interpreter must not be misled by such exceptional forms of expression, but must carefully note how far the poet has accommodated his words to the poetical forms.

Hebrew Poetry.
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The same is true in Hebrew poetry. Hebrew grammarians have noticed many irregular usages both in words and constructions in their poetical literature. In the most artistic Psalms, and especially those with alphabetic arrangement, there is often a very loose connection of thought from verse to verse; and this necessarily weakens the value of interpretation by the context. In the 119th Psalm a very artistic arrangement is followed. The Psalm is divided into paragraphs corresponding to the several letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In each paragraph every verse begins with the same letter; and it requires the author very often to transpose the words of a verse irregularly to bring the desired letter at the beginning, and this transposition is liable to mislead the interpreter. Moreover, every verse in this Psalm makes some mention of the "word," "statutes" or "testimonies" of the Lord; and this again taxes the resources of the poet, who not infrequently in succeeding verses resorts to very different devices, wholly disconnected from each other, to accomplish this purpose. In such a case the interpreter must be mindful of the conditions which gave rise to these peculiarities. Psalms 25, 34, 37, 111, and 112 begin their verses with the several letters of the alphabet in regular order with a very few exceptions. The parallelisms in Hebrew poetry are very important in the interpretation; and their value has been duly noted under Rule VI.

The principle involved in this great variety of poetic forms may be expressed in the following

*RULE:—A passage of poetry must be interpreted in accord with the requirements of its artistic features.*

RULE XLIV.—*The Emotional Character.***Blessing of Joseph.**

It is evident that any writer moved by powerful emotion will express his thought more forcibly and more extravagantly than in his calmer moods of thought. And interpreters must make due allowance for this fact. An example of this may be found in Gen. 49:26, where Jacob with very deep emotion pronounces his last blessing upon his most beloved son Joseph. He closes his lengthy blessing with the words:

"The blessings of thy father  
Have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors  
Unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; They  
shall be on the head of Joseph,  
And on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his  
brethren."

Here the interpreter must take into account the feeling of the aged father toward his son who had received ill treatment at the hands of his brothers, but had risen to a position of the greatest honor, and had saved the whole family from the peril of starvation. It is very noticeable that while the blessing of Judah clearly involves a richer element than that of Joseph when he says that "the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh come," yet the language is very calm and unimpassioned. This difference must be attributed wholly to the different states of Jacob's emotion.

**Imprecations.**

It is probable that many of the strong invocations in the imprecatory Psalms are merely extravagant expressions of the author's deep emotions. An example of this may be found in Psalm 140:9,10,

"As for the head of those that compass me about,  
Let the mischief of their own lips cover them. Let  
burning coals fall upon them; Let them be cast  
into the fire; Into deep pits that they may rise not  
up again."

While the spirit of the writer may here seem to be most vindictive, the context shows that this is a highly emotional

statement based upon the poet's faithfulness and loyalty to Jehovah. The 109th Psalm is a very passionate imprecation upon the enemies of the poet and of Jehovah. It consists mainly of hyperboles; for it was not the disposition of David, to whom many leading scholars ascribe this poem, to be vindictive and cruel. His treatment of Saul on many occasions is sufficient proof of this conclusion. On the other hand, such a Psalm sets forth the real truth that there are no evils too great to fall upon the head of him that disregards the injunctions of God and the feelings of humanity.

<p><b>Bitterness of Justice.</b></p>
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Although these Psalms appear bitter in spirit, they do not unduly reflect the bitterness of anguish deserved by the willful violator of laws divine and human. Indeed, in poetry the principle of adequate punishment for heinous sins can be expressed only in such concrete forms as those set forth in this poem. This accounts for such expressions as, "When he is judged, let him come forth guilty," "Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow," "Let the extortioner catch all that he hath;" "Let his posterity be cut off;" "Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out;" "He clothed himself also with cursing as with his garment . . . Let it be unto him as the raiment wherewith he covereth himself, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually." It is easy to see the strong poetic element that gives form and flavor to this production. Such psalms are often condemned thoughtlessly by those who do not consider the emotional freedom of the poet, nor the spirit of his age, nor the inherent justice of his cause.

From these examples we may properly derive the

*RULE:—Allowance must be made in poetry for the emotion of the poet.*

RULE XLV.—*The Fictional Element.***Book of Job.**

One of the greatest difficulties of interpreting poetry is to determine how much is fictional and how much historical. Many poems of a narrative character have a historical basis; and if the history be well known, the extent of the fiction can be readily judged. If, however, the poem is based upon historical events that are partially or wholly unknown to the interpreter, he will rarely have the means of deciding how much of the production is merely fictitious. We have an example of this in the book of Job. The first two chapters and much of the last chapter of this book are written in prose, the rest in poetry. It is almost certain that the poetical portions are mainly fictional; for it is unreasonable to suppose that the conversations of Job and his friends were uttered in poetry, or that their many long speeches were recorded at the time or remembered afterwards. They are clearly the product of careful and leisurely composition. It cannot be positively affirmed that the prose portions of this book are strictly historical, that the main acts really occurred and furnished the occasion of the poem, though there are certain allusions that seem to imply some historical background; but they may be related to serve only as an introduction and conclusion to a purely fictional work.

**Song of Songs.**

The Song of Songs is another example of poetry, the historical basis of which is unknown. The Shulammite maiden may have been a real person, and her rustic and royal suitors may have really lived, so that the elements of the plot may be historical; but it is not possible to prove this true. Clearly the greater part of the poem is imaginative, and possibly it has no historical basis at all. Under such circumstances the interpreter must beware of regarding his material as too historical. He must rather study the production as pure poetry, and emphasize rather the principles and lessons

involved than attempt to give it a historical setting and significance.

Psalms.

Many of the Psalms are presumably based upon the actual experiences of the writer and of the Jewish people. The interpreter should identify these historical conditions, if possible; but great care must be exercised not to accept very uncertain evidence in identifying these, and then upon this unreliable basis work out an elaborate interpretation. If this basis should be wrong, the whole work might be worthless. This is perhaps one of the most common and most grievous errors of modern commentators on the Psalms.

These facts abundantly justify the following

*RULE:—The extent of the fictional element in poetry must be duly regarded in interpreting.*

## CHAPTER IX.

### PROPHECY.

#### *The Nature of Prophecy\**

<b>Broad and Narrow Senses.</b>
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In the broader sense in which the word prophecy is used in the Bible, it is *any instruction from a divine source and communicated by man to his fellowmen*; in the narrower sense, as often used by modern writers, it is a *prediction of a coming event*. All those instructions given to the world by the prophets which do not include prediction, may be interpreted by the general principles which have already been discussed; but prediction has many peculiarities which require special attention at the hands of the interpreter. On this account the present treatment of prophecy will be limited to this narrower kind.

<b>Contrast with Heathen Prophecy.</b>
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Hebrew prophecy is very different from the utterances of the heathen seers. 1. Hebrew prophecies always had a *religious spirit and aim*. Civil and political questions might be discussed, and many national events might be foretold; but with the prophet all these had an important place in the religious development of his people. 2. Hebrew prophecy usually was *connected with the history* of the times in which it rose. The prophet took occasion to deliver his predictions when they were needed by the people among whom he lived. Accordingly, the threats and promises

\*For a fuller treatment of the whole subject of prophecy, see the author's work, "*The Messianic Message of the O. T.*" Christian Pub. Co., St. Louis.

which he uttered, were almost invariably suited to restrain or encourage the people, and so to withhold them from their vices and point them to a high national destiny. It is this fact that accounts for the choice of times in which the most important predictions were made; for it is noticeable that the periods of national crises were the most productive of important predictions. 3. These prophecies were given not merely for the time then present, but many of them were intended to be a *heritage to posterity*. It was evident to the prophets on many occasions that the generation then living would not develop the plans which they unfolded. A clear example of this is the prophecy to David concerning his son whose throne should be established forever (2 Sam. 7:12,13). 4. These prophets had *true ideals*. Heathen prophets rarely had ideals at all, but usually gave out fugitive utterances of strictly local and temporary character. The Hebrew prophets were constructors, without exception. Their predictions involved the purposes of God concerning their nation, to be wrought out in the indefinite future. It is true that they often foretold disaster; but that was attributed to an opposition to the divine will, and after all was made to serve an important part in the whole plan. 5. Each prophet *saw but a part* of the great ideal on which he wrought. It is remarkable that these parts were so supplemental as to combine into a most beautiful and harmonious picture of the divine destiny of Israel. It is no less singular that the people were so far below their prophets as that they rarely saw the glory of these visions, but in their blindness were ever spoiling the prophetic work. 6. Many of the predictions were *conditional*, but the divine aim required some to be unconditional. Such predictions as were local, individual, or national, depended largely upon the obedience of the people concerned; and whether the conditions are expressed or not, they were generally understood. Repentance might usually avert a threat, and disobedience generally subvert a promise. But those predictions which contained the essential elements of the

world's salvation were unconditional. 7. The prophet's *view was usually limited*; on this account the details of events, their time and distance, their proportions and conditions, were often unseen and untold, and hence the picture was never full and exact. This does not detract from the value of the prophecies, but rather suited them to the very purpose for which they were made. Very rarely, as in the case of Cyrus (Isa. 44:28), was a prophecy so framed as that a distant fulfiller might know that he was meant. Generally it was not the purpose to bring about fulfillment in that way. 8. The Hebrew prophets were ever *preparing for a great culmination* of divine blessing. Their work was part of a great system, the benefits of which the whole world was to share; and it is impossible properly to study their utterances without taking into account that they were designed to be parts of a great religious mosaic that was being formed from the day that the first prediction was given to Eve that her seed should bruise the serpent's head on down to the advent of the Christian institution. These features require the interpreter of Hebrew prophecies to remember that *he is dealing with utterances from a super-human source, and yet communicated through man.*

RULE XLVI.—*The Prophet's Situation.*

Effect on  
Prophecy.

The work of a prophet was so intimately connected with the needs and conditions of his people that his predictions as well as his other instructions must be studied in the light of his situation at the time. His predictions were not designed wholly for future generations, but were intended to encourage or restrain the people of his own age. On this account almost all the predictions of Hebrew prophets have a distinct historical setting, and the language of the prophecy is strongly colored by these conditions.

**The Prote-  
vangelium.**

An example of this principle is found in Gen. 3:15, "I will put enmity between thee (the serpent) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." While this prophecy clearly includes the enmity between the human race and that of the serpent, it is generally understood to foretell the moral victory of Christ, who as the seed of the woman should overcome the powers of the evil one, here represented by the serpent. Whatever the meaning may be, it is certain that nowhere else in the scriptures do we have a prophecy precisely in this form; and it is evident that the form here given is due to the character of the temptation and the office of the serpent as told in the connected story. Since such an occasion is not again presented, this form of the prophecy is not repeated.

**Noah's  
Prophecy.**

In Gen. 9:25-27, we have another example. Noah, having awakened from his wine, discovers the shameful treatment that he has received from Ham and Canaan and the tokens of respect from Shem and Japheth; and this furnishes an occasion for a prophetic curse and blessing, in which apparently the distant future is foreshadowed. The language, in which the names of the sons are prominent, is adapted exactly to the occasion of the utterance. "And he said, Blessed be Jehovah the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant." Here the devotion of Shem to Jehovah, which was not characteristic of the other families is clearly implied. The enlargement of Japheth has been signally fulfilled in the greatly superior numbers of the descendants of Japheth over those of the other families. These far-reaching utterances take their form from the occasion, and seem to have so close connection with the treatment which the sons had given their father that the prophecy seems to pronounce almost direct rewards

and punishments for the deeds of a single hour. It is unreasonable to suppose that the world's history for ages is based upon so insignificant a circumstance; and yet the occasion was suited to prefigure events of world-wide importance. Accordingly, the prophecy assumes its form from the event.

<p>The Messianic Child.</p>
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A very important example appears in Isaiah 9:6,7, where the prophet has been contemplating a dreadful invasion, probably by the Assyrians, in northern Palestine; and he turns from a picture of desolation and gloom to portray a bright and glorious future when the Messianic child shall be born, and the government shall be upon his shoulders. His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. And he prophesies that the increase of his government and its peace shall have no end, and that his kingdom shall be established for the support of judgment and righteousness forever. Now this is one of the most notable Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, yet it cannot be separated from its historical occasion. The unfaithfulness of king Ahaz of Judah to Jehovah lies in the background in contrast with the principles of judgment and righteousness which are to be sustained by the future king. The distress of hunger and warfare are contrasted with the coming prosperity and peace; while the depopulation of Zebulun and Naphtali contrasts with the increase of the new government that shall be established. It is possible also that the name of the coming king is set in antithesis with the arrogant assumptions of the Assyrian king. The Messianic king will be more wonderful, a wiser counsellor, a mightier one, a more enduring leader, a prince of peace rather than of war. It thus appears that a prophecy may receive its form from the condition under which it is uttered without marring its sacred meaning. It must be evident that a scientific interpretation of such pre-

dictions will require a careful study of the times in which the prophecy is proclaimed. Accordingly, we may adopt the

RULE :—*The form and meaning of a prediction must be studied in the light of the prophet's situation.*

RULE XLVIL—*Harmony and Fulfillment.*

Statement of  
the Principle.

The predictions of the Old Testament have a distinct place in the development of the divine plan by which the world should be redeemed; and, accordingly, each utterance forms a valuable part, and cannot be ignored in a proper study of the whole. The full meaning of these predictions was hidden from the prophets themselves and from their people until the times of their accomplishment; and their significance became known by their fulfillment. Without Christianity the meaning of many most remarkable predictions could never have been determined. In the life and office of Christ numerous typologies of the law and predictions of the seers find their only real interpretation; and their relation to the entire scheme of human redemption could not be understood until Christianity developed the value and proportions of the several parts of the entire system. It follows that the predictions must be interpreted in the light of their fulfillment so far as that fulfillment may be known to the interpreter. If the predictions were based upon human foresight alone, and were liable to fail of fulfillment, or if they were liable to find their fulfillment in the doings of any or every generation, and were susceptible of being interpreted in any one of many ways, then the fulfillment would be so uncertain and precarious as to furnish no clue to the intention of the prophecy. If, therefore, any interpreter questions the divine origin of these predictions and their position in the revelation of divine truth, he will not be in position to interpret them according to the principle just set forth. In the present writing it is claimed that the

prophecies are expressions and revelations of the immutable purposes of God; and hence must have their fulfillment, and therein must find their interpretation. This view finds its scientific basis in the phenomena of *one harmonious system formed and completed by many revelations through many centuries culminating in the establishment of Christianity*. Such a thing is not human, feeble, or precarious.

<p>Nathan's Prediction.</p>
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If we examine the prophecy of Nathan to David, 2 Sam. 7:12-16, we shall see the importance of studying the fulfillment to determine the value of the prediction. In this case the Lord said, "When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." In this passage the prophet appears to refer to the immediate successors of David and the construction of the temple. The historical setting favors this view; for David had just proposed to erect a house of worship, and this very passage withholds him from accomplishing that object. The prediction, however, states that the throne should be established forever, which reaches beyond the kings that immediately follow David. Further on the prophecy adds, "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be made sure forever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever." This language taken in connection with (1) the royal character of Christ, and (2) the fact that he was the son of David, and (3) that he will reign forever, points unmistakably to the Messianic king. When we take this in connection with the whole system of preparation for Christ in Old Testament times, the Messianic bearing and definite intent of the prophecy can hardly be doubted. If it was intended to be Messianic, the reign of the Messiah must furnish the true interpretation of it; and so the fulfillment is the only definite clue to the reach of its meaning.

**The Servant.**

Another illustration of this truth is the prophecy of the Servant, Isaiah 52:13-53 :12. The prophecy cannot be adequately interpreted to mean the nation of Israel, or any nucleus of it, as some have supposed, but it does attain a rich and worthy fulfillment in Christ. If no other person or group of persons can be meant in this prophecy, it follows most conclusively that it must be interpreted in the light of its Messianic fulfillment. This does not disregard the historical conditions in the midst of which this prophecy may have originated, nor does it overlook the possibility that the prophet himself may have thought of the righteous remnant of the Jewish nation in exile as Jehovah's Servant by whom these things should be brought to pass. It does contemplate, however, a divine authorship more far-seeing than the prophet, and the necessity of interpreting in harmony with the divine purpose which brought the prediction into existence. That this passage is Messianic cannot be questioned by any candid mind familiar with all the facts; and the clearness of a divine foresight is most apparent. In such a case there is no more scientific means of interpretation than the fulfillment itself.

**Caution.**

It must be remembered that the principle here discussed does not apply to predictions the fulfillment of which is not certainly known. If a certain fulfillment be regarded only as probable, an interpretation based on such fulfillment must be held only as probably correct. We may therefore state the principle as in the following

*RULE:—A prediction regarded as divine should be interpreted in harmony with its fulfillment if that be known.*

RULE XLVIII.—*Preassumption of Contents.***A Frequent Error.**

We have already seen in Rule XIII that an interpretation should not be controlled by a preconceived opinion; and there are special reasons for the application of this principle to the interpretation of prophecy. Perhaps no error is more frequent and destructive than the effort to make prophecy conform to assumed meanings which exist only in the minds of interpreters. Prophecy affords a peculiarly favorable field for this sort of interpretation, because of the obscurity of many of its utterances, and because of the expectation that the prophecies will find exact fulfillments in the Christian era. It can hardly be doubted that many predictions are in this way partly or wholly misunderstood and misapplied. Generally this is because many interpreters give too little attention to the historical origin and immediate application of prophetic instruction, and because of a fascination for examples of distant and exact previsions.

**Prophecy of the Virgin.**

This may be illustrated by the prediction in Isa. 7:14, in which the prophet in conversation with King Ahaz informs him that he need not fear the allied kings of Damascus and Samaria, for they shall be overthrown by the Assyrians. The king is incredulous, and yet too haughty to ask for a sign from Jehovah that the prediction is correct; therefore, Isaiah says, "The Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, when he knoweth to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken." It is clear that the prophecy of the virgin is intimately connected with the history of the times; and that the child was to be born very soon after the prediction was made, and before he should be old enough to distinguish good and evil the kings of Damascus and Samaria were to be overthrown.

It is very easy, however, for an interpreter to overlook these historical items, and especially when he reads of the Messianic fulfillment distinctly declared in Matt. 1:22,23, "Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Behold the virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us." Interpreters often find it difficult to understand Matthew's application to the birth of Christ by the virgin Mary without setting aside the historical connections in Isaiah. With the preassumption that the prophet must have had the birth of Jesus in mind, an interpreter is almost sure to neglect an immediate fulfillment in the days of Ahaz. We have a right to accept Matthew's statement that these words were fulfilled in the birth of Jesus; but this does not give us the right to set aside the promise to Ahaz. We may understand that Jehovah fulfilled His word to the king of Judah by the overthrow of his allied enemies during the infancy of the little child Immanuel, whose name was monumental of God's presence in the deliverance of Judah from her foes. That part of the prediction that could be applied to Jesus, as by Matthew, has also what may well be termed a *parallel fulfillment*, that is, a new event that can be aptly described by the prophet's words, though not the primary event in the mind of the prophet. In this case a special value attaches to the one word *Immanuel*, God with us, as exemplified by Christ the Son of God. If this prophecy be approached with the assumption that it could have no other fulfillment than that in the days of Ahaz, or no other than the birth of Jesus, either the teaching of Isaiah or that of Matthew must be set aside.

Resurrection of Jesus.
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Another important prediction is given in Ps. 16:10, "For thou wilt not leave my soul to sheol, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." The setting of this in the Psalm in

which David seems to speak of himself in a time of danger, and declares his confidence in God to deliver him from death at the hands of his enemies, places a personal construction upon the words quoted, and seems to make them mean that the Lord will not forsake David's life that he should go down to sheol, or that his flesh should be decomposed in the grave as a result of his enemies' success in their efforts to slay him. But in Acts 2:27, these words are quoted, and the apostle Peter follows the quotation with the statement that David spoke of the resurrection of Christ. He argues that he spoke not of himself; for he died, was buried, his tomb remains until this day, and he foreknew that God would raise up one to sit upon his throne. Here a preassumption that David spoke only of himself would set aside the teaching of the apostle; or a preassumption that he spoke only of the resurrection of Jesus would lead to a disregard for the connection of the words in the Psalm. Each of these positions, although very unsatisfactory, has been often taken by interpreters. It seems far more in accord with the phenomena, and hence more scientific, to take account of the double authorship of the Psalm. As Peter says, David was a "prophet," and he spoke by the Spirit of God; so that while he is praising Jehovah for past deliverances and expressing his confidence in his future protection, the Spirit appears to place words in his mouth, which David may interpret for himself, but which are in their highest sense applicable only to the Messiah. In the two possible applications, the principle, viz., deliverance from death on account of holiness, is one and the same; and in consideration of the peculiar double authorship, the passage does not fall under the condemnation of being designed to bear more than one meaning. David's situation prepared him to be a most suitable prophet to utter, perhaps unconsciously, the God-given prediction as Peter understood it.

Weeping at  
Ramah.

Another illustration of this principle occurs in Jer. 31:15, where the prophet foreseeing the fall of Israel into the hands of the Babylonians, pictures the distress of the captives collected at Ramah as they behold the greatness of the slaughter and the wretchedness of the living: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; she refuseth to be comforted for her children, because they are not." This is followed by an exhortation to refrain from weeping for "they shall come again from the land of the enemy." It is clear from these words that the prophet has reference to the captives; but in Matt. 2:17,18, the language is quoted, and it is clearly affirmed to be fulfilled in the lamentations at Bethlehem over the infants slain by Herod the Great. Here, again, preassumption may lead the interpreter to ignore either the historical setting of the prophecy in Jeremiah or the application made by Matthew. Clearly the prediction immediately refers to the grief of the captives at the fall of Jerusalem; and it is almost equally clear, since Ramah and Bethlehem were well known and distinct places, that Matthew could not regard the prophecy as a direct prevision of Herod's cruelty. It is most reasonable to conclude that Matthew deemed this a parallel fulfillment of the prophecy in the sense that it furnished a striking parallel in the occasion of deep mourning, so that the language of the prophet was entirely adaptable to the new event. This is quite sufficient as a meaning of the word "fulfill," for the thought expressed in the prophecy was as well adapted to the latter occurrence as to the former.

These examples abundantly demonstrate the importance of reserving judgment on the meaning of a prediction until all the facts in the case are carefully noted. We may express this in the following

RULE:—*No prophecy should be approached with an assumption as to what it should contain.*

RULE XLIX.—*Prophetic Numbers.*

Usage Must Be Studied.
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The interpretation of numbers in prophecy, just as that of any other words, depends upon usage, and must be reached by a careful comparison of passages where they occur. Unfortunately for the interpretation of prophecy in almost all ages, many peculiar theories concerning the meaning of numbers have embarrassed scientific interpreters. Such theories are usually supported by uncritical and ingenious methods of interpretation, with which many students have become infatuated, and upon which they have rested content without ample investigation. It is reasonable to expect prophetic writers, just as other writers, to use numbers both literally and figuratively. A study of many examples will establish the correctness of this expectation.

Numbers Often Literal.
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It is reasonably certain that numbers are often used in prophetic utterances in their regular, literal sense. The prophecy to Noah, Gen. 7:4, "Yet seven days and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights," cannot reasonably be regarded otherwise than literal. There is no reason whatever for regarding the days as symbolical of years, nor for supposing that the seven or the forty have any peculiar or special significance. Again, when Abraham received the prophecy, Gen. 15:13, "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," he certainly did not understand that these years must be multiplied by three hundred and sixty, according to the number of days in a year, to reach the prophetic import. At any rate, if such was the meaning, the prophecy signally failed of fulfillment, or our Biblical chronology is hopelessly confused. This is true also in later predictions. Isaiah (7:8) prophesied that within sixty-five years Ephraim should be broken in pieces, that it be not a people. This

came to pass by two notable events within sixty-five literal years; one was the fall of Samaria less than fifteen years after the prediction, and the other was the colonization of Assyrian tribes in the land of Ephraim by which the Ephramites were mingled with Gentiles, only a few years later. Any theory that sets aside the literal significance of the numbers in this passage does injustice to its most remarkable fulfillment.

But it is sometimes urged that later prophets, and especially Daniel, do not use prophetic numbers literally; but in Dan. 9:2, we are informed that he referred to the book of Jeremiah, and ascertained that seventy years were the period predicted "for the accomplishment of the desolation of Jerusalem." This refers to the length of the Babylonian exile; and Daniel interpreted the number literally, for he began immediately to prepare for the return. It would be most extravagant to understand that the Exile was to continue three hundred and sixty times seventy years; and it is an historical fact that the Exile lasted, in round numbers, the period that Jeremiah had prophesied in literal terms.

<p>Special Uses. Three.</p>
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On the other hand, there is evidence that numbers are sometimes used in a figurative or special sense. Many interpreters find a sacred significance in the use of the number *three* in the thrice repeated benediction and the three-fold mention of the name Jehovah that the Lord commands to be "put upon the children of Israel" in Num. 6:24-27; in the triple ascription of holiness to Jehovah in Isa. 6:3, and Rev. 4:8, followed in the latter passage by the three titles, Lord, God, and Almighty, and the words, "who was, and who is, and who is to come;" in the three-fold name of the baptismal formula (Matt. 28:19) ; and in the apostolic benediction (2 Cor. 13:14). It is evident from these examples that the trinity in the Godhead is intended at least to be strongly emphasized; but it does not follow conclusively that the

number itself thereby acquires elsewhere in the Scriptures a special meaning.

Seven.

The number *seven* seems to have a peculiar use in Josh. 6:13-15, where the seven priests with seven trumpets were to compass the city of Jericho seven days, and on the seventh day seven times, and then with a shout the walls of the city were to fall before them. Why the number seven here so often repeated? Likewise in the law, the Passover feast continued seven days (Ex. 23:15), Pentecost came seven weeks after the wave offering (Lev. 23:15), the Feast of Trumpets was held in the seventh month (Lev. 23:24), and seven times seven years brought the Jews to their Jubilee (Lev. 25:8). Also, in the book of Revelation this number occurs very often, and seems not to be accidental, but to have some symbolical meaning; else why does the writer mention just seven churches, seven stars, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven thunders and seven last plagues? It is generally believed that this number symbolizes completion or perfection, and therefore seven stands for the whole number, which may be indefinite. It is notable, however, that this number is rarely used by the Old Testament prophets, and it is not certain that with them it had any special significance. It seems to be used in an indefinite sense in Isa. 30:26, "And the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days, in the day that Jehovah bindeth up the hurt of His people;" and also in Dan. 3:19, "They should heat the furnace seven times more than it was wont to be heated." If the number has any peculiar value in prophecy, it is limited almost exclusively to the book of Revelation.

The number *four* is often employed to refer to all parts or directions of the earth, and hence is usually applied to worldly things; as "the four winds," "the four corners," and so to the four seasons of the year. In prophecy, we may note in Ezek. 1:5,6, the four living creatures, each with four faces, four hands,

Four.

four wings, and connected with four wheels; and in Zech. (1:18,20; 6:1), the four horns, the four smiths, and the four chariots. Ezekiel himself interprets his vision to be a representation of "the likeness of the glory of Jehovah" (1:28); and the number four seems to refer to the four quarters of the earth or four directions to which the glory of the Lord went forth. Likewise, in Zechariah the four horns represent the enemies of Judah in all directions; and the four smiths are to bring about the complete overthrow of the enemy on all sides. On the same principle the four chariots were to go forth in all directions for the discomfiture of Judah's foes. Thus the number four, so far as it acquires a prophetic significance, seems to refer to a fulness of space, or all directions on the surface of the earth; for the meaning seems to arise from the popular conception of the four points of the compass.

<p><b>Larger Numbers.</b></p>
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Many larger numbers are often used as round numbers or definite for indefinite. Probably when Jacob says that Laban changed his wages *ten* times, he means many times (Gen. 31:41) ; and in the same sense we may understand ten women (Lev. 26:26), ten sons (1 Sam. 1:8), ten rulers (Eccles. 7:19), and the kings represented by the ten horns (Dan. 7:7,24; Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 17:12). The significance of ten as composed of seven and three is probably a fiction of interpreters. The number *twelve* became naturally to the Jew very notable on account of their number of tribes; and this was emphasized by the appointment of twelve apostles. It can hardly be doubted that we should herein find the reason for the twelve stones in the breastplate of the high priest (Ex. 28:21), the twelve casks of showbread (Lev. 24:5), twelve bullocks, twelve rams, twelve lambs, and twelve kids offered at the dedication of the altar (Num. 7:87) ; and so the twelve times twelve thousand of the sealed (Rev. 7:4-8), the twelve gates, guarded by twelve angels and the twelve foundations of the city wall

which bore the names of the tribes or of the apostles (Rev. 21:12,14). The number *forty* was impressed upon the minds of Israel by the period of their wandering in the wilderness; and it occurs many times in their history; notably, the forty stripes to punish a criminal (Deut. 25:3) ; the forty years' reign of Saul, David and Solomon; the forty years of Egypt's desolation (Ezek. 29:11,12); the forty days respite given Nineveh by the prophet Jonah; and the forty days fasting of Moses, Elijah and Jesus. We have no apparent reason in any of these instances to assume that the number is used symbolically. The number *seventy* frequently occurs, as the number of Jacob's household (Gen. 46:27), of the elders of Israel (Num. 11:24), of the years of Babylonian exile (Jer. 25:11,12; Dan. 9:2), and of the disciples chosen to preach the gospel (Luke 10:1). Some interpreters have regarded the number as symbolic in Daniel's prophecy of "seventy weeks" (Dan. 9:24) ; and many understand them to be weeks of years, the total being 490. This explanation, however, involves the interpreters in endless discussions and total uncertainty as to the time when the period began and ended. It is probably far better to regard it as a definite for an indefinite time, only a simple synecdoche.

<p><b>Year-Day Theory.</b></p>
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Many expositors hold what is called the "year-day theory," which means that in prophecy a day represents a year. This theory has been employed especially to interpret the "time, times, and half a time" (Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14) ; the 1260 days (Rev. 11:3; 12:6) ; the 2300 days (Dan. 8:14) ; the 1290 and the 1335 days (Dan. 12:11,12). Also according to this theory the forty-two months (Rev. 11:2; 13:5) are composed of thirty days each, making 1260 days, which represent so many years.

<p><b>A Proof.</b></p>
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Although this theory would most fundamentally affect our system of interpreting prophecy, and is therefore very important, it certainly rests

upon very unsubstantial proof. As one proof it is urged that in Num. 14:33, 34, after the spies had reported their forty days search through the land of Canaan, and had advised the Israelites not to enter the land, Jehovah pronounced their punishment, and stated the time of it in these words: "After the number of the days in which ye spied out the land, even forty days, for every day a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years." But it may be noted that this is in no sense a key to the prophecies of Daniel or any other writer, but a literal statement that as the unfaithful spies had spent forty days in the land so their faithless people should all spend forty years in the wilderness. The passage is very literal and explicit; the days mean days, the years mean years, and the case has nothing whatever to do with prophetic numbers.

**Another Proof.**

Again in Ezekiel 4:5,6, the prophet was commanded to lie upon his left side a certain number of days and bear the iniquity of Israel, and this was followed by the statement, "For I have appointed the years of their iniquity to be unto thee a number of days, even three hundred and ninety days; so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And again, when thou hast accomplished these, thou shalt lie on thy right side, and shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah; forty days, each day for a year, have I appointed unto thee." Here again we have a plain statement in which the words "days" and "years" have their literal meanings, and in which as a special case the number of days selected for the prophet was determined by the years of his people's iniquities. There is no indication in the passage that a general rule for the interpretation of prophecy is set forth, or that the relation of days to years as here given is applicable to any other prophecy. There is not the slightest evidence that this is a general rule.

**Further Proofs.**

It is sometimes argued that the word days is used to denote years in some historical passages, and may be so used in prophetic passages;

but the examples offered are very unsatisfactory. In Jud. 17:10, Micah offered to pay his priest ten pieces of silver for the days, and a suit of apparel, and his victuals. Although "for the days" is often translated "by the year" (Rev. Ver), the words may be used literally, and mean the days that the priest should remain with him. The context furnishes no indication that the contract was by the year. So in 1 Sam. 2:19, we are told that Samuel's "mother made him a little robe, and brought it to him from days to days in her going up with her husband to offer the sacrifice of the days." Here again the R. V. translates "from year to year" and "yearly;" but it may mean simply at the days of the regular feasts, and this seems the more apparent from the Hebrew text in 1:3, 7, where first it speaks of Elkanah going up "from days to days," or the several days of the feasts, and then in speaking of his regular returns to Shiloh the Hebrew text says, "year by year." Other similar passages have a like meaning. Even if it could be established, as some Hebraists think, that in some rare occurrences the word days is used for years, which is not improbable, it would not follow that this is a rule in prophecy or in any other kind of literature.

<b>Rule Fails.</b>
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It is a poor rule that fails of application in a large majority of cases. The failure of the most careful estimates on the fulfillment of these prophecies to which the year-day theory has been applied, is strong evidence against it. Mr. Wm. Miller employed this method to ascertain from the prophecies the date of Christ's second coming, and with great assurance announced that it would take place in October, 1843. After time had fully exploded his system of calculation, others with the same principles of interpretation named the year 1866, 1870, and numerous other times, for the end of the world most certainly to come. These years have long since passed, and the logic of events has proved a fatal argument against the whole theory. It seems far better, therefore, to

regard all these prophetic numbers either as literal or as definite for indefinite.

On the basis of these facts and examples, we may establish the

*RULE :—Interpret numbers in prophecy literally when consistent, otherwise as definite for indefinite.*

*RULE L.—Prophetic Symbols.*

**Definitions.**

A symbol is an object used to represent another object because of resemblance or analogy. It differs from a metaphor in being an object rather than a name. A metaphor is a name of one thing used for another; while a symbol is an object representing another object. The principle of representation is resemblance or analogy in either case. It follows from these facts that symbolism in the Bible has the same natural basis and origin as figurative language; and it remains to be seen that it has precisely the same principles of interpretation.

**Mistaken for Symbols.**

Many words in the Scriptures which are commonly called symbols are really metaphors or metonymies. Thus, the word *arm* in Ps. 10:15, "Break thou the arm of the wicked," is used simply as a figure of speech; and it represents their strength, because a man's effective strength lies in his arm. The same is true of the word *balance* in Job 31:6, "Let me be weighed in an even balance," which means to be judged justly. Likewise, the word *chariots* in 2 Kings 2:12, where Elisha called Elijah "the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof," by which he meant that Elijah had protected Israel as chariots and horsemen might protect them. So the word *horn* in 1 Sam. 2:1, "Mine horn is exalted in the Lord," means power, because the horn of an ox was his means of putting forth his power against an enemy. Also the word *keys* in Matt. 16:19, "I will give

unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," means the authority to open, because a key is the means of opening a door. The word *lamp* in Ps. 132:17, "I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed," means the light of a continuous life, everlasting life, and probably refers to the Messiah. In these and many other instances the prophet does not behold an object, but merely uses the name of an object; and in all such cases the word is not a symbol, but a metaphor or metonymy.

**Examples of  
Symbols.**

A symbol is a literal thing usually perceived by the seer. A notable example of this may be found in Daniel vii, where the prophet beholds four great beasts; the first like a lion with eagle wings, the second like a bear with three ribs between his teeth, the third like a leopard with four heads and four wings, and the fourth an unnamed beast of great power with ten horns. These represented four kings or kingdoms that should rise and attain prominence in the world's history before the kingdom of heaven should be established. In the same manner many other animals appeared to the prophets in visions, and represented various powers that should be raised up. Notable examples are, the goat in Dan. 8:5-7, representing Alexander the Great; the dragon (Rev. 12:3), representing satan; a white horse (Rev. 19:11), representing the righteous dominion of its rider; and the locusts (Rev. 9:7), representing the forces of evil arrayed for war. All these are to be interpreted just as figures, by observing carefully the most prominent natural characteristics of the objects and noting the points of analogy with the subject apparently intended to be illustrated.

**Scope and  
Context.**

A symbol must be studied with regard to the scope and context of the prophecy where it is used and by its analogy to other symbols. The *bow* carried by the horseman in Rev. 6:2, can hardly be misunderstood in the light of the following statement,

"And he came forth conquering and to conquer;" for it can only denote the power of conquest. The white cloud in Rev. 14:14, can be interpreted by the words, "And upon the cloud one sat like unto the son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle;" from which it appears that the cloud represents the holy presence of Christ, as the mercy seat represented the presence of Jehovah in the temple, or the cloud represented it outside of the temple. So the breastplate in Rev. 9:9, where it is introduced as the leading part of the armor of a great enemy, can from the scope of the prophecy represent only their indestructibility. Sometimes the meaning of a symbol is determined mainly by the analogy observed by comparing different passages in which similar objects are presented. In Ezekiel's prophecy of the cedar in Lebanon (31:3-14), the trees clearly represent men, and the same is true in Isaiah's prophecy of the oak whose stock remains after the tree has fallen (6:13) ; likewise, in Zechariah's prophecy of the branch, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch" (Zech. 6:12) ; accordingly the word *tree* may be understood to represent men in Rev. 7:1; 8:7, where the context does not distinctly indicate the interpretation.

<p><b>Prominent Analogies.</b></p>
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As in metaphors, the points of analogy should be clearly discerned and well considered, all fanciful resemblances suppressed, and all that is mere drapery in the symbol should be omitted in the interpretation. In the study of Ezekiel's vision of the valley of the dry bones (37:1-14), we observe an extended description with many minutiae; but the interpretation is brief and simple. The dry bones represented the children of Israel in exile; as the bones came together, were covered with flesh, and breath was breathed into them, so the Israelites should be revived in their national spirit, and restored to their native land. It would be possible in interpreting this vision to impose numerous fanciful analogies that were never intended by the author; and it would be

easy to find resemblances in many of the details that were designed only to render the vision more natural and vivid. The description of the symbolic tree in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is very elaborate; but the interpretation points merely to the greatness of the king in his extensive dominion (Dan. 4:10-12,22). A microscopic interpreter could find fitting analogies for every detail in the description; but as in the case of parables, only the main points of analogy are intended by the author, and the minor items simply add effect to the figure.

<p>Colors and Metals.</p>
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Colors are *generally literal*, and usually so even in prophecy; but in the description of symbolic objects the color often has a special significance. This significance is never arbitrary, and a clear reason is always discernible. *White* represents purity and beauty, and sometimes joy or riches; *red*, because of the color of blood, denotes cruelty, punishment, or war; *black* signifies disaster, doom or mourning; *pale* implies death; *purple* indicates riches and royalty. See Rev. 6:2, 4, 5, 8; Dan. 5:7. Metals also have a symbolic meaning when used to describe the material or decoration of an object presented as a symbol. In the great images described in Daniel 2:32-35, gold, silver, brass, iron, clay and the stone cut out of the mountain, all seem to have an appropriate meaning in representing the several kingdoms signified in the king's dream. It is no accident that precious stones were placed in the breastplate of the high priest, since they were to bear the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (Ex. 28:17-21) ; but it does not follow that precious stones must always represent tribes rather than anything else equally fitting. In the description of the new Jerusalem the most costly and beautiful jewels are mentioned as materials for walls, foundations, gates, and pavements, appropriately to signify the inestimable wealth of the eternal home (Rev. 21:10-21). No colors or metals have a fixed or arbitrary symbolism.

## Names.

Names are often symbolic; and should be interpreted usually as ordinary metaphors, but sometimes etymologically. In Rev. 17:5, Babylon is a name for the mysterious woman that seems to represent a city hostile to Christianity; and doubtless the name is so used because the real city of Babylon was hostile to Jerusalem, and carried its inhabitants into exile. There is no good reason for the old view that the name literally meant, and in this passage signifies, confusion. In a similar way the names Sodom and Gomorrah are applied to Jerusalem in Isa. 1:9,10, because of deep iniquity and liability to destruction. Probably the name Egypt in Hos. 8:13, is used to represent bondage, because it was in Israel's history the chief land of their servitude. The names David and Elijah are symbolic of Jesus and John the Baptist (Ezek. 34:23,24; Matt. 11:14; 17:10-13), because Jesus was a lineal descendant of David, and John came in the spirit and power of Elijah. The name Immanuel (Isa. 7:14; 8:8), is used symbolically for the Messiah; but it must be interpreted by its etymological meaning (*immanu*, with us; *el*, God), since the Savior is God with man. Probably the name Ariel in Isa. 29:1, 2, 7, representing Jerusalem, is to be interpreted by its meaning, lion of God; or, perhaps more suitably, *altar of God*, because Jerusalem was the sacred place for national sacrifices during many centuries.

From these numerous examples of the use of symbols in the Bible, it is apparent that they are employed, and therefore must be interpreted, just as metaphors; for they involve precisely the same principles of representation on account of likeness or analogy. In the preceding paragraphs we have seen that the usual methods of study adapted to figurative language are well suited to a study of symbols. From these considerations we simplify the subject of their exposition by adopting the following

**RULE** :—*Interpret symbols by the same principles as ordinary figures based on resemblance or analogy.*

## CHAPTER X.

### TYPES.

#### *The Nature of Types.*

**Definition.**

A type is an object which antedates another object which it is designed to prefigure, and with which it involves a like moral or religious principle. A type is not necessarily a prophecy, because its typical significance may not be made known in the age in which the object itself appears; while a prophecy must be a revelation in advance of the event predicted. It is unlike a symbol, because a symbol is usually prophetic, and further because a symbol does not necessarily precede the object for which it stands, nor does a symbol necessarily involve a moral or religious principle.

**Noteworthy Distinctions.**

1. We must avoid the misconception that typology is only history repeating itself. One object is not a type of another in a Biblical sense simply because the two objects are analogous, or because they involve the same principles; but types in the Bible are objects or events that in the purposes of God intentionally refer to their antitypes. 2. The types are not precisely like their antitypes; but just as appropriate metaphors and similes must introduce comparisons of objects essentially dissimilar in most respects, so types are the *more* striking and instructive because of one or more notable correspondences in the midst of many widely different features. 3. We may further notice that since types are used only in important moral and religious matters, they must be exalted in their character; nevertheless, it is

appropriate that they should be less exalted than their antitypes.

RULE LI.—*Evidence of Divine Intent.*

**Kinds of  
Evidence.**

Inasmuch as a type is an object or event designed of God to prefigure something else, it is apparent that in order to identify a type we must have some clear indication of such intent. It is clear also that this purpose existed originally in the mind of God alone, and that man can learn it only by revelation given directly or indirectly. It is often a question with interpreters whether an object shall be regarded as typical under any circumstances without a direct affirmation of that fact in Scripture. A careful study of those passages of Scripture which contain typology reveals the fact that those types that are mentioned are not given apparently with a view to exhibit a complete list of types, but they seem to be treated incidentally by way of illustration of other important themes. This suggests that there may have been many other types which are not distinctly identified. Accordingly, most expositors agree that objects which have all the essential features and relations of types may be considered as such; and particularly does this seem reasonable when such objects are intimately associated with other objects which are affirmed to be typical.

**Examples:  
The Tabernacle.**

A wealth of typology appears to cluster about the ancient tabernacle. The most holy chamber represented heaven (Heb. 9:24), the high priest represented Christ (Heb. 8:1; 9:11); the annual sprinkling of blood before the mercy seat by the high priest represented the blood of Christ with which he entered into the presence of God in heaven (Heb. 9:11, 12, 24). Associated with these types is the mercy seat which is not declared typical; but by its close relationship to the foregoing types it may legitimately be regarded as representative of the throne of God, or at least His holy presence.

This is confirmed by the statement that our High Priest "sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (8:1), and that he entered "into heaven itself now to appear before the face of God for us" (9:24). Likewise, some scholars suggest that when we remember that the mercy seat was placed on the ark which contained the law, it is not improbable that the ark with the tables of stone represented the principles of truth and justice on which the throne of God is based (Ps. 89:14).

Test of Types.
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Interpreters are liable to yield to a temptation to interpret many objects as typical which were never so intended. Usually these can be detected by applying one or the other of two tests: first, many such objects do not involve clearly the same moral or religious principle as their alleged antitypes; second, in many cases they will be found unsuitably trivial in their character. Thus, while many things about the tabernacle were designedly typical, we should not regard all the boards, sockets and curtains as prefiguring things to come, because they do not carry special principles. The same is true of the priests; for while they are typical of Christians (Rev. 1:6; 1 Pet. 2:5,9), certainly not every article of their garments can be deemed typical of something pertaining to the followers of Christ, since they do not bear the same principles. An example of trivial circumstances rejected from typology is given by Terry (*Hermeneutics*, p. 341): "But to find in the brass [of the brazen serpent] — a metal inferior to gold or silver—a type of the outward meanness of the Savior's appearance; or to suppose that it was cast in a mould, not wrought by hand, and thus typified the divine conception of Christ's human nature; or to imagine that it was fashioned in the shape of a cross to depict more exactly the form in which Christ was to suffer—these, and all like suppositions, are far-fetched, misleading, and to be rejected."

Recognized  
in N.T.

As to the existence of typology in the sense in which we have defined it, the New Testament is explicit. In Rom. 5:14, Adam is definitely declared to be "a figure of him that was to come," where the word "figure" translates the Greek word *typos*. Several points of analogy between Adam and Christ are pointed out in the context. The same word is used in I Cor. 10:6, referring to the experiences of the Israelites passing through the sea and the wilderness, the apostle says, "Now these things were our types." From this it is plain that certain historical events of the fathers, no doubt directed and shaped by divine guidance, were designed to prefigure corresponding relations and experiences among Christians. Accordingly, the apostle yet more plainly states in verse 11, "Now these things happened unto them typically; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come."

Embarrassed  
with Theories.

Many types are greatly embarrassed in the course of time by gathering about them a host of expository conjectures, which may not be established in fact, and which serve only to bewilder a careful student of the Scriptures, and conceal from him the intended force of the typology. A notable example of this may be found in Heb. 7:1-25, where Melchizedek is set forth as a type of Christ. The leading points of the typology here are that both were priests, neither had a priestly ancestry, neither had successors in the priesthood, neither belonged to the Levitical family of priests, and both were regarded as having an unchangeable priesthood. Many interpreters, stopping to inquire who Melchizedek was, and being confronted with a variety of theories which may not be easily proved or disproved, rarely proceed further in the interpretation of the passage. In fact, there is no reason for being disturbed with this question and the theories connected with it, since the record in Genesis (14:18-20) plainly presents him as simply a man by the

name of Melchizedek, a king and priest of Salem, that worshipped the true God, and on account of his distinguished position received tithes from Abraham. There is no hint that he was any other than himself. The statement in Hebrews (7:3) that he was "Without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, and abideth a priest continually," may be readily explained, not by supposing that he was some miraculous personage or some great ancestor of the Hebrews, but by observing that the writer describes him simply as he stands out in the record of Genesis. He appears there in the record without ancestry and without descendants, a king-priest in the midst of the Gentile world, unconnected with any line of priests, and so standing before the eye of the reader an unfading figure bearing forever his priestly character. "He is preceded and succeeded by an everlasting silence, so as to present neither beginning nor end of life. And he is as an historical picture, forever there, divinely suspended, the very image of a perpetual king-priest. It is by optical truth only, not by corporeal facts, that he becomes a picture, and with his surroundings a tableau, into which the Psalmist (Ps. 110) first reads the conception of an adumbration of the general priesthood of the Messiah; and all our author does is to develop the particulars which are presupposed by the psalmist." Whedon, *Com., in loco.*

<p>Doubtful Types.</p>
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Necessarily some uncertainty hangs over the typology of many objects in the Old Testament that may seem to have antitypes in the New. Indeed, in some instances there are hints at analogies which seem to point to intended typical relations; but where the interpreter is in doubt, it is probably better to be very reserved in pronouncing them actual types. An example of this is Heb. 4:9, "There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God." This seems to teach that the Christian's sabbath is heaven; but the interpreter

may be left in doubt whether the seventh day was designed to be typical of the saints' eternal rest. Or, by Paul's referring to the baptism of the Israelites "unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" when they crossed the Red Sea and escaped from the Egyptians (1 Cor. 10:1,2), are we to understand that the crossing of the Red Sea was designed to forecast Christian baptism? Shall we regard the crossing of Jordan under Joshua as typical? If so, what is its antitype? The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah with the rescue of Lot was a most notable event in patriarchal history; but shall we regard it as an intended type? In this way numberless examples could be adduced, many of which are incidentally referred to in the New Testament as pointing a moral or illustrating some principle in divine government or some feature of the Christian institution; but we cannot assure ourselves that they are strictly typical. It is found wise and even necessary, therefore, to adhere to the following

RULE:—*Clear evidence must be had that a thing was divinely intended to be typical before it can be so interpreted.*

RULE LII.—*Important Analogies.*

A Serious  
Error.

It is clear that types are sufficiently like symbols and metaphors to involve practically the same leading principles of interpretation. The leading error in all figures of similitude or analogy is an oversight of important points of similarity and an over-emphasis of those which are significant. It is apparent that this mistake not only misses the author's purpose, but most unfortunately distorts the figure and greatly diminishes its value.

True Analogies  
Important.

In a study of the types of the tabernacle as discussed in the ninth and tenth chapters of Hebrews, we may note that only the leading objects are represented as typical, and that in each

case the analogies are very few and always important. It is noticeable that most of them relate directly to the person and office of Christ. Accordingly, the offerings represent Christ slain for the world (10:11,12) ; the blood of the sacrifice typifies His blood (9:11,12), and the veil between the two rooms of the tabernacle and hanging in front of the mercy seat is typical of the body of Christ (10:20; 9:8). Such types as these, and many others mentioned under the previous Rule, have so exalted and sacred antitypes that neither the objects themselves nor the principles involved in them can be insignificant. From this it follows that the interpreter should beware of assigning a typical significance unless the types and analogies are duly exalted.

<p>Details Not Typical.</p>
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The parallel drawn between Moses and Christ in Heb. 3:1-6, doubtless warrants the conviction that Moses was a type of the Christian's leader and lawgiver; but it is evident that this typology must be limited to a few notable analogies. Moses was a deliverer, a lawgiver, a prophet, the head of his nation and the intercessor and mediator between the people and God; and in all these points he may be safely regarded as a type of Christ, and this may be signified by his appearance with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. We must not, however, press all the details of Moses' life or ministry into typology. Many of the incidents of his history were peculiar to himself, and in the nature of the case could not belong to another; and it would be wholly unfair on the basis of any trifling similitude to interpret such events as typical.

These facts point unmistakably to a general law in the interpretation of typical institutions and characters, which may be expressed in the following

*RULE:—All points of analogy between a type and its antitype which are real and important should be interpreted typically, and no others.*

## CHAPTER XL

### INTERPRETATION OF WHOLE BOOKS.

**Evils of  
Disorder.**

Disorderly work is always poor work. It is a needless waste of time and strength, and is often attended with evils serious and permanent. Disconnected and disorderly study never produces a scholar; but it usually brings discouragement and an indisposition to do really good work. All this is true of irregular Bible study, with the additional result that one of the greatest of all duties comes to be sadly neglected. It is a lamentable fact that very many people who study the Scriptures at all have no plan, adopt no order of investigation, and cease for want of benefit, or continue only by impulsion of conscience.

**As Other  
Studies.**

How much interest or profit could a person find in reading the best work of fiction in fragments, by disconnected and widely separated paragraphs or chapters? Where would the plot appear? What would become of the fine correlation of parts and of the lessons to be conveyed? In truth, every page would be a mystery, and every paragraph a puzzle. Is not this the case in the study of the Bible as most people pursue that study? Suppose that in teaching arithmetic a student be required to solve problems miscellaneously from all parts of the book without ever having taken the study in order; what will be his progress? What excuse could his teacher frame? or how defend his reputation for pedagogy? The only successful method of studying the Bible is to interpret it book by book, pursuing a reasonable and logical order. The importance of this, and consequently the method of it, merit the most careful consideration.

*I. The Value of Study by Books.*

1. It is a means of securing the author's thought. The great motive of all interpretation is the acquirement of the author's thought; and the study of the book as a whole is the only scientific method of accomplishing this. A friend hands me a letter that contains a paragraph difficult to understand. Instinctively I note all the circumstances connected with the writing, and read the whole letter, to ascertain the author's purpose and to gather any other clues to his meaning that may be found. It would be folly to undertake an interpretation without these aids. Many of the New Testament books are letters, and must be interpreted in precisely the same way as other letters.

It is clear that the study of a whole book will usually be necessary if we desire to apply the simplest rules of interpretation. It is the only means of thorough examination of the immediate and the remote context; *it* is the best means of ascertaining an author's purpose, unless he plainly expresses it; it often exhibits the author's usage of peculiar words and phrases; it reveals many of the conditions of the writing itself and sometimes furnishes parallel passages and comparisons of figures of speech. The fundamental laws of interpretation assume just such a comprehensive examination of a book, and are rarely applicable without it. This proves that it is the scientific method of procedure, and that its neglect must be subversive of the best results.

2. It is a training of the mind. Every truly scientific study will train the mind for still greater exertion. But it is manifest that in such a study the mental processes must conform to the ordinary laws of thought. Ideas, like a body of soldiers, move most readily in an orderly form; and their effect upon the thinking mind of a hearer, will be stronger and deeper when the thought moves in a regular manner. Macauley well describes the loss of the battle of Sedgemoor by the confusion of one of the armies. Horse-

men attempting to rally were scattered in an instant. The fugitives spread a panic among their comrades in the rear, who had charge of the ammunition. The wagoners drove off at full speed, and stopped not for an instant, till they were many miles away. The Duke of Monmouth, like a stout and able warrior, did a noble part to retrieve his fortune, but in vain. On foot, pike in hand, encouraging his infantry by voice and example, he strove to hold his troops together against the foe; but no ammunition was at hand, and they were hopelessly overpowered in defeat. So the unmarshalled forces of the mind must fail of true success. Had the soldiers been drilled to order, they could have been held in order during the conflict; so, the powers of investigation, insight and discrimination of ideas, when trained to orderly exercise, will become strong and perceptive for any new duty that may appear.

The mind is trained for interpretation just as for any other scientific work. The botanist learns to study each plant in a methodical way; the bloom, the leaf, the stem, the root, each part in order, and every item, carefully noted, must come into his investigation. The true interpreter, likewise, will study a whole work, and carefully note every particular before he decides a difficult point in exegesis; and his very carefulness will save him from many errors and inconsistencies into which he would otherwise be precipitated. It is not an insignificant part of scholarship to be trained in mind to follow the most logical and productive processes.

3. It is an aid to the memory. It is one of the laws of memory that it has a better retention of facts and ideas if they be well correlated and associated. Accordingly, the contents of a book in the Bible will be better remembered by a thorough knowledge of the whole book. In such a knowledge there will inevitably appear a fitness of the ideas expressed to the purpose of the writer, a naturalness in consideration of the author and his circumstances, and an

adaptation to the conditions of the persons addressed. By associating these together the whole will be more easily remembered than any disconnected part. Presumably a book in the Bible will exhibit one or more leading ideas around which all other thoughts will cluster by a natural relation; so that a diligent study of the book as a whole will reveal, not only the main thoughts, but also the bearing of all subordinate statements. Thus the contents of each book will find an easy connection with each other as groups in the mind; and attention to one of these will be sufficient to recall all the rest.

"Lulled in the countless chambers of the brain,  
Our thoughts are linked by many a hidden chain;  
Awake but one, and lo, what myriads rise; Each  
stamps its image as the other flies."

The value of a knowledge of the Scriptures depends very much upon the power of memory by which the sacred ideas are held ever present with the soul; and no means of study which quickens this happy faculty can be lightly set aside.

4. It is a help to devotion. The study of a whole book more richly ladens the heart with the divine ideas which it contains than any fragmentary study. If, therefore, the book contains devotional elements, their effect will be greater by the more comprehensive investigation. Besides this, the soul is moved toward God in proportion as the mind comprehends the divine goodness and grace revealed in His purposes and works. Fragmentary reading in the Bible rarely presents a broad view of God's work for the race. It is in the fulness of the thought contained in any book that we behold the majesty and goodness of God. Nearly all the books of the Bible were adapted by their authors to the conditions of their people at the time of writing; and if we would understand how God suits His providence and plans to the wants of men, we must obtain as large a view as possible of the circumstances under which each writing was produced.

In order to receive the greatest devotional stimulus from a study of the Scriptures, a reader must enter into a hearty sympathy with the writer of any book and the people to whom it was addressed. The greater his acquaintance with them, the more readily this can be done; and this acquaintance will be promoted best by a careful study of all the writings of an author to his people. It would be impossible to appreciate the work of Isaiah if we had no information concerning the times in which he lived, the questions with which he struggled, the people for whom he labored, and the divine intent of his messages. We enter into a sympathy with him, and accordingly with those benevolent aims for which he was sent forth, only by understanding his pure motive, high purposes, and arduous, though almost fruitless, efforts to save his people from a decline to ignominious ruin. But this knowledge of Isaiah's character and work can be fully attained only by a thorough study of all that he has written. Such a study will reveal the character and purpose of God, and tend to bring the reader's heart into better accord with the mind of Him who cares for all. In this way the deepest devotion is based upon the broadest knowledge and the most intimate acquaintance with the word and works of God.

5. It is an insight into the real nature of the Bible. It is certain that no man that reads the Bible merely as a collection of proverbs or disconnected texts can ever understand the real nature of the sacred volume. The literary character of a work cannot be discerned by merely reading a few fragmentary passages. The whole book must be studied, the manner of its composition must be considered, the bearing of all its parts upon the general purpose must be noted, the trend of thought and the spirit of the writer must be closely followed, and the fountains of his genius and inspiration must be sought, if one would really determine the literary value of a book. It is needless to say that no hasty reading of scraps and extracts from a book

will reveal these things. The Bible is worthy of our profoundest efforts, and we shall fall far enough short of its beauties and blessings when we have with our best endeavors studied each priceless page.

## II. *The Method of Study by Books.*

The method of studying a whole book will depend largely upon the preparation and purpose of the student. It will not be possible for an ordinary English reader to make so complete an investigation of a book of the Bible as one who has a thorough acquaintance with the original Greek or Hebrew in which the book was written. Nevertheless, by the kindness of modern scholars a large amount of outside material for investigation concerning each book has been brought to the hand of the average student. So valuable is this material that it is unreasonable to maintain that a good knowledge of the Scriptures can be obtained by a study of the Bible alone. Whoever wishes to become a good interpreter of the Sacred Writings must avail himself of all the information within his reach. The following general plan, it is hoped, will be found adapted with some variations to students of every rank of scholarship.

1. The very first thing to do in the study of a book of the Bible is to read it through thoughtfully from the beginning to the end. Without this reading any other reading concerning the book would be poorly appreciated; and by it a large amount of the most important information concerning the book will be obtained. It should not be the purpose of such a reading to spend time on difficult passages and attempt to solve all the difficulties that may arise; but rather to secure a comprehensive view of the author's effort and such historical information as may afterward lead to a more thorough understanding. Accordingly, it will be well on the first reading to note all historical items that may appear and their bearing upon the general execution of the work. These will be particularly valuable if they indicate

the relation of the author to his intended readers and the purpose of his present writing. This is well illustrated in the book of Philemon. We are informed in the book itself that the author is Paul the apostle, a prisoner for the sake of the gospel, but who is anticipating a speedy release and a visit to the locality of his reader. The letter is addressed to Philemon, a Christian, whose servant, Onesimus, had run away, and having fallen in with the writer, had been converted to Christianity, and was now being returned to his master with the exhortation that he should be kindly received for Christ's sake and the sake of the writer. With these facts in mind, the book can hardly be misunderstood, and its beautiful spirit can hardly fail of appreciation.

Sometimes a book will contain very few historical suggestions to aid the interpreter, and he will be forced to study the general trend of thought throughout the work. This is pre-eminently true of the book of Hebrews. The book names neither the author nor his intended readers; and nothing of their location or former relations is revealed. For the name of the writer we are dependent upon a study of his style and such traditions as may have come down to us from other sources. To discover his purpose, the prevailing thought of the book must be carefully considered. In this case the aim of the book is so apparent that the interpretation may not be regarded as more difficult than that of many other books concerning which historical information is more abundant.

The first reading should also prepare the student to discover the leading divisions of the book and the general arrangement of thought. In the book of Genesis a single reading will render apparent the larger divisions of the work. In this case the diversity of subject matter in the different parts is so great, and the connections of those parts which are more closely related are so intimate, that the reader can hardly fail to carry in his mind the order and arrangement as he proceeds from the beginning to the

end. This discernment of the parts of a book and their relation to each other will preclude a possible confusion of materials in a more careful interpretation; at the same time it will lead to a better appreciation of the author's production.

2. A second reading of a book of the Bible should be preceded by a careful study of some scholarly introductions, such as may be found in good commentaries or Bible dictionaries. These introductions will bring to the reader's notice many facts concerning the-book which he had overlooked in the first reading or which may be gathered from external sources. These will prepare him for a better understanding and a much greater appreciation of the work. They will usually include such questions as the authorship, the persons addressed, the time and place of writing, the purpose of the book, the condition of its text and an analysis of its contents. He will thus find a confirmation of the matters which he has already observed and a much greater fund of information due to the extended researches of eminent scholars.

During the second reading the student will also give a more minute attention to the subdivisions of the book; and he will note any digressions of thought, peculiarities of style or of argument that may appear. He will find it advantageous to study more carefully the argument of the writer, and especially its general drift and force. He will find that this consideration together with the facts collated in the introductions will enable him to interpret many statements that before were very obscure; and it will be advisable for him to mark with a pencil such passages as present difficulties yet unsolved. He will probably find that these are not very numerous, and he will be surprised that his methodical work has so soon yielded a rich harvest of Biblical information.

3. On the third reading of the book the student will be prepared for a more searching examination of difficult

passages. He is now ready to bring to bear all the leading rules of interpretation, since he is in possession of the historical and textual facts with which these rules have to do. He will study each passage in the light of its context, and bring to bear upon it the scope of the section or paragraph in which it is found and the general purpose of the writer as seen in the whole book. In addition to this, he will be prepared to use the best commentaries on the text, and therein note such explanations as the most skillful exegetes have approved. By a comparison of several commentaries he may sometimes find many views of a passage, and he will be compelled to decide among them according to the principles of interpretation as already learned.

If the work thus far has been thoroughly accomplished, the reader will now devote his thought chiefly to the teaching of the book. He will take delight in reviewing each section and each subdivision, in meditating upon the appropriateness of each remark, the strength of each argument and the practical force of every admonition. He will not be unmindful of the spirit of benevolence, of justice and of wisdom that breathes in every part; and he will note with pleasure what must be the effect of such teaching upon the world, and how it is adapted to contribute something to the sum of human happiness.

Last of all, the student will observe those lessons which are of value to himself. He cannot fail to behold the weaknesses in his own life which are met and remedied by the divine counsels before him. There will be an inevitable contrast between the mind of man and that of God as the reader compares his own ideas which he formerly entertained with those that now confront him on the sacred page; and he will be astonished to consider how well justified is the challenge of God as expressed by the ancient prophet of Israel (Isa. 55:8,9): "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are

my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts higher than your thoughts." With such an impression the devout student will not restrain the prayer in his heart that is pressing for utterance, that the word of life, which by his studies has been planted in his soul, may not be unfruitful, but bear a harvest as rich in blessing as it is sweet in contemplation.

## CHAPTER XII.

### INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE.

In the study of the Bible as one volume, some considerations should have attention which need not be observed in the study of a single book or smaller portion of the Scriptures. Railway engineers have noticed that one locomotive may be weak, sluggish, or even almost useless, while another locomotive of the same size and style and from the same shop is powerful and active; and it sometimes requires a skillful machinist weeks of diligent search to find the cause of the difference, if indeed he can ever find it. In such an examination, each part of the whole locomotive may be most carefully scrutinized, measured and tested; then the bearings of each piece on adjoining pieces must be noted; and finally, the fitness, proportions and adaptability of each part to the whole locomotive demand attention. Now, in the interpretation of the Bible as a whole, it is not enough to study each part alone; but the correlation of parts must be observed, and the place of each book or class of books in the design of the whole should be considered. With how little interest or profit would a man unfamiliar with a locomotive examine any single part of it that might be laid before him! How much more agreeably and beneficially will he learn the fitness and use of that part in the construction and the operation of the whole locomotive! A like principle applies to the study of the Bible. Many a reader of a single chapter or a book loses interest by missing its place and office in the construction and design of the whole volume.

Referring again to the locomotive, we notice first of all that it is composed of two important classes or divisions of parts: first, those parts which prepare the steam; and secondly, those parts which use the steam to perform the work of the locomotive. A scientific study of the locomotive would require a careful observation of the office of each part, whether in the preparation or in the ministration of the locomotive energy. In the study of the Bible, likewise, we cannot ignore its two great divisions, one produced in the preparation of divine forces to save man, and the other produced in the ministration of that salvation, the Old Testament and the New Testament. In our brief survey of such a study, we may follow these two natural divisions.

### *I. Interpretation of the Old Testament.*

#### *1. The Pentateuch.*

Since our purpose is to study the present relations of the parts of the Old Testament, and not the manner or dates of its composition, we need not disturb our thought with questions of ancient or modern criticism. Such questions, however, may be necessarily involved in the consideration of some passages, and cannot, therefore, be totally ignored by the interpreter. The first five books of the Old Testament as they now exist, stand by nature in a class to themselves. They present the origin and organization of the Hebrew nation. Since this nation was to develop Christianity, and especially since the law contained in the Pentateuch was an expression of the moral and sacrificial principles of Christianity, these books have an important place in the preparation for the Christian economy. The book of Genesis, by its portrayal of the creation, the fall of man, the genealogies of the Hebrews, the deluge as God's overwhelming rebuke to sin, the call and covenants of Abraham, and the fortunes of the elect family, forms in many respects the basis of all later developments. The book of Exodus, by relating the divine deliverance of Israel from the bond-

age and idolatrous influence of Egypt, the making of the covenant and giving of the law at Sinai, and the construction of the tabernacle with all its wondrous typologies, introduces the select nation and carries forward the student of God's redemptive plan through another important stage. The next three books simply complete the part already begun, by giving more fully the law and a further account of Israel's experiences in the wilderness. The interpreter of these five books will fail of their deepest significance, unless he study them as the first act of the world's greatest drama.

## 2. Joshua to Esther.

In these twelve books are told the fortunes and afflictions of the chosen nation from their entrance into Canaan to the end of the prophetic work, a few generations before the coming of Christ. The interpreter again experiences not merely an interest in each book as it tells its wonderful story, but an admiration as he contemplates the bearing of all these events upon the great preparation for the Messiah. The land of Canaan becomes the theater of God's work, the monarchy becomes the model of the future kingdom, the pathetic scenes of Israel's many sins and falls teach the holiness and justice of God, while their restoration on repentance and their preservation in awful crises mark the faithfulness of God and His persistent effort to have a people ready to receive His Son.

## 3. Job to the Song of Songs.

These five books contain the greater part of the wisdom literature and psalmody of the Old Testament, and may here be grouped together for the sake of consecutive study. They present, on the one hand, a great treasury of lessons from human experience supplemented by divine wisdom, a most important preparation for practical life in any age; and, on the other hand, both prophecy and liturgy, which are preparatory to the coming kingdom. The lessons of faith, the forms of praise, and the deep spirit of devotion

manifested in these Psalms, are forever fountains of refreshing to the Christian soul. The book of Job discusses the meaning of affliction to a righteous man, and especially furnishes a strong vindication of man against the satanic charge that his faithfulness to God has no higher than a selfish motive. Such a defense of righteousness is valuable for all time. Ecclesiastes is an impressive treatise on the vanity of worldly pleasures in contrast with the permanent duty of fearing God and keeping his commandments. The Song of Songs is a drama teaching the ever-important lesson of the constancy of love, a beautiful emblem of the faithfulness of the church even under trying circumstances.

#### 4. Isaiah to Malachi.

While these books do not contain all the works of prophetic writers, their material belongs almost wholly to that class. The interpreter will find interest in these writings by carefully following the history of each prophet and the conditions of his times; by noting that the prophets were the preachers of that day, suiting their sermons to the needs of the people then present; and by remembering that the divine purpose to be accomplished through Christ was being gradually unfolded in prediction through these prophets. The predictions were framed in words and forms of thought that would most attract and encourage the people of the prophet's own generation; and yet by this they lost none of their value in later ages.

Thus, almost every part of the Old Testament has an interest of its own, an adaptation to its own time, yet a relation of great importance to that preparation which God through many centuries was making for the consummation of His plan of human redemption in Christ. He that would study well the preparatory effort of God with man, and desires to understand the peculiar relations of men to God during that preparatory period, will find a deep interest in the interpretation of the Old Testament. He who wishes to know in what form the plan of redemption is finally de-

veloped and delivered to man, or who wishes to avail himself directly of its blessings, will turn his study to the New Testament, which we are next to consider.

## II. *Interpretation of the New Testament.*

### 1. The Gospels.

Most appropriately the first four books of the New Testament set forth the Messiah above all else, the one visible agent of God in the rescue of man from sin. John the Baptist puts the people in moral readiness, and then introduces to them the "Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Our writers relate the wonderful words and works of Jesus, with the intent that we might believe, as John tells us (20:31), "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God! and that believing we might have life in His name;" and so the proofs of this proposition appear on almost every page of these books. In addition to these evidences, the reader of the Gospels will find a precious unfolding of the principles and plan of the new kingdom now to be ushered in as soon as the King shall be ready to receive His coronation and sit down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Already in advance of His ascension, He informs His disciples that He is vested with all authority, and they are to be His ambassadors to the nations of the earth. He gives them their message to man, only enjoining them to wait till they are fully empowered to perform their very responsible task. The reader of such developments as these will almost breathlessly hasten into the next book to see in what manner the sublime events now pending are to be consummated.

### 2. The Acts of Apostles.

That this book is closely related to the Gospels is apparent from its opening sentence, and from every step in the account of those scenes for which the former books have prepared the reader's expectation. The disciples followed their Master's command, and in due time began in Jerusalem the

proclamation of the age-long offer of God to man. The reader cannot help feeling that he has reached a crisis—a culmination—toward which all that he has read in the Old Testament and in the Gospels was looking forward, and to which all coming ages must look back with wonder and gratitude. The long prepared message is delivered by the Apostle Peter, and then by all the others, in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. With no ordinary interest the reader will follow the apostles into their several fields of labor, perhaps only wishing that a fuller account of such sacred ministries might have been written. In all this, the friendly interpreter cannot fail to read to his own joy those lines of clear and explicit counsel, in the celestial light of which the soul beholds its pathway unto the eternal morning.

### 3. The Epistles.

Far as most of these apostles must have been scattered abroad carrying the good news committed to their hands, they did not neglect the converts which they must often leave behind them, nor did they fail to advise them with many a tender and helpful message respecting their duties in their new relations. Fortunately, in the simple form of letters, a most precious collection of these advices has been preserved for later generations. These letters are not addressed to sinners, not designed as the Gospels to produce faith in Christ, nor as the Acts, to show men the gateways of the kingdom, but they are written to saints, to point out to them the ideal life which they are to follow. In harmony with this primary object, they unfold the great doctrines of the divine character and love for man, man's fall and deep need of God's help, Christ's supreme effort to help the race, man's opportunity to avail himself of this aid, the work of the church in maintaining these truths in the world, the righteousness that every Christian should exhibit in following the divine ideal, the kindly sympathies which he should show to his brethren in the same holy cause, the

honorable conduct that he ought to have toward all men, the final accountability of all to God, together with the closing scenes of this age and the opening glories of the world to come. With all these instructions and more, with numerous warnings in the midst of dangers and manifold promises in hours of discouragement, the believers are helped to walk in the highway of holiness and pointed upward to a fadeless reward. The value of such books can never be told in words.

#### 4. The Revelation.

One book remains with an object quite its own. The Lord Himself had written no books. Hitherto He had inscribed His truth and His life only in the hearts and lives of men. But the church is not to be left without a message directly from the throne. How does the church stand in His sacred eyes? Is He pleased with His prospective bride? Will He defend her in the time of sore trial? Will she be swallowed up when surrounded by her enemies? These were the questions that were yet to be answered; and no answer could be so reassuring and blessed as one sent directly by Him who was dead and lives again. He selects His loved apostle John at a time of his loneliness to prepare this writing and to deliver it to the church. It is not an open letter to be handled, exhausted, and rudely mocked by the unbeliever; but it is written in confidence—a private message from the Bridegroom to His bride. If she does not understand it all now, she *believes*, and will yet understand. So, also the best interpreter may not apprehend the full meaning; but he will prize its content more as he considers the purpose of the book in its relation to the whole volume of divine revelation, and as he enters into sympathy with the entire effort of God to lift up this fallen image of His own glory and crown it with a wreath of unquenchable light.



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