HERMENEUTICS

INSTRUCTOR: DR. HERBERT MOORE
WINTER QUARTER 2013
Syllabus

Hermeneutics: How to Study the Bible
Three (3) hour undergraduate course: Dr. Herbert Moore, Jr.

Course Objectives:

1. To identify different examples of wrong interpretations of the Word vs. Right interpretations of the Word.
2. Learn to rightly divide the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15).
3. Learn how to separate doctrine from tradition or cultural.
4. Learn the skills of memorizations.
5. Develop an effective way to teach others about the ONE WAY (John 14:6).

Course Assignments:

1. Read the required workbook assignment in Section “A” (Refer to Sections 1-6).
   Assignment completion date: January 22, 2013

2. Keep a notebook of class notes and research materials.
   Assignment completion date: February 12, 2013

3. One research paper on an approved text (subject). Minimum of 8 pages.
   Assignment completion date: February 12, 2013

4. Complete take home test at the end of the quarter.
   Assignment completion date: February 12, 2013

5. Class participation is required by all students.

6. Attendance for each class is required.

7. Memorization assignments in Section “B” (see below- please fill in the blanks).
   Due week 2
   a) 2 Peter 1:3
      According as his ________ ________ hath given unto us all things that pertain unto ______ and ____________, through the knowledge of him that ______ us to glory and virtue:
b) 2 Peter 1: 19-21
We have also a more sure word of _________; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a _____ _______ _______ place, until the day dawn, and the day star _______ in your hearts:
Knowing this ______, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any __________ interpretation.
For the prophecy came not in ____ time by the will of _____: but holy of men God spake as they were moved by ____ _______ ________.

Due Week 4
c) 2 Timothy 3:16-17
______ _______ is given by inspiration of God, and is __________ for doctrine, for reproof, for _______________, for instruction in ________________:
That the man of God may be __________, thoroughly ___________ unto all good works.

d) Romans 15:4
For whatsoever things were _______ _______ were written for our _______, that we through __________ ___ __________ of the scriptures might have hope.

e) 1 Peter 3:15
But sanctify the Lord God in your_______: and be ready always to give an ______ to every ______ that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with __________ ____ _____ _____:

Due Week 6
f) John 8:32
And ye shall ______ ___ _____, and the truth shall make you free.

g) Psalms 119:10-11
With my ______ _____ have I sought thee: O let me not wander from ______

h) Psalms 23:1-6
The Lord is my ___________: I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in __________ _______: he leadeth me beised the still waters. He __________ __ _______: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for __________ ____________.
Yea, though I __________ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __, I will fear no evil: for thou __________ __ __: __ __ __ __ __
Thou prepares a table before __ __ __________ __ __ __________: thou anointest my head with oil: __________ __________.
Surely ________ ______ ______ shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will __________ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ for ever.

Required Book:
A Bible that has Facts and Data preface pages to each chapter.

Recommended Book:
D. R. Dungan; Hermeneutics (free download from website in pdf format)
HERMENEUTICS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

SEC. 1. OUR SUBJECT DEFINED.--Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation. It is derived from the Greek Hermes, the messenger of the gods and the interpreter of Jupiter. Every Hermeneus was, therefore, an interpreter, as he was supposed to inherit some of the mystic qualities of this god of philology, this patron of eloquence. Sacred hermeneutics is the science of interpreting the Scriptures. Exegesis (from ex, out, and egeisthas, to guide or lead), means to lead out. It is the application of the principles of hermeneutics in bringing out the meaning of any writing which might otherwise be difficult to understand.

SEC. 2. GOD EXPECTS US TO USE HIS BOOK IN BECOMING ACQUAINTED WITH HIS CHARACTER, AND IN GAINING A KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL.

(1.) The Bible to be used as other books.--An interpreter implies a misunderstanding, between two parties, or, at least, a liability to such a misunderstanding. And it is at once objected that if the Bible is of God, it should be so plain that no one could misunderstand it; that, if God could give us such a book, and would not, He was certainly to blame. But if He would, but could not, He is not [1] perfect in wisdom or ability to execute. This logic is not good. We might as well say that if God is the Author of Nature, its meaning should be so apparent that all would perfectly understand it, and therefore, understand it alike. And yet we know that our scientists are quite disagreed about many things in nature, and that the great masses of men are in ignorance, almost from first to last, respecting the whole question. God has, therefore, made it necessary to study nature in order to get its lessons. Geology, astronomy, physiology, etc., etc., are known only to those who study them. It is reasonable, therefore, that He should make it necessary to study His word.

(2.) The weakness is with, man.--Man is fallible, and his judgment is very imperfect. Nothing has ever been written which has been understood by all alike. (a) Our laws are made by, our wisest and most careful men; they are made with special reference to the people for whom they are intended, so that no
man may be misguided respecting his duty, and no criminal go unpunished. And yet our shrewdest lawyers and ablest jurists are in doubt as to the meaning of much of our law. (b) Not only so, but the creeds that have been wrought out by the ablest and purest of men, are variously interpreted. Churches wrangle and divide over them. Leading divines differ widely as to the meaning of many of the articles, while the common people have not even the most indistinct idea of their original intent. We can not say that these were not plainly written, in the first place. And, perhaps for the first quarter of a century after any one of these was published, all parties were agreed as to the import of its articles. But age has come, custom has changed, religious sentiment has veered, [2] words and forms have become obsolete, or have changed their meaning; hence the many interpretations. Man misunderstands his fellow man, and even himself, and is competent to misinterpret the Lord also.

(3.) God does not inspire the interpretation.--It is sometimes supposed still that the Holy Spirit directs men in their inquiries after truth, so that no hurtful mistake can be made. But we know that the very best of men differ very widely in their views of the word of the Lord. We know, too, that these men make their investigations a matter of daily prayer. And knowing that truth is never contradictory, that error is dangerous and injurious, that very pious men are permitted to blunder in reference to the meaning of the Scripture, we feel assured that, whatever helps the Lord may see proper to give His servants in their efforts to understand the Bible, he does not guide them by inspiration, or the mistakes which are now made would not occur.

(4.) Divine wisdom has adopted the word-method of revelation.--This being true, it is implied that all the weaknesses which belong to such a medium of communication were adopted at the same time. There would be no reason in giving a revelation which would need inspiration to interpret. If the inspiration has to be given, there is no need of the word itself. The inspiration would make known all the truth as well without the word as with it. Indeed, it would be better to have the inspiration alone than to have a faulty word revelation, which might mislead those who have not the needed inspiration. While the word would be of no practical value whatever, it might do a great deal of harm. Better that God had never given it, since its only power is to deceive. But when He made choice between a [3] direct revelation to every one, and the selection of a few who should be the teachers of the many, He chose the latter. Hence to those whom He has chosen as His revelators, must we look for a knowledge of the divine will.

It does not change the question to claim that a few men are now chosen to interpret that word. We must have some means of knowing that they are favored above the common people in thus being divinely endowed. And since those who have equal claims to a special call to this work differ widely respecting very important matters, we are incredulous respecting these exalted assumptions. The truth is, their claims are not sustained. Besides, there is no reason that God should give special inspiration to interpreters now. He has no other truth now to reveal, nor can He make it any plainer than He did when He gave us the Bible. The words of the men whom He now inspires, if there are any, are as difficult to understand as the words of the men He inspired eighteen hundred years ago. If we can not understand those, how shall we understand these?

The ancients supposed that they must look to the law and the testimony for a knowledge of the will of
the Lord, and that the truth was to be had by the same methods of study that were applied to any other branches of knowledge.

Ezra vii. 10: "For Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments."

Deut. xxix. 29: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that. we may do all the words of this law." Nehemiah viii. 1-8 shows how they had to learn the law, Ezra reads the law from morning till noon, and is assisted by chosen men, who go among the people and explain to them the meaning of any words which they did not understand.

From Psa. i. 1, 2; xix. 7; cxix. 39-105 we shall get David's idea of coming to the knowledge of the will of the Lord. They must read that word, study it day and night, get all its precepts in the mind in this way, and then may they assure themselves that they have more knowledge than the ancients--than all their teachers.

Jesus makes Abraham say to the rich man, respecting his five brothers: "They have Moses and the prophets; . . . if they hear not Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead" (Luke xvi. 29-31).

Paul holds this view of the question. He says to Timothy, that although he has known the Holy Scriptures from his childhood, which were able to make him wise unto salvation, he must study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly setting forth the word of truth. Hence he must give attention to reading, to, exhortation, to teaching.

SEC. 3. A CORRECT HERMENEUTICS WOULD GO FAR TOWARD HEALING THE DIVISIONS OF THE CHURCH.

(1.) A wrong interpretation is not the only cause of divisions.--That the followers of Christ should be one, does not admit of a doubt. Jesus prayed for the unity of all those who should believe on him through the word of the apostles. The apostles condemned divisions on all occasions; even in an incipient form, they were regarded as being carnal, and proceeding from hearts not in unison with the will of Christ. Men who were division-makers were regarded as unworthy of a place in the church, and after the first and second admonitions were to be avoided. They were spoken of as not serving the Lord Jesus, but their own passions. But while we regard carnality, in the form of unsanctified ambition, as the great cause of the divisions that now serve to mar the beauty of Zion and destroy the peace and power of the kingdom of Christ, it is not the only cause.

(2.) Selfish ambition can not be removed by rules of interpretation.--Even in the days of the apostles, in the presence of divine inspiration, in the presence of the divine authority which had been committed to the chosen twelve, ambitious men rose up to draw away disciples after them, ready to make merchandise
of them. Even then the mystery of iniquity was secretly at work. The desire for place and power led men then to adopt the claim of sanctity, that they might gain a leadership which could come to them in no other way. It would be idle to undertake to prevent men from being hypocrites, from loving this present world, or from seeking their own, and not the things of Jesus Christ, by rules of interpretation. Sound exegesis can have but little effect on such conditions of the heart. But when we are not able to change the goods, we may do something in changing the market. A correct hermeneutics may do something toward rendering it impossible for these men to continue their work of deception. If we could bring all the followers of Christ to a common interpretation of the word of God, the power to create divisions would certainly be gone.

(3.) All divisions, however, are not the result of ambition, carnality, or a sectarian spirit.--Among the purest [6] and best of earth, there are many differences of faith and practice. They can not be accounted for upon the basis of dishonesty, nor upon the ground of general ignorance, for these divisions in the church contain men of equal learning. Of course, many of these learned men were born in their particular views, and all their study in the Scriptures has been to sustain these tenets, and in their maintenance there may be the spice of dishonesty. Still, the unfairness that comes from the prejudice of early training will not account for the many conflicting faiths among the followers of Christ.

(4.) The Bible is not at fault.--Skepticism to-day feeds and fattens on the divided state of the Christian world. It declares that the book which we regard as God-given is to blame for all this misunderstanding. Skeptics charge that the Bible either teaches doctrines which are contradictory, or that they are so obscure that a man is about as liable to make one thing of them as another. This we can not admit. If the Bible is of God, it does not contradict itself, nor is it so obscure in its teaching that those who are seeking the way of life can not understand it. We reason that God gave man such a book as he needed, and that man needed a book which, with honest effort, he could understand; hence, if the Bible is God's book, it can be understood by all those who wish to know the way of eternal life.

(5.) The method of interpretation is to blame for much of the inharmony which now exists.--It is evident to every student of the times, that the great body of Protestant Christians want unity; that they deplore the divisions which now disfigure the church and retard the progress of the truth; that divisions are not sufficiently accounted for upon the basis of dishonesty; and we can [7] not admit that the Bible is at fault in the matter: hence there is nothing else that we can say but that our manner of interpreting the word of God is wrong. These facts compel the thought that he who can bring before the world a correct system of interpretation, will do more to heal the divisions than any other man of this century.

SEC. 4. A SOUND HERMENEUTICS WOULD BE THE BEST POSSIBLE ANSWER TO INFIDEL OBJECTIONS TO THE BIBLE.

(1.) A wrong interpretation is not the only cause of unbelief.--Much of the infidelity of the age is the result of impure hearts and bad lives. Many men have made themselves opposite to the purity of the gospel of Christ, and so have gone beyond the limits of the faith-condition of the mind. Men may cultivate distrust in their fellows till it is impossible for them to trust themselves to the virtue and honesty.
of any one. Skepticism is a plant that may be grown, nay, that is grown. It is suited well to a barren soil, and luxuriates in an foul heart. Many things are believed because men wish them to be true, while others are disbelieved for a like reason. In such cases, it would matter but little what the evidence might be, they would not accept of the gospel.

(2.) But false interpretation is a strong support of unbelief.--Some one has well said that "the Bible is its own best defense." But in order that it may be any defense at all, its teachings must be understood; and this can never be without a correct knowledge of the principles of interpretation. Before we assume that Geology and Genesis are at variance, we ought to be absolutely certain that we have accurately interpreted both. For the want of a correct hermeneutics, men have imagined [8] that they have found discrepancies, and even palpable contradictions, in the Bible. They would find any other book equally contradictory if they should treat it in the sauce way. But men know that the laws of language must be observed in reading any other book. If they would use the same care and common sense when reading the Bible, infidelity would find no place to set the sole of its foot. Hence it becomes evident that a correct exegesis will greatly weaken the power of infidelity, if not utterly destroy it.

SEC. 5. THE LAST GREAT NEED OF A SOUND EXEGESIS, OF WHICH WE NOW SPEAK, IS THAT WE MAY FIND OUR WAY TO HEAVEN.

(1.) Inquirers discouraged by the different answers given.--The question, "What shall I do to be saved!" receives so many different and conflicting answers, that the seekers after eternal life are confused and disheartened, and they do not know what to do. They are told that there is nothing they can do, that they must wait for the Lord to come and save them; and that they can not do anything that will conduce to their salvation. Others tell them that they can and must give themselves to Christ, that they may be saved; and that unless they do, they will certainly be lost. Still they do not tell them how to give themselves to Christ. If they are sent to the word of God to learn the way of life, they are not told how to read it or where to look for directions on the subject. They would be as apt to go to the book of Job as to the Gospels or the Acts of the Apostles, to find the way of salvation in Christ. If men were inquiring into any question of law or history, they would be told where they could get the desired information—what book treated on that subject. They would not only be pointed to the [9] book containing the desired intelligence, but to the chapter and section where the information might be found. If the Scriptures were studied in this way, there would be but little difficulty on this most important of all questions.

(2.) Not only is the question of salvation involved, but the assurance of pardon also.--Persons who have had the same religious experience, differ widely as to the import of what they have heard, and desired, and felt. One believes he is a child of God, and no doubt lingers to chill the ardor of his soul. Another, who has had the same experience, hopes that he has a hope, but is only certain that he is not certain of anything respecting his standing with God. It is vain to say that this must be the direct teaching of the Holy Spirit, or that a Christian knows by his feelings just what his relations are with God. For if God taught one of these servants in this direct way, He certainly would not have left the other to grope his way in darkness, doubt and uncertainty on the same subject. The truth is, one has had the same joys and sorrows that are known to the other, and the reason that the one regards himself a favorite of heaven and the other is in doubt as to his standing with God, is in the creeds of the two men. They are equally
good, equally pure, and have passed through the same repentance, and have the same trust in Christ as
the only Saviour of men; in fact, there is no perceptible difference between them, except as by their
creeds they have interpreted these sorrows and joys differently. And this difference of creed has arisen
from the difference in their modes of interpretation. To one, these things have had one meaning; to the
other, they have had quite a different meaning. Now, if it is God's will that one Christian should know his
sins forgiven, [10] it is certain that it is His will that all His servants should rejoice because of like
intelligence. Right methods of the interpretation of the Scriptures will certainly remove the trouble, and
enable our joyous and doubtful brethren to see themselves in the same condition before the "one God and
Father of us all." [11]

[HATB 1-11]
CHAPTER II.

THE THINGS WHICH HELP US TO UNDERSTAND THE WORD OF GOD.

SEC. 6. THE NEED OF UNDERSTANDING THESE THINGS.--If we know not the things that will help us, we shall not be likely to invoke their aid. No man searches for that of which he has no knowledge. If there are helps, let us know what they are, and how they may be obtained; and then we will strive for that ability which will enable us to what the will of the Lord is.

SEC. 7. GOOD COMMON SENSE IS THE FIRST REQUISITE.--This is so self-evident that to present it further would be to waste time.

(1.) This is a natural qualification, but it may be greatly increased.--Some one has said that if a man lack knowledge he can get it of his fellow-man; that if he lack religion, he can have it by going to God and asking for it; but if he lack common sense, he has nowhere to go. But this remark has in it more of wit than of truth. We are not all equally endowed, but almost every one has a talent, and if that be not hid in a napkin and buried in the earth, but properly employed, it will increase; if it shall only be put on interest, it will gain something. Common sense has its root-idea in the ability to discover harmony in the things which agree; and, conversely, to perceive unlikeness in opposites. To a man devoid of common sense there would be no difference between Mohammedanism and the religion of Christ; between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ; between Catholicism and any form of Protestantism. Equally hidden from him would be the truths in all these systems, for he would not be able to distinguish truth from error.

It does not seem to be known that a man may be ostensibly learned in the abstract, and know but little of anything in the concrete. And yet it is true that he may give himself so entirely to the study of attenuated philosophy that he will almost cease to have any proper understanding of the events of life, and be quite incompetent to decide between one thing and another.

If it be true that one may injure his mind by employing it only on subjects that are abstruse, it is just as true that the mind may be strengthened and benefited by proper use upon themes and duties that concern every-day life.

(2.) The use of this gift in the interpretation of the Scriptures.--If we were speaking of the
interpretation of law or the study of medicine, no one would call in question our position for a moment. To understand the propositions of any branch of science, all are agreed as to the absolute necessity of common sense. But there lurks in the popular heart the suspicion that, after all the less of real knowledge, and the more of the dreamy speculative qualities of mind are possessed, the more likely will the interpreter arrive at the meaning of the Bible. They forget that God gave this book to the common people, that He has filled it with the experiences of men, and that its writers have spoken to us not only of the things that constantly surround us, but in the language which a plain people can the most easily understand. It is a book to accompany us through all the walks of life—to constantly show us the dangers on the one hand, and the way of safety on the other. In this book we are constantly dealing with those things that are in antithesis; in which are the deceptive tricks of the enemy of the race, put over against the truth of God; in which the way of truth is made plain by its contrast with the works of darkness. Hence the more the student will study plain questions, and the more he may know men as they are, the more likely will he be able to understand the word of God.

SEC. 8. FAITH IN THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES, WILL HELP THE STUDENT TO UNDERSTAND THEM.

(1.) It is not meant to say that unbelievers can not know anything of the claims of the word of God. They may know many things respecting the Bible. The Jews who did not believe in the divinity of Christ understood many things respecting the claims which he made. Indeed, if an infidel could not know such things, he would not be responsible. The ability which unbelievers possess to investigate these subjects, is the measure of their responsibility before God.

(2.) And yet the condition of their mind is unfavorable to any thorough investigation, or any proper estimate of the claims which are made. To receive a letter from Jay Gould, and yet believe it to be from some one else, who had sent it out of mere sport, would not likely benefit the receiver. If he should read it, curiosity would have to incite to the effort; and as soon as the reader would be sufficiently amused, he would lay the epistle aside, with but little, if any, further thought. [14] The communication might be one of very great importance, and yet in a few hours he would know but little, if anything, of its contents. So it is with the Bible. The unbeliever reads it out of mere curiosity, or that he may find some fault with it, and the probability is that all he will be able to find in the volume will be a few things that, to him, are curious, or unreasonable. He remembers here and there a text from which he can make an adverse criticism, but as to making any thorough investigation into the teaching of that book, such an idea does not enter his mind. He is not in sympathy with its and in no way is he prepared to understand it.

(3.) Faith, in the inspiration of the book will prompt the most patient and thorough investigation. Not only so, but the thought that it contains a divine message for him, will help to a clearer view of its contents than could otherwise be had.

SEC. 9. MENTAL INDUSTRY IS ESSENTIAL TO ANY PROPER INVESTIGATION.—Mary, who sat at the feet of the Master, and attended diligently to His teaching, may have been as industrious as her sister, but her industry was of a different kind. She employed the head and heart more in the acquisition of truth.
The disciples, who did not always understand the parables of the Saviour, went to him afterwards and inquired about the meaning. It was their investigating spirit that made it possible for them to learn the deep things which the Master came to give them. Without this it would have been impossible for them to have graduated in His school. The Bereans are praised for this disposition of mind. "Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things [15] were so. Many of them therefore believed; also of the Greek women of honorable estate, anal of men, not a few" (Acts xvii. 11, 12).

There is no essential difference between the study of the Scriptures and the study of any other subject, respecting the mental outlay necessary to success. An occasional hour or lesson may accomplish something toward learning, but not much. With all the advantages given Timothy through the early instruction received from his mother and grandmother, and the assistance of the apostle Paul, still it was necessary for him to "study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed: rightly setting forth the word of truth." So we find in the efforts essential to a knowledge of the word of God, that, like obtaining knowledge of other things, the mind must be employed intently and continuously. There can be no substitute for mental industry. We must apply the mind and heart, or not know the things of God.

SEC. 10. A DESIRE TO KNOW AND DO THE TRUTH, IS NECESSARY.--It can not be denied that the most careless and indifferent may learn something about the word of God. But they are not likely to learn much, nor to learn anything very well. Being without interest respecting its claims, or, it may be, set opposite to them, wishing not to find the truth, as almost anything else would comport better with their lives, the truth will not be found by them. It would be as difficult for such persons to see the truth, as it was for the priest and the Levite to see the man who had fallen among thieves. Or, if they should see, they would immediately look on the other side, and so pass on. For a moment they may behold their face in the divine mirror, but they go away [16] immediately, and forget what manner of men they were. The soil must be in keeping with the seed, or there will be but little accomplished by the sowing. There are men for whom the gospel of Christ has no more charms than pearls have for swine. There must be good ground; "such as have an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke viii. 15). The test given by the Saviour is just to the point: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself" (New Version). It is this willingness to do the will of God that prepares the mind for that effort which is necessary to understand the law of the Lord. In the Acts of the Apostles (xiii. 48), we have a picture. The Gentiles who glorified the word of the Lord, and were ordained to (determined for) eternal life, believed; and those who were opposed, remained in unbelief. Men can find what they look for, but what they do not want to see, it is difficult to make them understand. Hence if there be not a good and honest heart, there will be but little fruit from the sowing.

SEC. 11. SPIRITUAL PURITY IS A LARGE FACTOR IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION.

(1.) As just seen in the previous section, the mind must be en rapport with the teaching to be received. But we now go further, and show that indisposition does not simply prevent the examination that is necessary to any thorough knowledge, but it is a condition that fences against the pure word of
God. There are those who are competent to see in every remark that is made something that is unchaste. They can find double meanings to anything that is said. And they interpret actions in the same way. To them every word and act seen or heard is [17] prompted by motives that are sinister. The world is a mirror in which they see themselves, as they attribute their own motives to the acts of others. To the evil, all things are evil. Nothing is pure to the eye of lust. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," does not have to wait till the day of judgment for its fulfillment. In all the bounties and splendors of earth, they can see the traces of the hand of a loving Father. But such views are never had by the impure. They do not like to retain God in their minds, and when they are compelled to recognize the Almighty, they make Him into the likeness of men, and of four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Any other thought is too high for them.

(2.) We do not mean to say that such men can not learn anything about the word of God, for this is God's way of making men better. There is truth put within their reach, and which, if they will lay hold of it, will lift them up to that better condition, in which they can know more of God and of the beauties of his word. They may learn much of sacred history; they may understand the teachings of prophecy and the claims of the Messiah; they are competent to examine the claims made respecting New Testament miracles, but there are great spiritual truths that will not be recognized by them.

(3.) It is possible for men to become so gross as to be removed even from the probabilities, if not from the very possibilities, of faith. I can not do better here than to quote a few passages of Scripture containing this thought:

"For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers [18] after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables" (II. Tim. iv. 3, 4).

"Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them which showed of the coming of the Righteous One; of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers; ye who received the law as it was ordained by angels, and kept it not" (Acts vii. 51-53).

Here is both the teaching and the living picture of the ability to harden the heart against truth, until the soul of the soul is utterly destroyed.

"And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, And their ears are dull of hearing, And their eyes they have closed; Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And should turn again, And I should heal them" (Matt. xiii. 14, 15).
The import of this language can not be mistaken. The reason they were not saved was they had not
turned to God, and the reason they had not turned, was, they did not understand with the heart; the reason
they did not understand with the heart, was that grossness prevented them from considering the claims of
Christ in any proper way.

"How can ye believe, which receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only
God, ye seek not?" (John v. 44).

Here, even, the desire for the praise of men is presented as a barrier sufficient to prevent faith. [19]

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer
from the beginning, and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he
speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof. But because I say the truth, ye believe me not"
(John viii. 44, 45).

It is plain that this was not the original condition of this people. Once they might have accepted the
truth and been made free by it, but they had turned their hearts over to the control of the wicked one tilt
they had become like him.

With this evil heart in them, it would have been more agreeable for them to have beard a falsehood
than a truth, and it would have been easier for them to receive the falsehood.

"And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his
mouth and bring to naught by the manifestation of his coming; even he, whose coming is according to the
working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders and with all deceit of unrighteousness for
them that are perishing; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for
this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be
judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thess. ii. 8-12).

These persons were perishing because they believed a lie, and not the truth. This they did because
they did not receive the love of the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. And because they would
not have the truth, God turned them over to the falsehoods which they preferred.

"But and if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that are perishing: in whom the god of this world
hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the
image of God, should not dawn upon them" (II. Cor. iv. 3, 4). [20]

The god of this world, in this text, was the riches, honors and pleasures of this life. These things
become a god to man through the devotion which he chooses to render. And in taro for all this service,
the worshiper has his mind blinded to all that is good and pure.

In this way the Gentile world fell away from all that was pure and holy. Once they knew God, but
they neglected his warship, and so went astray, step by step, till they reached the lowest possible spiritual
Paul thinks it possible for those who have once known the truth, and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, to fall so far away that they can not be renewed again to repentance (Heb. vi. 1-6).

(4.) Not only may men fall into evil thoughts and evil lives, and thereby destroy their disposition to receive the truth, and even go so far that they can not turn back again, but every degree in depravity renders it that much more difficult to accept of the pure, thoughts of the word of God.--There are carnal-minded church members, who are too gross in their hearts to know the height and breadth, and length and depth, of the riches and beauty and glory of the revelation which God has made to us.

This proposition might be regarded as having been established already. Still it is proper to refer to a text or two--first to make the point still clearer; and second, to get the meaning of these passages clearly before the mind of the reader:

"Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him, and he can riot know them, because they are spiritually judged" (I. Cor. ii. 14).

This text has been a battle-ground, and as we enter it we announce our utter want of sympathy for either [21] party. The first and most common view of the passage is, that until a man is converted and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, he can not understand the word of God that this natural man is the unconverted man. The second view is much more reasonable: The natural man, is the man in a state of nature, and, therefore, without the revelation which God has given. And the reason that he can not understand the things of God is that he has not had a teacher, but with a teacher, he could know these things quite well enough. I do not accept the interpretation of either of these parties, for the following reasons:

(a) Paul was not speaking to, nor of, men in a state of nature having never received revelation, or to whom it had never been offered.

(b) He was not speaking to, nor of unconverted men, in antithesis to converted men.

(c) The spiritual judgment is the antithesis, and the carnal judgment is that which naturally opposes it. Hence the conclusion is, that the word rendered "natural" would be better rendered carnal.

(d) The reason that this natural man did not receive them, was not because he had never heard of them, but because they were foolishness to him. They could not be foolishness to a man who never heard of them.

(e) The word psuchikos, here rendered natural, is better rendered carnal. It occurs five times in the New Testament: I. Cor. ii. 14; xv. 44, 46; James iii. 35; Jude 19. In the Corinthian letter, it is rendered in the Common Version by the word natural, but in the other occurrences, by the word sensual. The latter is
Paul was writing to church members, whom he denominated saints--those who had been set apart to the service of the Lord. Hence neither of the old interpretations can possibly be true.

He was condemning them for their carnality. In the third chapter he tells them that their divisions proved that they were carnal and walked as men. In the fifth chapter they are condemned because they had an incestuous man among them, who was living with his father's wife, and they did not mourn on that account, but were rather puffed up. In chapters ten and eleven it appears that they had turned the Lord's Supper, on the first day of the week, into a kind of Sunday club dinner, and thus spoiled the occasion of all its sanctity. But they were not only impure in their practices; they were erroneous in doctrine. Some of them, as it will be seen in the fifteenth chapter, denied the resurrection of the dead. Their condition is well presented in the following chapter to that in which our text stands:

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, and not with meat; for ye were not yet able to bear it; nay, not even now are ye able; for ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal and walk after the manner of men? For when one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not men?" (iii. 1-4). [That is, are ye not worldly men, or men of carnal minds?]

The reason that Paul had not given them the higher spiritual instruction was, because they were not in a condition to receive it; and even then, when writing this letter to them, they were too low and carnal to receive the rich truth which otherwise they might have received long before. But in their then present condition, such lessons would have been wasted upon them. [23]

I lay it down, then, as being true beyond any possible doubt, that even Christians may be of the earth earthy, to that extent that they will be incompetent to get the grand and spiritual thoughts of the word of God. This will account, in part, at least, for the fact that the apostle John saw more in Jesus of Nazareth than any of the other writers of that most wonderful life. John had become more like the Master than any one else, and was, therefore, prepared to understand Him better.

There is many a learned criticism that comes not near the truth because of the icy distance of the writer's heart from the subject on which he treats. On the other hand, the true follower of Christ finds the truth almost by intuition. The glory of heaven's richest revelation has been withheld from the wise and the prudent, and has been revealed unto babes. It is first a humble, willing heart, good and honest, that will be easily instructed in the way of life in Christ Jesus. Those eyes are best adjusted to the divine light, and therefore the better understand both the truth and Him who taught it.

SEC. 12. A CORRECT TRANSLATION WOULD CONDUCE TOWARDS A RELIABLE EXEGESIS.-This is especially true with the ordinary reader. Indeed, it is true of ninety-nine out of a hundred of the whole number of the real students of the Bible, for they are almost wholly dependent on the received translation as a means of knowing what has been said to us by the Lord. There are many contradictions now found
in the Bible, or the language which is tortured into contradictions, which a correct translation would entirely remove. There are many harsh and seemingly brutal things in the Bible that would be modified by a clear and just translation. There are statements, forms and phrases that occur to the refined ear as vulgar, that would be shorn of all offensiveness by judicious rendition. There are many things which are exceedingly dark, which an accurate version would illuminate, and, in their place, give us the clear and beautiful truth of God.

We do not mean to cast any reflections on the translators of King James. They did well: for the times and circumstances, they did very well. It should be remembered, however, that they labored under many difficulties that have been removed since that time.

(1.) There are words anglicised and transferred into our version which ought to have been translated. And the failure in that respect has contributed very much to the misinterpretation that would long ago have given place to better views.

(2.) Incorrect translations were retained for fear of injury to the long-standing customs and traditions of the church. There is no reason for the word bishop, the meaning of which never occurs to any one, when the word episcopos meant an overseer, and should have been so translated. It was wrong to give us Raster, in Acts xii. 4, when it should have been passover. The Accepted Version thus maintains an error that would have died out, but for the assistance rendered by a wrong translation.

(3.) Many words have become obsolete since the translation of King James was made. Wist, and wot, and "we do you to wit," are expressions without meaning to us.

(4.) Many other words have changed their meaning entirely. The word let, then meant to, prevent, to hold back, to restrain; now it has the opposite thought. Paul had desired many times to see the brethren at Rome, [25] but had been let. He informed the brethren of Thessalonica that there would come a great falling away, and that man of sin would finally be revealed, but that which then let would continue to let till taken out of the way. Such language is unintelligible to us. Prevent (from pre, before, and venio, to come) meant to come before, to precede, to anticipate. So David said: "My prayer shall prevent the Lord;" "my prayer shall prevent the dawning of the morning." And Paul gravely tells the brethren that those who shall be alive and remain to the coming of the Lord, "shall not prevent those who are asleep." The word conversation once related to action and its results, rather than the use of words by one person to another. Hence Paul says, "our conversation is in heaven." The meaning of the passage is easy, when we have it correctly rendered citizenship.

We are in great need of a translation, not simply a revision. But while the world would not likely be willing to receive such a work, it would be better that all students should provide themselves with a copy of the Revision of the Old and New Testaments. Not that this work is faultless--that would be too much to expect of any human production--but because it is much better than the Common Version. The translators are equally learned with those of King James, and they have had many advantages which the former never possessed. While they have been too conservative in retaining many things that ought to
have been removed, and while the Revision is marred by much of the bad grammar of the Common Version, still there are many valuable changes. And I think it is not too much to say, that in many respects the Revision is the best work of the kind ever furnished to the reading world.

SEC. 13. A GENERAL AND THOROUGH EDUCATION IS OF GREAT VALUE IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE WORD OF GOD.

(1.) No one is at liberty to suppose, from my advocacy of learning, that it can always be trusted. It can not take the place of good common sense, and certainly not of a true heart and that spiritual purity which is so greatly needed in order to understand the things that are freely given to us of God.

(2.) There is an idea that learning is destructive of piety. But I know of no evidence of the correctness of that view. Of course, there are many men so engaged in their investigations of science, and even in their literary pursuits, that but little or no time is left for the cultivation of their hearts by the soul-stirring truths of heaven. Anything that will take up the mind entirely, will do that. Farming, merchandise, politics, anything, if it is sufficiently absorbing. Learning will do this no more than any calling which will elicit the mind and direct the energy of the man. But instead of learning standing in the way of faith and piety, it greatly aide it. The man of knowledge may lose his respect for many of the traditions of the fathers, but his faith in God and His word will not be injured thereby, but greatly aided.

(3.) There is a mental drill in the attainment of knowledge that will greatly assist in preparing for that effort necessary to a full and complete investigation of the Scriptures.

(4.) I would begin my recommendations respecting the necessary features of education, with the knowledge of one's own vernacular. With us the English language is the great medium of knowledge. If our knowledge of that medium is defective, the benefits derived from its use will be greatly lessened. Most readers of the Bible, as before stated, are entirely dependent upon the English Bible, and all are more or less dependent upon it: Not only so, but the commentaries, lesson helps, and all the valuable suggestions. by way of essays, sermons, etc., come to us through the English language. Hence it is of great importance that we should have an accurate knowledge of our own language.

(5.) A knowledge of the original languages in which the Scriptures were written, would be of great assistance in getting an accurate and intimate acquaintance with the Bible.

There are many thoughts in the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures that can not be so clearly presented in any other language than that in which they were indited. In translating any book; from one language into another, much of the beauty and strength is lost. The translator may be learned and faithful, but there are not the words to express those peculiar shades of meaning that belonged to the original. The peoples using these tongues have differed both in their thoughts and in their modes of expression, and it is therefore almost impossible to translate a book from one of these into the other, and retain the beauty and vigor of the composition. Other things being equal, the scholar in Hebrew and Greek is the better interpreter.
(6.) A thorough drill in logic would greatly aid investigation in the Scriptures. This is true in the reading of any work of merit. [28] But it is especially true of the Bible. I once heard a man of prominence say that the Bible is not a book of logic, but of assertion. This, however, was a short-sighted observation. Even if the Bible were a book only of direct revelation, still the propositions made to men are to be understood by the rules of logic. There is no more direct assertion found in the Scriptures anywhere than in the teaching of the Master. He ever spoke as one having authority. And yet the strictest and closest logic is constantly observed. This was especially true in his many encounters, with the Pharisees and Sadducees. When he stood in a synagogue on the Sabbath day, and a man was there who needed healing, he said to them: "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath day, or to, do evil?" They might have said it is lawful to do neither one. But they could not consistently do so. Help was needed, and it must be rendered or refused; hence a choice had to be made. Inactivity in the matter was an impossibility. When Peter had committed himself and the Master by saying that the Master paid tribute, Jesus said to him, "Do kings collect revenue from their sons, or of strangers? "Peter said, of strangers. Very well, then, said the Saviour, the son goes free. Nevertheless he sent Peter to take the fish. The blunder of this apostle was thus pointed out by the use of logic. Take all the conversations at Jerusalem; during the last feast that the Master attended, and his parables are full of logical acumen. He taught the Sadducees the resurrection, from the account of the burning bush. He went to the very root of the question, and showed them that they were fundamentally wrong. Men did not lose their identity by death, as they supposed, and therefore there would be a resurrection from the dead. But especially the [29] apostolic speeches and writings are full of logic. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, argued, from what they then saw and heard, from the language of the prophet Joel, and from the Psalms, and, having finished his quotations, he drew logical conclusions so strong and so just that the whole crowd were carried with him. And wherever the apostles went they argued before the people, opening the Scriptures and alleging therefrom that Jesus was the Christ, and that he must needs have died and risen from the dead; and their logic was faultless. Open to any of the epistles, and you will find them replete with the finest argument, and presented in the most logical form. Perhaps no more logical writing can be found anywhere than Paul's letter to the brethren at Rome. And if one is in need of the knowledge of logic, in order to comprehend the great speeches of Webster, Clay and Garfield, he will equally need that drill before undertaking to analyze the epistle to the Romans.

(7.) A good knowledge of contemporaneous history will greatly aid in the study of the Scriptures. For several hundred years before Christ we have history, more or less reliable, and with all the imperfections that gather about these productions, they greatly assist us in knowing just what was done, and hence just what was referred to by the divinely directed writer. Old Testament history is by no means well studied, without comparing the statements of the Bible with the best thoughts on Egyptology, and the most reliable records of the Medes, Persians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Syrians, Phenicians, Grecians, etc., etc. And there are many things in the New Testament that will never be clear to the mind unacquainted with the history of the times. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote for those who were well acquainted [30] with the facts, and therefore they did not stop to explain many things which can not be understood by gas, except as we study history and come into possession of the facts before their minds at the time they wrote these accounts. For the most part they speak of Herod as if there had been but one. Of course, to those for whom these records were first intended, there was no need of anything
further being said. But without the knowledge of history, we will not know whether the writer is speaking of Herod the Great, Archelaus, Aristobulus, Antipas, Philip, Agrippa I., or Agrippa II., and everything will be confused.

(8.) A good knowledge of the lands of the Bible will render many things plain which, without such knowledge, would be dark.--The things that were said and done would have much more of meaning and interest to us if we knew where they were and at what they were looking when these things were done and sail. The allegories of the true vine and the good shepherd; the teaching of the Master on the great day of the feast; the directions to the blind man, *Go wash in the pool of Siloam,* crossing the sea to the land of the Gadarenes, or coming through the midst of Decapolis; the teaching of the Master in the borders of the city of Cæsarea Philippi; the transfiguration that followed, are at least partially lost to us without a knowledge of the geography of the country. But while this is true in the study of the Gospels, it is especially true when we come to read the Acts and the letters of the apostles to the various churches. Every student of the Scriptures ought, therefore, to become familiar with all the lands mentioned in the Bible. In the study of Old Testament history, this is especially true. The forty-two encampments of the children of Israel will never be understood without a good knowledge of the country through which they passed. Egypt, Sinai, the wildernesses of Paran and of Zin; the land of Edom; the mountain ranges; the land of the Amorites, of the Moabites, of the Midianites east of the Jordan, should all be known. The student will be well paid for all the time and energy expended in the study of Biblical geography.

(9.) One should become as thoroughly acquainted as possible with the customs of the people during the times of the Bible.--Many things are perfectly inexplicable unless we are in possession of this key of knowledge. Words and ways are full of meaning to us when we know the customs of the people; whereas, without such knowledge, we would not be able to divine their intent.

SEC. 14. WE SHOULD EXPECT TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE.--The Bible is regarded by many as a sealed book, and not to be understood, unless by some gift from God which shall make it possible, either because of some office, or on account of conversion. The ability to read it as any other book, and understand it by reading it, is not supposed to belong to unaided mortals. In another place we will examine the cause of this hurtful superstition, but fog the present we are content to say that we must expect to understand the word of God or our investigations will amount pious waste of our time. If we should read any other book in this way, no one would expect us to know anything about it when we had finished the reading. The words might be pronounced or heard, but no impression would be made on the mind. We would not be looking for anything, and, as a consequence, we would not find anything. [32]

There are those now who regard the Scriptures as a mystery, and therefore not to be understood by the common mind. Indeed, they suppose that the Scriptures themselves teach that they are a mystery. On this account it is necessary to quote a few passages, that we may realize our privileges.

"But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture inspired of God is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be
complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (II. Tim. iii. 14-16).

The Scriptures which Timothy had known in his childhood were those of the Old Testament, which are much more difficult than the communications found in the New Testament. And these, too, as they were fulfilled in Christ, were sufficient to perfect the man of God, filling him with all needed truth.

"How that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men" (Eph. iii. 3, 4).

Then again in the eighth and ninth verses:

"Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from all ages hath been hid in God, who created all things."

Here it is evident that the most difficult things that had to be presented to the world--those which were more mysterious than any former revelation--were to be read and understood by the whole church. Not only so, but Paul was commissioned to make all men see this mystery as he did.

"And when this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye also read the epistle from Laodicea" (Col. iv. 16).

This letter to the brethren of Laodicea has been lost, but it was probably much like that which was sent to the church at Colossæ. We can not say that it is unusually difficult, and yet he who can read that letter and understand it, is able to read any of the letters of the apostle Paul. He supposed the whole church at Colossæ could hear and understand it, and that the church at Laodicea could do the same.

"I adjure you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the brethren" (I. Thess. v. 27).

Here, again, though the first of the apostolic letters, it is one of the most difficult. And yet Paul had no such thought as that the members of the church could not understand it. Indeed, the evident purpose of all the epistles was that they should be read to the whole church, and that the whole church, in this way, should be instructed in divine things. And yet there is as much skill needed in the interpretation of the epistolary communications as any other portion of the Scriptures, unless it be Revelation, or Ezekiel.

Then let us remove the fog of superstition that has prevented so many from any proper investigation of the Scriptures, that all may know their rights to search this volume for themselves, and that they may understand it. Indeed, they should be made to realize that they are responsible for their ignorance. God has made a revelation of His will to us, and if we do not avail ourselves of the privilege of reading it and of knowing its contents, it is our own fault. All should be made to feel that, under such circumstances, ignorance is a sin against God and ourselves.
SEC. 15. THE BLESSING OF GOD IS NEEDED, AND MAY BE HAD FOR THE ASKING.--This does not mean that knowledge is to be had by asking alone, when there are other conditions of receiving it. But it does mean that God has promised to bless us in this respect as well as in others.

"But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James i. 5).

While the preacher then had to study to show himself approved unto God, that he might be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly setting forth the word of truth, still this blessing is promised. And all we are authorized to say about it is, that while we use the means which God has provided for our education in divine things, it is our privilege and duty to ask that God will bless the effort. And we have God's promise, through an apostle, that he will do so. We may not know just how God will choose to assist us in learning his will, but his promise will certainly be kept. We may, in part, answer our own prayers, for the very hungering and thirsting for this divine knowledge will prepare us for a ready reception of the truth. [35]
CHAPTER III.

THINGS WHICH HINDER A RIGHT INTERPRETATION OF
THE SCRIPTURES.

It is about as necessary to understand the things that prevent us from the investigation that would acquaint us with the word of God, as to know the things that will help, for even while we may be availing ourselves of assistance, we may be injured by many things that will so modify the favorable forces that we shall get but little benefit from them. We wish to know, therefore, the things that will hinder, as well as the things that will assist us to understand the word of the Lord.

SEC. 16. A DESIRE TO PLEASE THE WORLD.

(1.) It is not meant to say that all desire to please the world is wrong; indeed, we are required to please our neighbor for his good. No real man of God can have any interest in offending. For when we have offended the world, we have lost our power with them to do good, at least to a degree.

(2.) But it is the inordinate desire to please the world that hinders a right interpretation. Many men have been decoyed from the truth by popular applause. They have said something that sounded like heresy, and it received the approbation of persons of means and standing, and, desiring more approval, they ventured on more and graver utterances of the same kind. If they did not absolutely run away into heterodox woods, they at least climbed up [36] to the top of the orthodox gate-post, and gave a longing look in that direction. And for that look they received a benefit. And then with vanity on the one hand and flattery on the other, all sorts of doctrines have been preached, to tickle itching ears, and bring the rounds of applause for which a vain heart palpitates. To such men the word of God may never have been very precious, but the honor that comes from men continually lessens their feeling of loyalty to divine authority, until they are willing to preach anything, true or false, if it will only give them favor with the people. They become willing to sell their pulpit, and themselves also, to the highest bidder. And the bid from the ungodly becomes a bribe to blind them to the truth.

SEC. 17. THE BIBLE MADE THE PROPERTY OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

(1.) This has been one of the great faults of the Catholic Church. In the decision of their councils, that the laity of the church should not read that book, lest they should reach wrong views, they have left it entirely to the control of those whose especial business it has been to furnish the people with a
knowledge of heaven's will. This enables them to establish a monopoly of interpretation. So that, to the people, the Bible is not the book itself; but the meaning of the book, as interpreted by the priesthood, *is to them the Bible*. All the restraints are thus removed from these men, and they are at liberty to interpret the Bible in that way that will best suit their purposes. This kind of power is always dangerous, as well in this respect, as in any other.

If, in answer to this, it shall be said that only the more ignorant of the membership of that church are thus prohibited, and that many of them are at liberty to [37] read the Bible, and that they are encouraged to do so, I am willing to grant that such is the case in some places, and especially of late. But this does not remove the correctness of our position nor the justness of our charge. Much has been done in opposition to the thought that the common people can understand the word of God; and in this way it has been kept from their hands.

(2.) Our Protestantism is an improvement, perhaps, but not such an improvement as will give us any particular cause of boasting. The creeds that are in use have been made a long time, at a time when knowledge was lower and prejudices were higher than at present. And yet in the light of these catechisms we have been compelled to conduct our investigations. So it has not been, even to Protestants, so much, "What does the Bible say on the subject?" as, "What does the creed or catechism say?"

(3.) There, has descended to us a kind of reverence for authority found in great names, that is very hurtful. These authorities have been canonized by us, and are not to be disturbed. This is partly because of superstition from which we are not yet free, and partly from laziness that makes us willing to accept statements, rather than look for the truth ourselves. In this way errors are handed down from one generation to another, for centuries, without having been suspected of being untrue. Some great man has made a hasty statement, which, at the time, he intended only to be understood as a kind of guess, and then it has been copied by one after another, till a dozen or twenty scholars can be quoted as holding that view; and this will be evidence enough for the faith of all the rest, for centuries to come.

(4.) It is not intended to encourage disrespect [38] for candor and learning. *Authors may be used as aids in study of the Scriptures*, as well as in the study of any thing else, but it should be remembered that nothing but the word of God will do as a guide for the faith and practice of His people. We should accept of the assistance of these great men in getting that knowledge, but nothing more. Reformations have been checked, and really prevented, by too much reverence for the reformers. They have had but a single truth which they have urged before the world. That they saw with great clearness. On many other points they have been weak, like other men. But their admirers have stereotyped them as the sum of all intelligence, and refused to have any view of theirs called in question. This has resulted in making these men the standard of doctrine, and preventing the world from learning anything else than what they learned under the most difficult circumstances.

**SEC. 18. USING THE BIBLE TO PROVE DOCTRINES, IS A GREAT SOURCE OF MISUNDERSTANDING.--**

The Bible is not a book with which to prove doctrines; it is the doctrine itself. Almost anything can be proven to the man who wants to find the proof. It leads to a wrong use of the Scriptures, so that, instead
of searching them for whatever they may contain, the doctrines have been first assumed, and then the Bible is compelled into some sort of recognition of the position. (See Dogmatical Method.)

SEC. 19. MYSTICISM.--Spiritualizing the word of the Lord.--Instead of regarding it as a sensible communication from the God of heaven, it is turned into a kind of Samson's riddle, and made to say almost anything except that which it meant to say. (See Mystic Method.)

SEC. 20. MAKING THE BIBLE MERELY A BOOK OF [39] WONDERS.--The disposition manifested in this does not differ greatly from that which guides in the Mystic Method. And yet it is so treated by many persons who have not the slightest idea that they are influenced by like motives and feelings. It is treated as a kind of mental and spiritual museum--a box of curiosities. Men who search for quaint texts, and Sunday-school teachers who have their scholars searching for some strange question, are constantly contributing to that kind of disregard for the word of the Lord, though they do not intend it. The school is asked to tell how many times the word girl occurs in the Bible, or what was the name of David's mother, or what man had twelve toes; and the energies and time of the scholars are taken up with such incidentals, to no profit.

SEC. 21. READING WITHOUT INTENDING OR EXPECTING TO UNDERSTAND IT.

(1.) Reading from a sense of duty, or simply to have it to say that they have read it through. I have known persons who regarded it a duty to read the Bible through once a year, and having done this for a number of years in succession, they seemed quite fond of telling about it. This exercise will be something better than a pilgrimage to Mecca, but as a means of becoming acquainted with the Scriptures, it is very poor. If we should read any other book in this way, we would not be expected to know much of its contents. The mind must be fixed upon the thought and purpose of the work, with the intent of knowing what they are; and no more should be read than is understood, or at least partially digested.

(2.) The Bible is read irregularly and without any system.--This is quite common in family worship. One time it is a Psalm; at another, it is a chapter from the [40] Gospels, or one from the Prophets. Something, of course, may be learned in this way, but not very much. Like the reading mentioned before, it leaves nothing except that which sticks to the mind of its own accord. It comes from the want of method, which will be more fully discussed in another place. (See Chapter on Methods.)

(3.) Reading only favorite Scriptures.--This is pardonable, to a degree, in a hobbyist. A man who has a particular hobby to ride, may be expected to know but little of the Scriptures outside of the round of texts that can be made to harmonize with his doctrine. These he has thoroughly committed--at least, he has the places well marked, and quite well worn. Now and then I find a Bible owned by one of these men, and it is worn out at his favorite texts, and perfectly new everywhere else. But there are many others who treat their Bibles much in the same way. They have their favorite, chapters, which they read-again and again to the neglect of other and equally weighty Scriptures. If any other study should be pursued in this way, no one would expect anything to be gained by the effort. If a student should come into school and study only the chapters and sections in his book which he preferred, he would know but
little more at the conclusion than at the beginning of his studies.

There are a great many hindrances, which we will not now name, of the same kind. But let this suffice. Anything that will prevent thorough and continued study, will prevent knowledge, to the full extent of its influence. Whether we read hurriedly or slowly is a small matter, for each has some advantages; but the reading that is not pondered, is nearly worthless. [41]

SEC. 22. INTERPRETING FROM SINISTER MOTIVES. (1.) *This is frequently done to save property.*--Being found in the possession of goods that it is not right for us to have, we begin to excuse ourselves by some peculiar theory on that subject. Then the mind is drawn out in the defense, not simply of the theory, but of the property which the theory protects. We did not first advocate slavery in this country, and then seek the slaves. The property came into our possession, we could scarcely say how. And rather than to let the servants go, the Bible was brought into the defense of the institution. Legislators make laws to shield themselves in the possession of property, and many interpret law for personal gain, or for protection in the business which they know to be ruinous to the people. Of course they will quote and apply the Scriptures in the same way. Many, perhaps, do no intentional wrong in the matter. They have simply permitted themselves to become blinded by their own interests. This desire for security in their business and property, colors all their interpretations and vitiates all their exegesis.

(2.) *A wish to do as we please; to continue our customs, or begin new ones which we prefer.*--Many men to-day are in the condition of the prophet Balaam; they are very anxious to do and say whatever the Lord may direct, provided the Lord will direct them to do and say the things they prefer. When Judah heard that his daughter-in-law had played the harlot, he was so indignant that he wished her to be burned; but when she showed the cane and the bracelets, which he had left with her, there was a wonderful modulation in the tone. In the days of Christ, the Pharisees and lawyers were ready to lay grievous burdens on the shoulders of others, [42] but they were not willing to touch one of them with even a little finger. The rules they would make for others were strict, but those they would make for themselves would be quite different. So it has ever been with the world. I knew a man who had a hobby on marriage. He was of the opinion that no man could marry twice without being a polygamist--in heaven, if not on the earth. His wife might die, but that had nothing to do with it; if he married again he would be guilty of polygamy. You could not talk with him five minutes without having his hobby brought out and made to canter in your presence. But his wife died, and in less than a year from that time his theology changed on that point. Almost anything that men want to do, they can find some text of Scripture that will sound like giving it support. And it is exceedingly difficult to make any man see that he has been preaching that which is not true. He has posed before the people on that subject, and is not willing to incur the humiliation of saying, "I was wrong, and my opponents were right." The question, "How religiously dishonest can an honest man be?" is hard to answer. Whether this is the right way to state it or not, may be doubted; but one thing is certain--a man's wishes will blind his mind to the truth, if they happen to be on the contrary side. During the last war, good men would read the same dispatches, and reach opposite conclusions from them. During a political campaign they will do the same. We should be as far above such prejudice as possible.

(3.) *Sectarianism is responsible for much of the wrong interpretation that prevents the world from*
knowing the truth.--The desire to be with the successful party, furnishes a strong temptation to use the Scriptures so that [43] the party shall be approved. Indeed, the love of party will develop genius in its maintenance. In political matters, it is not strange that men will bend the truth for party purposes, and interpret all facts according to the interests involved. But that good people will do this in matters of salvation, seems out of place. If we were listening to such a statement for the first time, we would not be willing to accept the charge without a wide margin on which to write exceptions. But facts are stubborn things; the world does very frequently subordinate the truth to the interests of sectarian preferences. It is possible for well-meaning people to be blinded by these things. They get into an argument, and are put to the worse; and, being sure that their position is correct, and yet not being able to make it appear, they are ready to seize any passage that can be made to do even temporary service. In their sober moments they would say that the interpretation of the passage in hand was not the correct one; but not seeing what else to do at the time, they give that exegesis to push back the opponent till they can have time to cast about for something better to say. But for the sectarian prompting, nothing of the kind would have occurred. Prompted by their love for their party, or, perhaps, what is worse, their hatred for the opposite one, they become willing that the word of God shall be misrepresented for the time. They find themselves in the heat of battle, and, anything then to win—at least, to prevent defeat. This interpreting the Bible for party ends is one of the greatest hindrances of to-day, to a correct knowledge of the revelation of God to men. How to avoid this, and yet retain the parties, is difficult to say. About all that we are now warranted in saying is, that it is needful to [44] put everything out of the mind but the desire to know the truth of God when we open His book. Let go, as far as possible, everything of self and sect, and free the mind and heart from every wish or interest that may, in any way, prevent the knowledge of the word and will of the Lord.

(4.) Moral or practical atheism.--This is the disposition to do as we please about divine things. There is a feeling of indifference as to what God may have said on the subject. Men are ready to conclude that it matters little whether they do God's way or not. In their opinion, it will do well enough to obey the Lord in His commands, but it is not essential. If they do not prefer to do the Lord's way, He will accept them while they do their way. These persons may believe that there is a God; they may believe that He is the author of the Bible; but it has not entered their minds that it makes any particular difference whether they do His will or not. This is practical atheism. Like the Samaritans of old, they fear the Lord and serve other gods. With such views of the authority of Jehovah, it is not possible to have any correct understanding of the Scriptures. Everything is vitiated by such heedlessness:

SEC. 23. THIRST FOR DISTINCTION: DESIRE TO BE KNOWN AS PERSONS OF LEADING THOUGHT.

Whatever of desire there may be to do good, by bringing out the meaning of the word of God, is certainly laudable. Or if there be a wish to excel in this effort to benefit the world, it is to be allowed and encouraged; but when the ambitious mind has only in view the exaltation of self, the exegete comes to stand in the way of every other effort than that which he is making, and his thirst for distinction even prevents the acceptance [45] of the plain and simple truth of the gospel. Scientists do this, sometimes, and stop all investigation respecting everything on which they have pronounced. Lest they should not be regarded as the end of all wisdom, they go to work to destroy every hypothesis that, in any way, seems to call in question any position which they have taken. So do these, for the purpose of maintaining a
reputation for independence of thought, adopt anything and everything that promises to bring them to public view. One man was capable of finding all the ordinances of the church in the book of Job. And all the quaint or curious things from first to last, have come from this desire for leadership. Hence they must find in the Scriptures what no one else has been able to find, or their claim to acuteness will not be well maintained.

SEC. 24. EFFORTS TO HARMONIZE SCIENCE WITH THE BIBLE ARE DOING MUCH HARM.

We have no objections to any investigation into the subject of science and revelation. But what we do object to, is the demand that Scripture interpretation must keep pace with the guesses of scientific speculators. Every new theory that is advanced demands a new hermeneutics. Words must he bent and shaded till they will fit the wards and cells of the new science.

The old theologians took advantage of science, and declared that everything that did not accord with their interpretation of the Bible could not be true, and, therefore, should not be tolerated. This, of course, was very discouraging to scientific research. No man was at liberty to push his investigations beyond the creed of the church. All can now see the injustice and injury of such unrighteous jurisdiction.

But in latter times it has been changed, so that the [46] scientist comes and sets himself up in a kind of espionage over the, interpreter of the word of God. These are both wrong, and both to be condemned. Before any man is ready to say that the Bible and science are not agreed, he should know two things: first, he should know all about the Bible; and second, he should know all about science. In the meantime, the best thing he can do will be to learn all he can of either one, or both.

It is not to be denied that we may know some things, at least approximately, and that so far as facts have been really introduced and tested, we may be governed by them, just to the extent of our absolute knowledge. But no interpreter should trouble himself to make exegesis keep up with scientific hypotheses. Science has no more right to lord it over religion, than religion has to lord it over science. He who made the universe made the Bible, and when we come to understand them both, we will be delighted with their beautiful harmony. And it is, therefore, the privilege and duty of every man to push his investigations as far and as fast as he can. [47]
CHAPTER IV.

CONCERNING METHODS.

SEC. 25. THE VALUE OF METHOD.

(1.) Definition of method.--According to Webster, Method is--

"1. An orderly procedure or process; a rational way of investigating or exhibiting truth; regular mode or manner of doing anything; characteristic manner.

"'Though this be madness, yet there is method in it.'--Shakespeare.

"2. Orderly arrangement, elucidation, development, or classification; clear and lucid exhibition; systematic arrangement peculiar to an individual.

"'However irregular and desultory his talk, there is method in the fragments.'--Coleridge.

"'All method is rational progress, a progress toward an end.'--Sir W. Hamilton."

We use the word, in the present work, to indicate the arrangement or plan of investigation. It is the system by which facts are to be introduced and conclusions reached.

(2.) Method is superior to rule.--Methods are general and rules are special, hence the method governs all rules, or directs their use. One of the weaknesses of hermeneutics is the want of system, or of any thought that system is necessary in the study of the Scriptures. Rules have been furnished in abundance, but the great need has been that of method. Rules may explain how to cut stone and lay up the wall, but without method you would be [48] as likely to have one form as another in the building. The material that went into the temple at Jerusalem could have all been put into a building ten feet high and ten feet wide, by extending it far enough. If rules were all that had been needed, the men of King Hiram would have known just how to erect the temple of Solomon without any directions from him. But rules were not enough; it took the divine plan to govern them, to render them of any particular value in erecting the temple. An army might have all the rules necessary to success--marching, camping, cooking, fighting--but, without method, they would not unite against any foe, or conduct a campaign with any profitable results.
SEC. 26. WHY METHOD HAS NOT BEEN EMPLOYED.--Several superstitions seem to have combined to prevent the world from the exercise of common sense in dealing with the word of God.

(1.) The idea that it is a supernatural book, and, therefore, must have a supernatural interpretation, has done much to weaken efforts at close and profitable study of the Bible.

(2.) It has been regarded as the right of those who have been divinely appointed to bring out its meaning and that it would be presumption for others to meddle with their prerogatives.

(3.) Men have looked upon the Bible as not having been given according to any plan. They have regarded it as a mass of truth irregularly thrown together, and that we are as apt to find its meaning without system in our investigation as with it. They suppose its truth to be gold pockets, and not to be mined after any plan; and if we accidentally happen to hit upon a deposit we are fortunate. Getting the meaning of the Scriptures is more a question of genius or accident, than of study or research.

(4.) Others, as we will see, have looked upon the Bible as a blind parable, and if it mean anything, then it is as likely to mean one thing as another.

They would not think of treating any other book in this way. When they read books of law and medicine, they suppose that intelligence and a wish to communicate has made the author present his thought in a way in which he could be the most easily understood. And why they have imagined that God has acted less kindly and sensibly than do men in making their communications, I can not understand. Against this injustice, thinking men have arrayed themselves for many centuries. But they have been too few in number, and have been overborne by the thoughtless masses.

Milton says:

"We count it no gentleness or fair dealing in a man of power to require strict and punctual obedience, and yet give out his commands ambiguously. We should think he had a plot upon us. Certainly such commands were no commands, but snares. The very essence of truth is plainness and brightness; the darkness and ignorance are our own. The wisdom of God created understanding, fit and proportionable to truth, the object and end of it, as the eye to the thing visible. If our understanding have a film of ignorance over it, or be blear with gazing on other false glisterings, what is that to truth? If we will but purge with sovereign eyesalve that intellectual ray which God has planted within us, then we would believe the Scriptures protesting their own plainness and perspicuity, calling to them to be instructed, not only the wise and the learned, but the simple, the poor, the babes; foretelling an extraordinary effusion of God's Spirit upon every age and sect, attributing to all men and requiring from them the ability of searching, trying, examining all things, and by the Spirit discerning that which is good." [50]

This presents us no method of reading the Scriptures, but contains a valuable truth in respect to the divine purpose in giving the word of God to men. In the mind of Milton, there is no reason to suppose that God intended any other rules to be employed in the investigation of His book, than those which are needed in the examination of all other books.
Prof. Moses Stuart, of Andover, says:

"Nearly all treatises on hermeneutics, since the days of Ernesti, have laid it down as a maxim which can not be controverted that the Bible is to be interpreted in the same manner, that is, by the same principles, as all other books. Writers are not wanting, previously to the period in which Ernesti lived, who have maintained the same thing; but we may also find some who have assailed the position before us, and labored to show that it is nothing less than a species of profaneness to treat the sacred books as we do the classic authors with respect to their interpretation. Is this allegation well grounded? Is there any good reason to object to the principle of interpretation now in question? In order to answer, let us direct our attention to the nature and source of what are now called principles or laws of interpretation: Whence did they originate? Are they the artificial production of high-wrought skill, of labored research, of profound and extensive learning? Did they spring from the subtleties of nice distinctions, from the philosophical and metaphysical efforts of the schools? Are they the product of exalted and dazzling genius, sparks of celestial fire, which none but a favored few can emit? No; nothing of all this. The principles of interpretation as to their substantial and essential elements, are no invention of man, no product of his effort and learned skill; nay, they can scarcely be said with truth to have been discovered by him. They are coeval with our nature. Ever since man was created and endowed with the powers of speech, and made a communicative and social being, he has had occasion to practice upon the principles of interpretation, and has actually done so. From the first moment that one human being addressed another by the use of language, down to the present hour, the essential laws of interpretation became, and have continued to be, a practical matter. The person addressed has always been an interpreter in every instance [51] where he has heard and understood what was addressed to him. All the human race, therefore, are, and ever have been, interpreters. It is a law of their rational, intelligent, communicative nature. Just as truly as one human being was formed so as to address another in language, just so truly that other was formed to interpret and understand what is said."

(5.) More than any other thought or feelings a want of sound faith, has contributed to a wrong system of hermeneutics, and even to the abolition of all system. At a very early date, philosophies were introduced as the equal of the teaching of the apostles. And even up to the time of the Reformation, the study of Christian philosophers was thought to be more desirable than the study of Paul. And it made such a lasting impression on the minds of the people that they have not entirely recovered from it yet. Men studied Augustine, and were regarded sound, or otherwise, as they agreed with that saint. The schools of theology were not so much to study the Bible as to become acquainted with the views of their great men.

Blackburne, in his "History of the Church," pp. 226, 227, gives us a good statement respecting the condition of things in the ninth century:

"A subtle philosophy was brought into the controversies of the West by John Scotus Eirigena (Irishman), the adviser and confidant of the French king, Charles the Bald, who had some of the tastes of his grandfather, Charlemagne. John was the teacher of the court school. He was the enigma and wonder of his time. He suddenly comes, and all at once disappears; so that we know not whence he came nor whither he went. He was undoubtedly the most learned man, and the deepest, boldest and most independent thinker of his age, in which he was neither understood nor appreciated, and he was scarcely deemed even worthy of being declared a heretic. The churchmen of Paris rectified the omission in 1209, and burnt some of his books and pantheistic followers. Though he wished to retain [52] some of the essential doctrines of Christianity, his system was one great heterodoxy, based upon Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and himself.
Theology and philosophy were, in his view, merely forms of the same truth. He said: 'Authority springs from reason, not reason from authority.' He was the Western writer who used logic as a means of discovering truths. His philosophy was rationalistic; his pantheism foreran that of Hegel. The French king directed him into a new field. It is a startling feature of the times that one, whose theories were so divergent from the teaching of the Church, was called to speak as an authority on two of the most awful topics of the faith. These were the doctrines of predestination and the Eucharist, which, owing to the great activity of thought engendered in the Carlovingian schools, were now discussed with unwonted vehemence."

This is but the case of an individual philosopher, but the Christian world in general conducted no investigations in any religious matter for a thousand years, except as they did it by questions which were discussed. The opponent of Christianity appealed to philosophy as much as it friends, but to another class of philosophers. And heterodoxy consisted more in not agreeing with them respecting the philosophers who were to be guides for them in this wilderness of speculation than in anything else.

Guided by the thought that the apostles of Christ were only splendid philosophers, and that truth could be as easily and as safely gained from the others, it is not strange that there was no system of hermeneutics thought of; for there was but little attempt at investigation into the word of God.

And yet we may reserve our sympathies for ourselves, as we have nearly the same need of method in our attempts at investigation that they had. But we are coming to the light, and, it is sincerely hoped, that in the near future we shall have the common sense and common honesty to treat the Bible as we do other books: let it speak for itself.

Now and then, we find a man in the dark ages contending for something like a correct method of interpretation. But his voice is soon hushed, and a century goes by before the world is favored with another reformer of sufficient force to be known and felt.

**SECT. 27. WRONG METHODS OF INTERPRETATION ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MUCH OF THE MISUNDERSTANDING RESPECTING THE MEANING AND INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.**

(1.) *By their use many things are sustained that we know to be false.*--The unbeliever says, "There, that is what your Christianity teaches;" and we do not dare to deny it, for by the use of false methods of interpretation the church has adopted it. And we are in the condition of the Egyptians when Cambyses came against them. In front of his own men he drove a large number of their calves, and dogs, and cats. The Egyptians did not dare to injure them. They were their gods. As they could not reach the Persian army save through their own divinities, all that was left for them to do was to flee before the approaching enemy. So when the enemies of our religion can defend themselves by our creeds, we are helpless. When the Bible is made to teach that there are no good impulses in our nature, and that we can no more believe than we can make a world, except by a power that must come to us from above, the logical mind concludes at once that if he fails to believe, the fault is not his. And hence, if he is to be damned, it will be for that unbelief which he could not help. We argue in vain against his atheistic fatalism, for he can show that our Christian fatalism is no better. When we make the Bible teach that a man can not even
think a good thought, of himself, the thinking world says your Bible teaches what every man knows to be false. Supposing that the Scriptures have been fairly dealt with, the thinking man turns away from them in utter disgust.

(2.) Not only is the Bible made to teach what we know to be untrue, but also to contradict itself. It is said that to come to God in any acceptable devotion, we must not only believe that God is, but that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Then we are told that faith is a direct gift of God, and that the only thing that one can do in order to become a believer, is to ask God for that faith by which he can be saved. The logical mind balks at the sight of such confusion. He says: I can not be heard and have my prayer answered, unless I have faith when I go to Him. But I have not that faith, and am told that I must pray for it. That is, I must have the faith before the prayer can be heard, and I must pray before I can have faith. He says that such doctrine is nonsense. And, supposing that the exegetes have done their work all right, he declares the Bible to be self-contradictory, and, from that hour sneers at the claims of inspiration made in its favor.

(3.) False methods have turned over the Bible to the clergy, as a kind of convenient toy. We wonder that Christianity has outlived the treatment it has received at the hands of its friends. From the beginning of the fifth century to the close of the fifteenth, real scriptural examination was almost entirely dispensed with. The most ingenious travesty on the word of God was accepted as evidence of the fitness for the ministry of the man who could arrange it. Theology related to the forms of church government, or some question about Transubstantiation, Trinity, Predestination, Indulgences, Penance, or whether tonsure should be made by shaving the head from the forehead, backward over the crown, or to begin at one ear and shave over the crown to the other ear. This was a grave question, on which the English Church and the Church of the Pope could not agree, until it was settled by King Oswy, before whom the question had been argued by the ablest theologians of the time.

There were reformers, here and there, who wished to give to the people the word of the living God, and to urge them to follow it as their guide to heaven; but, as said before, they were few in number, and their power for good was scarcely felt. Religious people were controlled by scientific theology, and not by the word of God. As the philosophical puzzles of the day had little or nothing to do with the Scriptures, everything was left to those who had the time and were paid to attend to such things.

We think that it was a great misfortune to have lived in that day, and yet how much have we improved? Orthodoxy and heterodoxy are determined now, more by the canonized authorities than by the word of God. If a missionary now be questioned as to the soundness of his faith, it is to be decided more by the custom of the church, than by the word of Scripture. The sensational sermons of to-day are excused on the ground of dullness of the people and the need of something to appetize them. But whatever the cause, it is lamentably true that the masses are getting but little help in understanding the Bible from the pulpit at the present time. Upon the weaknesses of the pulpit, not of ancient, but of modern time, in matters of exegesis, I have nowhere seen a clearer or more manly statement than is to be found in [56] a work of Homiletics, "The Theory of Preaching," by "Austin Phelps, D. D., late Professor of Theology in Andover. He says:
"(3.) It should be further observed, that the past and present usages of the pulpit respecting truthfulness of interpretation is not entirely trustworthy. Explanations which exegesis has exploded are sometimes retained by the pulpit for their homiletic usefulness. Preachers often employ in the pulpit explanations of texts which they would not defend in an association of scholars. The pulpit suffers in its exegetical practice by retaining for polemic uses explanations which originated in an abuse of philosophy. I do not say in the use of philosophy. We have seen that there is a legitimate use of philosophy, within certain limits, in aiding the discoveries and application of sound philology. But philosophy has often tyrannized over philology. In the defence of the creeds of the Church, the exigencies of philosophy have overborne the philological instinct of the popular mind, as well as the philological learning of the schools. A modern exegete affirms that the interpretation of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, which makes it a description of Christian experience, was never heard of in the Church till the time of Augustine. He originated it to support his theory of original sin. He held the opposite interpretation, as now held by many German exegetes, till he was pressed in the argument with Pelagius. The authority of Augustine, and the force of his theology; have sent down to our own day the interpretation he then adopted."

Again the same author says:

"Still further: the pulpit suffers, in its exegetical authority, from the habit of spiritualizing all parts of the Scripture indiscriminately. Ancient usage justified any use of a text, which, by any eccentric laws of association, could be made serviceable to any practical religious impression. Popular commentaries have largely contributed to this abuse. Some of them no preacher can read respectfully without insensibly surrendering somewhat of his integrity of exegetical taste.

"Such are the more important reasons for the caution which I have advanced, that the past and present usage of the pulpit respecting truthfulness of interpretation is not entirely trustworthy. You can not safely accept that usage as authority. It [57] is improving, but it is no model for a youthful ministry. Do not be misled by it. Form your own model, and let it be one which scholarship and good taste and good sense can approve."--See pp. 160, 161, 162.

The foregoing are brave, true words, and voice the sentiment of the present time. The fact is, we are just entering upon more thoughtful and conscientious times. A new and more reliable hermeneutics will have to be accepted. The people are beginning to demand it. The time-servers among the clergy may as well get ready to faithfully interpret the word of God for the people, as that will soon be the means by which they shall be able to hold their places.

The time has come when men will demand that the meaning of the Scriptures shall be presented, instead of human vagaries. When that voice shall be heard from the pew, the pulpit will address itself to the task. Then the question will be, not, What can I make out of the text? but, What has the text in it for me and the people? not, How can I display my genius, in discovering some new way of filling the text with a meaning it never had? but, What did the Lord mean when he directed its use?

To present all that ought to be said on this subject in the most direct way possible, we shall consider the several methods that have been proposed. We shall not then have to charge the many failures in the interpretations of the word of the Lord to some unknown evil, but to definite mistakes.

**SEC. 28. THE MYSTICAL METHOD.**
(1.) *This originated in heathenism.*--Because of its origin it is called "mythical." It was maintained that no man could interpret the communications from the deities unless he was *en rapport* with said divinities. This gave [58] position and prominence to those men of holy calling. The church adopted as much of heathenism as was thought best to render Christianity popular with the people; hence the same, or similar claims, had to be, made for her priests. This was not done all at once but came, like other thing, which have no authority in, the New Testament, little at a time, until the whole distance was overcome.

(2.) The several *reformations* that have taken place have *removed somewhat* this veneration for the priesthood, but have not entirely removed the mistake; for while we have ceased to regard ourselves as the subjects of priest-craft, we continue a superstition quite akin to it. A common error remaining is that God's book is to be miraculously interpreted--that no one is competent to understand these things unless he has been called and divinely qualified for the task. This about as effectually removes the Bible from the masses, as the old theory of its interpretation belonging only to the priesthood. It leaves us dependent upon those highly fortunate ones who have been thus especially endowed for the work. They may be priests, or not. But in either case they must have been called of God to this work. If this theory were true, the Bible would be of no value whatever. The inspiration in these interpreters would be sufficient, without any Bible. Hence the effect of this theory has been to prevent the people from looking to the Bible for instruction. Regarding themselves as dependent upon inspiration, they have waited for it to accomplish its work, and break to them the will of God.

(3.) The *evil results* of this theory might be called *legion*, for they are *many*. All kinds of ambitious pretenders have found security under such claims. If we [59] deny their rights to such espionage over the great family of God, they are able to beat us back, by their assumptions that it had been given to them only to understand their prerogatives. *Sects* and parties have *grown from this seed* in great abundance. Men who have wanted a following, have been thus enabled to lead away multitudes of disciples after them. As these leaders have differed as to the things of God, many of their followers have been led into doubt and skepticism. *If these inspired men can not agree* concerning the things which their God wishes them to do, the *common people* can not be expected to know anything about it. They know, too, that where there is contradiction there is falsehood, for it is not possible that truth should disagree with itself.

(4.) *If the Bible does not mean what it says,* there is no way by which we can know what it does mean. Indeed, if it is a revelation at all, then it must signify just what such words would mean if found in another book. If they have any other meaning than that in which they would be understood by the people to whom they were employed, then they were absolutely misleading. In that case the Bible is *not only not a revelation, but a false light,* doing a vast amount of injury by leading simple-hearted people into the wrong way.

**Sec. 29. The allegorical method.**

*Definition.*--This method treats the word of God as if it had only been intended to be a kind of combination of metaphors--a splendid riddle. Interpreting by this method is not *exegesis* but *eisegesis*--
they do not obtain the meaning of the text, but thrust something into it. Its statements of history are mere figures of speech, and mean one thing or another, or nothing, as the interpreter may choose. What the Bible may mean to any man will depend upon what the man would like to have it mean. The genius that would be able to make one thing out of it would be able to make it have the opposite meaning if he preferred. Clement of Alexandria maintained that the law of Moses had a fourfold significance—natural, mystical, moral and prophetical. Origen held that the Scriptures had a threefold meaning, answering to the body, soul and spirit of man; hence that the meanings were physical, moral, and spiritual. Philo of Alexandria gives a fair specimen of allegorizing in his remarks on Gen. ii. 10-14:

“In these words Moses intends to sketch out the particular virtues. And they, also, are four in number—prudence, temperance, courage, and justice. Now, the greatest river, from which the four branches flow off, is generic virtue, which we have already called goodness; and the four branches are the same number of virtues. Generic virtue, therefore, derives its beginning from Eden, which is the wisdom of God: which rejoices, and exults, and triumphs, being delighted and honored on account of nothing else, except its Father, God. And the four particular virtues or branches from the generic virtue, which, like a river, waters all the good actions of each, with an abundant stream of benefit."

Clement of Alexandria had definitions for the interpretation of the Scriptures not unlike the rules found, in a dream-book. He said the sow is the emblem of voluptuous and unclean lust for food. The eagle meant robbery; the hawk, injustice; and the raven, greed.

Emanuel Swedenborg is a fair illustration of the workings of this theory. He is commonly written down as a mystic, but he is properly denominated an allegorical interpreter. Every statement of the Bible, according to his view, has a meaning such as no sane person would gather from the use of these words if they occurred anywhere else. He is able to find four distinct thoughts in almost everything that has been said, anywhere in the Scriptures. He is mystical in his claims to the means of knowledge. He is lifted above other mortals into the realm of clearer light, and therefore he is able to say that the Bible does not mean what it says, but means that which has been revealed to him. His position, as stated by himself, is:

"The word in the letter is like a casket, where lie in order precious stones, pearls and diadems; and when a man esteems the word holy, and reads it for the sake of the uses of life, the thoughts of his mind are, comparatively, like one who holds such a cabinet in his hand, and sends it heavenward; and it is opened in its ascent and the precious things therein come to the angels, are deeply delighted with seeing and examining them. This delight of the angels is communicated to the man, and makes consociation, and also a communication of preceptions" (The True Christian Religion, iv. 6).

This, however, only accounts for the power of knowing the higher import of the Scriptures, through his science of correspondences. But his interpretations are allegorical, and should be classed as such.

**SEC. 30. SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION.**—This method differs only in liberality from the Mystical. Instead of supposing that a few persons are favored above the rest of mortals, it regards such power to be within the reach of every one. Piety and a possession of the light of God in the soul, will enable every one to understand the Scriptures in this spiritual way. Of course, many plain passages of the word of God
will, to them, have the meaning of something very different from what has been said. For, with them, it is not so much what the Lord has said, as what He revealed to them as the meaning of that language. The Friends have held this [62] idea most firmly, though there are many in other churches now who hold similar views. It is strange that those who are thus enlightened of the Lord do not interpret the Bible in the same way. Even the Allegorists are better agreed. They follow some law of language, and hence, necessarily, reach conclusions a little similar. But the Spiritualizers are not bound by any law. Whatever may be the pious whim of the exegete, he will be able to find it in the Bible. Every one becomes a law of interpretation unto himself. Of course like all other people, those who live together or read the same books will spiritualize the word of God in the same way, and reach nearly the same conclusions. The reason is that they have formed ideas and convictions just like other people, and then in their ecstasy, suppose they receive these impressions from above. The Bible is, of course, worth but little to them, for the inward light in the soul of each one would be quite sufficient. When a man's practice is found to be contrary to some direct statement of the word of God, the easiest way to reconcile his conduct with Christian faith, is to say that such a passage is "spiritual." By that he ordinarily means that the text agrees with his practice, whatever may be its statement to the contrary; at any rate, it is above and beyond the comprehension of the reprover. No one would think of dealing thus with any other book. Law, or medicine, science, history, mechanics, anything else except religion, must be submitted to the rules of common sense. Everywhere else words are supposed to have a meaning, to be interpreted by the laws of language, but this superstition relieves its disciples from any bondage to law respecting exegesis.

Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they [63] are spirit and they are life." This metaphor is not difficult of interpretation. He is the bread from heaven, the vine, the door of the sheep; and the bread and wine of the supper were His body and His blood. Christians should be filled with wisdom and spiritual understanding; should speak of spiritual things by spiritual words, for they receive spiritual blessings, and are built up into a spiritual house, to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God. The city in which the witnesses lay for three days and a half was denominated spiritually Sodom and Egypt. In spirit it would be like these places. But this says nothing about spiritual interpretation, but uses the figures most common in the presentation of such thought.

SEC. 31. THE HIERARCHICAL METHOD.

(1.) This method differs from the Mystical, or Mythical, not so much in the manner of receiving the knowledge from heaven, as in the assumption of authority in presenting it. It affirms that the church is the true exponent of the Scriptures. As the church was built before the New Testament Scriptures were finished, and was appointed as their guardian, it has, therefore, the right to interpret them.

(2.) This interpretation, is to be given, by the priesthood.--When we ask what is meant by interpretation being given by the church, we are told that the word church does not mean all the members of the body, but simply that portion of its membership appointed to speak for it. Hence not the members of the church are intended in any general way, but its priests only.

(3.) But when priests are not agreed, then there must be provision for a higher tribunal than the parish priest. If his opinion shall be doubted, the bishop of that Holy See may settle the question. But
even then there may [64] be trouble. Bishops differ like other men, and then we will have to go to the archbishop, or the matter may be carried to the Pope, if it should merit the attention of the Holy Father. In the past there have been some who have even doubted his infallibility, and carried the question up to a Council. Of course that will end its consideration. However, the Pope now commits no more mistakes!

(4.) After, all, their decisions have been reached something like those of other people.--Some have maintained that whatever has always been believed, must necessarily be right. This has been a conservatism to retain the opinions of the past, and prevent any further search for truth.

(5.) Pinning our faith to the sleeves of the fathers is one of the features of this method that remains, to some extent, even among Protestants at the present time. Just now, however, the world is waking up to the fact that error may live and thrive for a thousand years, and never be disturbed during that time. While that which has been held to be true by good and competent men should not be hastily thrown aside, yet it may be utterly false. There are many traditions which have scarcely been doubted during the whole Christian era, that never had any foundation in truth. To begin with, they were only the unstudied guesses of popular men. Others suppose that they have duly considered them, and therefore adopt them without any further investigation. Still others, seeing their names to the theory, adopt it the more readily; and so on to the end. And yet when we come to look for evidence of truth in the matter, we find it wholly wanting. In this way we have had a traditional Mount Calvary, and have told and sung about the [65] Saviour's transfiguration on Mount Tabor. In the same way, many errors have lived long, simply for the want of any examination. But this method prevents any falsehood from being disturbed. As it has long been the faith of the church, it must be correct!

(6.) This method is followed, not so much to find what the Scriptures mean, as to know what the Lord would have them believe and do as revealed through the church. Hence, in the use of this method, the Scriptures are not the guide of the faith and lives of the people, but rather, the priest, the bishop, the archbishop, the Pope, the Council. The question is not, What say the Scriptures? but, What saith the church? While, then, we would retain a proper respect for the opinions of good and great men, we can not assent to this method of interpretation, as it sets the word of God at naught to make room for the traditions of men. In the seventh chapter of Mark and the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, we discover this to have been the trouble with the ancient Pharisees, and for it they received the condemnation of the Master.

(7.) In the plan of revelation according to this method, God has chosen strange ways of causing His people to understand the good and the right way. The correctness of a doctrine has been ascertained by the ordeal. In confirmation of this truth, its advocate partook of the Host, and that publicly. And as the emblem of the Saviour's body did not kill him, he was supposed to be right. Of course, this was looking to the supposed miracle for divine direction, and not to the word of the Lord. It is quite common for Protestants to smile at Catholics for superstitions so groundless, and yet to practice others as unreasonable. Even now there lingers the suspicion [66] that the Lord directs His people in the line of duty, and shows them that they are right while they do not follow the Scriptures. We ought not to speak of the superstition of Catholics when we are doing the same things. Now, if we are to learn the will of the Lord in this way, what use have we for the Bible? It is better that we seek its meaning and follow its
direction, or confess that God could not or would not give us the kind of book we need.

(8.) This method stands in the way of Christian liberty. It prevents all investigation, and so hinders the people from knowing more of the word of God than they did during the dark ages. Luther began the Reformation in direct opposition to this idea. And yet we are ready to stop all search after truth, and bind the world to the opinions of the last reformer. This was the tyranny against which he rebelled, and yet we are trying to fasten upon the rest of the world this usurpation. If the right does not now exist to differ from the views of canonized authority and hoary tradition, then it did not exist in the days of Luther; and, if it did not then exist, we ought all to be in the bosom of Rome. Of all methods of interpretation yet considered, if we shall call this one, it is the most unreasonable, and attended with the greatest amount of evil.

SEC. 32. THE RATIONALISTIC METHOD.

(1.) It is very nearly the rule of unbelief. Though many of these exegetes have professed to strive only to know the exact meaning of Scripture, yet they have done more to compel the Bible to harmonize with the latest philosophies than anything else. They have differed only from the dogmatists in the standard by which all Scripture statements are to be compared. With them, [67] "Nature is the standard, and Reason the guide." If the Bible can be made to harmonize with the notions of the reasoner, then it is to be understood as meaning what it says; but if not, it is to be regarded as mythical, or used by way of accommodation, or the writer has been mistaken respecting his inspiration, or we have been imposed upon by apocryphal books. After all has been said respecting the efforts at exegesis in the use of this method, we regard it not so much exegesis as exit-Jesus! The interpreters are the guide and rule of life, and the Bible is merely called upon to sanction their conclusions, not that they feel themselves at all in need of its light and instruction, or that it would be any proof to a sensible world of the correctness of their positions, but to patronize believers a little, they quote their sacred books to show that, after all, they are not bad friends. I speak of the German critics especially, not because they are alone in the use of this method, but because they are leading. Some of these claim to believe in the inspiration of the Bible, and others do not. But no man holding their views of the right to compare the Bible with the thoughts and feelings of men, and to compel the sacred text to agree with erring men, can have any particular conviction respecting its inspiration. It would be better if they were all avowed infidels, for then the world would not be deceived by them.

(2.) The theory of Strauss. In his Life of Jesus, he lays down the following rules to guide in the investigation:

"A narrative is not historical (1) when its statements are irreconcilable with the known and universal laws which govern the course of events; (2) when it is inconsistent with itself or with other accounts of the same thing; (3) when the actors converse [68] in poetry or elevated discourse unsuitable to their training or station; (4) when the essential substance and ground-work of a reported occurrence is either inconceivable in itself, or is in striking harmony with some Messianic idea of the Jews of that age."

This theory has been exposed so many times, and this has been so well done, that no more is now
necessary than to call attention to its unreasonable demands. (1.) *That all miracles must be rejected.* That is, no man can pretend to be an interpreter of the Bible till he is prepared to deny its claims to inspiration and to its record of miracles. (2.) If any accounts differ, they must both be false. (3.) If the actors were inspired, and, therefore, spoke in a manner above those of their time and station, the account is to be regarded as untrue. (4.) If the interpreter can not conceive of the correctness of the statement, or if any affirmation is made that harmonizes with ideas common to the Jews respecting their coming Messiah, then it must be untrue. Now, for unreasonableness and dogmatic unfairness, this has no parallel. According to David Friedrich Strauss, no one can interpret the life of Jesus, or any other portion of the sacred volume, till he is a confirmed infidel.

(3.) *Other theories of the same kind.*--Those of Kant, Baur, Renan, Schenkel and Eichhorn, while they may differ from each other in many things, have the same general plan of investigation. Human reason is held to be superior to anything that can be revealed in the Bible. Hence they do not interpret the Scriptures, but simply interview the interpreter, and then demand that the Bible shall say the same things, or be set aside as a work of fiction; and, having been the child of a dark age, it must hold an inferior position. We shall not deny that [69] good Christian men have held this view as the right method of investigation, that is, that everything must be made to harmonize with something they call reason but we do say that the rule is of no value whatever, as it determines beforehand what must be found, and thereby limits all investigation.

(4.) *Further objections to the Rationalistic Method.*

(a) *No new truth* or fact could be received; hence all investigation would be stopped. Every discovery is at variance with some preconceived idea, and therefore adverse to what some interpreter will regard as the eternal and universal law. This new truth being opposed to his previous ignorance, it would be rejected at sight. The king of Siam is said to have reasoned in this way; and when the missionary told him that in his country, in the winter, water would turn to ice, and on the lakes and rivers there would be a crust strong enough to bear up wagons and horses, the king decided that he was trying to practice upon his credulity, and told him plainly that he had no further interest in anything he might tell him. All his knowledge of nature's laws were set at naught by this daring man, and he felt outraged by him, and drove him from his presence. He was using this method consistently.

(b) *It is a wrong use of reason.*--The critical ability of every investigator should be employed (1) to determine whether the Bible is from God, or only from man; and (2) all the mental resources should be brought into requisition to ascertain what it teaches. If the Bible is not of God, then interpret it according to its contents; or if it is of God, do the same. But no man who shall first decide that the message is from God, can retain any [70] right to contradict its statements, or differ from its conclusions.

(c) For a man to make his reason the guide and standard of all truth, is to say that the reason of others is worthless--that he alone is the standard of appeal. This is indelicate.

(d) A man's reason can decide nothing of itself.--All that belongs to that faculty of the mind is to
properly argue, and dispose of all facts reported by perception. Perception only gathers depositions from one or more of the five senses. Hence, when a man decides that nothing at variance with his reason can be admitted as true, he asserted that he has had all possible facts reported to his mind that can have any bearing on the subject, and that he has properly considered them, so that in their use no mistake could have occurred. This is too assumptive for any modest man, and, we might say, for any man of common sense.

SEC. 33. THE APOLOGETIC METHOD.

(1.) It maintains the absolute perfection of all statements in the Bible.--It was brought into being by the Rationalistic Method, as the mind swings from one extreme to another. As the former denied everything but what agreed with the views of the exegete, this view finds its adherents to everything, and anything that can be found in the Bible, and regards it all as from God. Whether the witch of Endor, Cain, Ahimelech, Laban, Esau, Judas Iscariot, or the devil himself, everything is filled with inspired truth, and made to serve as a perfect guide to the world. This is unreasonable. Very much of the Bible was spoken by the enemies of God's people, and for the correctness of what they say, the Bible is in no way responsible. It has reported them correctly, and [71] that is all it had to do in the matter. Suppose, then, that Abraham and Isaac did equivocate respecting their relation to their wives, or that Rachel did deceive her father concerning his teraphim, the Bible is not to blame for her falsehood in the matter. David did many things that were wrong, and the Bible tells all about it. Suppose that David was a favored man--that does not demand that he should have been perfect in all that he did. If it could be shown that Jephthah did really offer up his own daughter, it does not make the word of God endorse the deed. When Paul speaks of him as an example of faith, he does not affirm that he was without fault, nor does he indicate that God did not hold him guilty for the act.

(2.) This method opposes one of the very first rules necessary to any fair and thorough investigation--TO KNOW WHO SPEAKS.--With the question of authorship, our inquiries have first to do in all matters for investigation. Was it the language of Balak, or Moses; of one of the three comforters, or Job? Was the man inspired? Did he claim to be? Was he truthful, even? Was he competent to speak on such a subject? Job's wife offered very poor advice, and yet it is a part of the Bible. To regard it as authoritative is to do more than Job did, for he said she talked like a foolish woman.

(3.) This method takes it for granted that if a man was ever inspired, then he always was.--But when we come to examine the Scriptures on the subject, this is not found to be true. A man might have been inspired for one message only, and all his life before and afterward may have been without such divine guidance. Caiaphas once spoke by inspiration, as well as Balaam; but it does not follow that they always did so. The beast on which [72] Balaam rode had an inspiration, but it was for one occasion only.

SEC. 34. THE DOGMATIC METHOD.

(1.) This method is noteworthy for two things: first it assumes the doctrine to be true; and, second, it regards it as certainly true by being proven. It proceeds by assumption and proof. We have found more or
less of *this in all the methods* yet considered. It has, indeed, been the rule that that which was desired to be found, was looked for, and, the conclusions reached were those that were desired at the beginning. Men have been able to find what they have looked for.

(2.) *It came into existence during the dark ages*, when speculators and Christian philosophers were the only guides of the people. These were soon found to differ from each other; hence there must be found some way to test the correctness of the positions taken. This correctness was *determined by argument, tradition and Scripture*.

(3.) *It has been kept alive by the same power that brought it into existence.*--The desire to rule in spiritual matters made it necessary for leaders and parties; and the desire now, on the part of men and sects, continues the use of a method which, without such potencies, would soon die out. But men and parties hold and teach doctrines nowhere found in the Bible, and they must do something to support their theories. To go to a plain reading of the word of the living God, for support, would be ruinous; hence, resort must be had to what is known as proof. The assertion is made, and then something is found that sounds like the position already announced. This is satisfactory to those who want the theory sustained. [73]

(4.) *This method was begun in Catholicism, and is continued in Protestantism.*--We are now in the same condition, largely, as those to whom this plan was a necessity. Many of the practices of Mother Church are continued to-day. For them, there never was any Scripture warrant. Once they might have been upheld by the direct voice of the church, as it spoke in its councils. But now having denied that these councils have had any right to change divine regulations, and finding no directions for our practices, we have to resort to methods of proof that would not be recognized in any other search for knowledge.

(5.) *Truth has been found in this way*, and yet the manner of investigation has been a great hindrance. It should be said that men have found truth in opposition to the method, rather than by it. A very honest mind will sometimes see that the proposition, though made by himself, is not sustained by the facts, and turn to that which is true; but it is the exception, and not the rule. He who has taken a position and made it public, is in a poor condition to see that his affirmation is not correct. He may see it, but he is not likely to do so.

Wishes and previous conclusions change all objects like colored glasses, and convert all sounds into the assertions which the mind prefers to have made. The horse hears no sound in the morning that indicates it to be his duty to stop, but in the evening, when he has traveled all day, almost anything would convey to him that thought. In the morning there were many frightful objects that suggested the propriety of running away, but in the evening he is not troubled with any such evil apprehensions. The reason of this difference is very obvious: in the morning he wanted to run, and in the [74] evening he wanted to stop, and he understands everything in the light of his desires. When Moses and Joshua went down the hill together, and heard the children of Israel in their frolic around the golden calf, Joshua thought he could recognize the sound of battle in it, for he was a warrior. Moses had a different thought about it. They reached different conclusions, not because they heard differently, but because their minds were on
different topics. So it is with most of us. If we start out to find some particular doctrine or dogma in the Scriptures, we shall probably find it. It may not be there; there may not be anything on the subject; but we can find a hundred things that comport with that thought, and hence conclude that it must be true.

(6.) *This does not indicate that the Scriptures speak in riddles, or that they are not clear.*--Such misuse may be made of any book. A man may not only prove anything he wishes by the Bible, but he may do so by any other book, if he will treat it in the same way.

(7.) *It exalts traditions and speculations of men to an equality with the word of God.*--In the heat of argument, with a determination to find a theory in the Scriptures, anything is accepted as proof. If the desired proof can not be found in the Bible, it will be found somewhere else. The fathers, the canonized authorities, the practice of the church--anything, to save the doctrine, from which we are determined not to part.

(8.) *This method now very greatly hinders the unity of the people of the Lord.*--Much as we dislike to own it, we maintain our creeds by its use. It serves us, not as a means of ascertaining the meaning of the Bible, but as a means of supporting our theories. In our very best books of discipline, we say that "The Scriptures of the [75] Old and New Testaments furnish the only and sufficient: rule of faith and practice, so that whatsoever is not read therein, *nor may be proved thereby*, is not to be required of any one to be believed, or thought requisite or necessary to salvation." It may not be "read therein" but if it can be "proved thereby," then it is to be continued in the church. Hence it will be continued, beyond any possible doubt. If proof is desired, proof will be found, and the doctrine will continue to be taught, and those who prepare themselves for the ministry will have to run the gauntlet of this doctrinal test. The Bible may know nothing about the doctrine, but it is kept alive by this method of assumption and proof.

(9.) *The Bible is not a book of proof for doctrines, but is the doctrine of God itself to men.*--We are to go to God's book, not in search of our views, with the intent to find them in some way or other, but to go to it for what it *has in it for us*. Many of the interpreters of prophecy are prophets first, and then they go to the Bible to see if they can get the old prophets to agree with the new ones. Of course they always succeed. The man who fails to make out his interpretation, should be regarded as wanting in common genius. I am hopeful of overcoming this method, notwithstanding its strong hold on the people. All works on Hermeneutics of recent date condemn it. I give a short quotation, by way of example. *Immer's Hermeneutics*, pp. 144, 145:

"One of the most frightful causes of false explanations is dogmatic presupposition. See Matt. vii. 16-20. This passage has been thus understood by Luther and by other old Protestant exegetes in an anti-Catholic interest: The tree must first be good before it can bring forth good fruit--*i. e.*, man must, through faith, be regenerated, before he can perform good works. But this contradicts the connection and the clear intention of [76] the passage. Immediately before, Jesus has warned his disciples against false prophets, who appear outwardly like innocent and pious sheep, but inwardly are ravening wolves. He now gives them the criterion by which they may distinguish the false and the good teachers from each other, viz.: their fruits--*i. e.*, good works, conduct corresponding to the words of Jesus."
The writer continues to show, at considerable length, the many blunders that have been maintained in this way. The doctrine is assumed, or presupposed, and then everything is bent, to give it support.

(10.) The manner in which it is done.--Conclusions are reached without the facts necessary to warrant them. Sometimes it is by a mere jingle of words, something like the theory. The author may have no reference to anything relative to the subject that the interpreter is considering, but the application is made. The exegete supposes that the author has his subject under contemplation, for what else could he be thinking about? It is of such importance to him, that of course the writer or speaker must have been discoursing on that topic. Again, misinterpretation is very innocently reached by associating one of the premises of the speaker with one of his own, and then drawing a conclusion. In this way one man frequently misrepresents another—he hears a statement made, which, if associated with a position of his, a certain doctrine would be advocated. Then it is common to clothe that thought in one's own speech, and say that a certain man taught it. And yet he may never have thought of such a thing in his life. He did not hold the premise that we did, and therefore did not teach as we said he did. But the position was in our mind, and we assumed that it was in his, without inquiring about it. When Jesus was dining at the house [77] of a Pharisee, somewhere in Galilee, there came behind Him a woman whose character was not good. Simon said in himself: "If he were a prophet, he would know what sort of woman this is." Now, he assumed that if Jesus did know, He would send her away; and because He did not send her away, therefore He (lid not know what sort of woman she was. This was his mistake. Jesus did know what kind of woman she was, but He was not like the Pharisee in the disposition to order her away.

(11.) Dogmatism first determines what it is willing shall be found in the Scriptures, and then goes to work at once to find nothing else there, and even to refuse that anything else shall be found. The infidel has this dogmatism as largely developed as any one. In all the reading that he may do, his determination never wavers for a single moment. From first to last he is determined to find that the Bible is only the work of man. Hence the evidences which he has no way of meeting, or turning to a bad account, he regards as unintelligible, or he deliberately shuts eyes and ears to all that has been said therein. It is just as difficult for a man to be made to believe what he does not want to believe, as it is to cause him to throw away long cherished opinions. And no investigation will ever be worthy of the name while conducted under this controlling power of prejudice.

(12.) Liberalism is just as dogmatic as the most orthodox creed.--They who boast of their liberality are, many times, the most narrow and unreasonable bigots. They are liberal while they differ from the old church authorities, and are perfectly willing that you should join them in their new views of inspiration, or of obedience to [78] Christ, but they are unwilling that you should differ from them. Hence it is plain that they have reached their views without the tedium of the introduction of facts and the uncompromising use of logic, but have simply jumped to their conclusions without any such examination, and are determined that the rest of the world shall adopt their views of liberality. And those who are not able to do so are denominated by them "legalists." They may adopt as many forms as any others, and those, too, that are not known to the Scriptures, but, when others fail to adopt their liberal ideas and still cling to the word of the Lord and the ordinances as they were first commanded, they are denominated bigots by those who are continually advertising their extreme liberality. This is the way dogmatists deceive themselves quite commonly. With them, the world is perfectly illiberal, because it
will not adopt their dogmatic opinions. Dogmatism here is just what it is everywhere else, only the points assumed at the beginning, differ from those which have generally been regarded as orthodox; but the manner of maintaining them is just the same.

SEC. 35. LITERAL INTERPRETATION.

(1.) This is most commonly employed by dogmatists, in order to maintain a view that can not be supported in any other way.

(2.) It makes all the language of the Bible literal. — It treats the word of God as if it were an essay on chemistry or mechanics. Hence, almost anything can be proved by its use. Something can be found, by taking a jingle of words, that will establish any theory. They do not stop to consider that God spoke to men in their own language, and by such methods of speech as would render the thoughts of God most easily understood. If they would read Oriental writings, on any other subject, they would be convinced that much of it is highly figurative; but, coming to the Bible, it must be made to bow down to a gross materialism, and take a yoke upon its neck that will make it the merest slave of the merciless task-master, who allots the tale of bricks, and will be satisfied with nothing less. These exegetes do not pretend that David's heart melted within him like wax, that all his bones were out of joint, and were staring at him in the face; that he was a worm, and no man; for they have no theory dependent upon the literal use of these figures. But let their theory be involved for a moment, and then, if the literal meaning will avail them anything, they will use it, and deny that any other is possible. If the word in question has a low meaning, then it has been used only in that sense. Many of our spiritual conceptions are expressed in the Scriptures by the use of words once employed in material affairs; hence they are enabled to shut out everything but the grossest meaning the word had in its first use. The materialists of the present time insist on making the soul of man as material as his body, or, at any rate, dependent upon it for its existence.

The disposition, however, manifested by materialists, does not differ much from the spirit of dogmatists generally. Everywhere the aim is to carry the point and maintain the doctrine, whatever may come of Scripture truth. Others, from the same determination respecting the doctrine to be proved, will compel a word into any peculiar meaning which is only possible to it under peculiar circumstances. But, the word having been used in that sense somewhere, it must have that unusual import in the passage under consideration, for two reasons: first, the word could be used in that sense; and, second, the doctrine in question is in need of that being regarded as the meaning in this place.

This trifling with the word of God does not come from that dishonesty to which we are ready to attribute it. This dogmatism has fostered the idea that whatever may be proved by the Bible, no matter in what way the proof may be found, or extorted, must be right. Hence there is a kind of undefined feeling of right to manufacture teaching in that way. And the work seems to be undertaken and accomplished without any compunctions whatever. Not one of these persons would think for a moment of interpreting the words of a friend in that way. A letter having been received from father or brother, they would feel insulted if any one should insist on such a mode of interpretation. With such a communication before them, the question would be, What does the writer mean? not, What can we make him mean?
The latter forms of materialism go even farther, in one respect, than any former effort, to maintain the desired doctrine. It is not uncommon to assume a meaning for a word which it never has, and then make a play on the sound of the word, using it so repeatedly in that sense that many persons will come to the conclusion that such must be its import. In this way very much is being done at the present time to establish religions speculations nowhere mentioned in the Bible. We have before seen the evils resulting from the Allegoric method, and yet it is but little, if any, more likely to prevent the right interpretation than the Material or Literal. Either one is a foolish and hurtful extreme. [81] Much of the Bible is written in language highly figurative. And not to recognize the fact, and treat the language according to the figures employed, is to fail entirely in the exegesis. This, of course, does not imply that God has said one thing while He means another, but simply that He has spoken in the language of men, and in the style of those to whom the revelations were made. No one reading the Prophecies or the Psalms without recognizing this fact, will be able to arrive at any reliable conclusions whatever as to their meaning.

SEC. 36. THE INDUCTIVE METHOD.

(1.) What is it? A leading or drawing off a general fact from a number of instances, or summing up the result of observations and experiments. Roger Bacon, to whom we are largely, if not wholly, indebted for this method of philosophy, was less clear in the definition of terms than in the use of the method itself. Still, we can arrive at his meaning fairly well. This is what he had to say of it:

"In forming axioms, we must invent a different form of introduction from that hitherto in use; not only for the proof and discovery of principles (as they are called), but also of minor, intermediate, and, in short, every kind of axioms. The induction which proceeds by simple enumeration (enumerationem simplicem) is puerile, leads to uncertain conclusions, and is exposed to danger from one contradictory instance, deciding generally from too small a number of facts, and those only the most obvious. But a really useful induction for the discovery and demonstration of the arts and sciences, should separate nature by proper rejections and exclusions, and then conclude for the affirmative, after collecting a sufficient number of negatives."

The thirteenth century was a little too early for such a philosopher to be well understood, and far too early for him to be appreciated. Still his views gained some [82] support even then, and have been gaining ever since, and now they are quite extensively adopted.

In the uses of this method of interpretation, all the facts are reported, and from them the conclusion is to be reached. Of course during the time of the collection of these facts, there will be incertitude as to whether some of them are facts or not. Still, judgment is to be formed as best it can, for the time. But when the whole number of facts are reported, it is probable that all the facts will stand approved as such, and the guesses that were incorrect will be found to be wanting in the necessary evidences, and will be easily thrown aside. After the pyramid shall have been built, it can be put into line, and whatever of material there gathered which will not harmonize with the whole amount will be readily refused as not being according to truth. Hence we may say that in the inductive method, we have necessarily the deductive. We will not only induce, or bring in all the facts, but we will reach conclusions as to truth...
(2.) The law of analogy.--Everything must be found to agree. Harmony is one of the first demands of truth. Two truths are never contradictory. It is impossible for contradiction to be found where there is truth in all concerned. Hence, when any fact has come to be known, and about it there can be no longer any doubt, whatever may be reported after this, which is contradictory thereof, is rejected at once as being certainly untrue. And yet this rule must not be employed so as to prevent investigation, for it is possible that we may be perfectly satisfied with an error. We have long regarded it as truth, and may make it the reason for the rejection of facts that would be of great value. But if the new fact is admitted, then that which has been accepted must [83] be displaced, for it is impossible for both to be correct. Hence no interpretation can be true which does not harmonize with all known facts.

(3.) This method demands that all facts shall be reported.--It assures all concerned that if all facts are reported, and they are permitted to speak for themselves, error will not be possible. But it is not always possible to obtain all facts that have bearing on any given subject. Indeed, it is very probable that complete success in this respect has never yet been attained. All the mighty works of Jesus were not reported; but enough were presented for the faith of all who were willing to believe. John said that He did many other signs beside those which he recorded, but that the record he made was sufficient. This method demands that when all the facts can not be had, as many shall be reported as possible. The falling of one apple would not be enough to prove the law of gravity, for there might have been something peculiar (1) in the then present condition of things; or (2) in the form of the falling body; or (3) in its contents; or (4) something present which had attraction for it and not for other bodies. On the other hand, it is not necessary that all bodies shall have been observed in their relation to each other; a large number will do, if they embrace the several kinds of material, and are tried in many circumstances--provided there is no opposing fact. One opposing fact will be enough to introduce an exception, at least, to the rule. Hence it would not be a universal law. Before reaching a conclusion, then, all facts attainable should be gathered.

(4.) To always heed this command is difficult.--Men have ever been ready to deduce without having properly [84] induced. Sometimes a number of exceptions are reported as the rule. One man is an enemy to the Christian religion, and therefore he proves that it is of no value to the race, by finding a number of cases in which it has done no good, or, at least, it has not made the right kind of persons out of those who have professed it. The argument is augmented by finding a large number of men who are out of the church who are better persons. Now, this examination is very imperfect. It should be known (1) what they were before conversion, so that the life afterward might compared with what it was before. It ought to be known (2) what they probably would have been without this religion (3) On the other hand, too, it should be known if, the men who have been presented from the outside of the church are fair representatives of those who, have never made any profession of Christianity. (4) And again, it should be known what have been the effects of Christianity on them. It might be that although they had never been church members, the morality which made them so respectable was all obtained from that very religion. (5) Then again, on the other hand, it should be borne in mind that other influences than those of the religion under consideration may have controlled those church members, and that the religion is not so much to blame as the other forces that have controlled them. (6) Finally, it should be known whether the
persons compared are fair representatives. If they have been the exceptionally bad on one side and the exceptionally good on the other, then there has not been an induction of facts, but an induction of falsehoods. Neither the inside nor the outside of the church has been properly reported. He who would pursue such a method would be about as truthful in his investigations as the man who undertook to prove that his neighbor's ground was not as good as his. To do this, he went into his neighbor's field and plucked ten ears of corn, of the smallest and smuttiest that he could find. He then went into his own field, and took the same number of the largest and best filled ears that he could find. Then he made a comparison.

The same unfairness is exhibited sometimes in the examination of the results of temperance laws. A large number of exceptions are reported as the rule; hence the conclusion is reached that such laws are accomplishing no good. In order that all facts shall be considered, we should ask, (1) Are the statements made correct? or are they only part of the truth? or are they wholly false? (2) Has the law itself been what it ought to have been? or has it been full of flaws and weaknesses? (3) Is it a new law, and therefore not understood, or loyally accepted; as it contravenes longstanding customs? (4) Is the party in power in favor of the law, or is it opposed to it, and therefore will not enforce it? or (5) while the party in power wishes well to the law, is there a large number of its members on the other side, so that the leaders of the party are afraid to do anything in the way of enforcement, for fear of dividing the party? (6) Are other laws, under similar circumstances, disobeyed as much as those? I refer to these things because they are within easy reach of every one nowadays, and to show what I mean by the inductive method.

But men have been no more rash in these matters than in many other things. In medicine, a cure is reported by a certain remedy, but the condition of the patient is not known; indeed, it may not have been properly diagnosed, and hence the report may have contained falsehoods instead of facts. Or, if the condition has been made known, it may be that other assistance may have been received from other sources to which the recovery was in part due, and may be wholly due.

Experiments in science are conducted hastily, sometimes, and deductions made before the facts have been induced. If a deformed creature is found in some part of the earth, forthwith some one is ready to reach the conclusion that it is the representative of a race, and hence that the connecting link has been found. We might find a large number of hunchbacks and unfortunate creatures in this country, and we are at liberty to suppose that abnormal conditions have existed in other places; and hence, from such a partial introduction of facts we have really no report at all.

(5.) The inductive method has long been used in almost all departments of investigation except that of theology.

(a) I could quote many passages from the great jurists of the world, showing that in the interpretation of law they follow this method. One quotation, from Blackstone's Commentaries, Vol. I. pp. 59-61, must suffice for the many we would like to give:

"To interpret law, we must inquire after the will of the maker, which may be collected either from the words, the context, the subject-matter, the effects and consequences, or spirit and reason of the law. (1)
Words are generally to be understood in their usual and most known significance; not so much regarding the propriety of grammar, as their general and popular use. . . . (2) If words happen still to be dubious, we may establish their meaning from the context, etc.; of the same nature and use is the comparison of a law with laws that are made by the same legislator, that have some affinity with the subject, or that expressly relate to the same point." [87]

This shows that in the mind of this jurist the great aim of all research in legal investigation was to arrive at all the facts in the case. Whether constitution, or code of legislative enactment was to be interpreted, the absolute intent of the maker was to be sought after, and any failure to get a right understanding of such purpose would result in a misapprehension of the enactment to be interpreted. And to know this aim of the law-making power, all facts that bear upon the subject should be employed. I know of no jurist or constitutional lawyer that differs from this opinion.

(b) When witnesses give in testimony in our common courts, they are sworn to tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." This demand is made upon the presumption that the only way of meting out justice to all concerned, is to render a decision according to all the facts. And as these must be gained by the testimony of witnesses they must make known to the court the whole of their knowledge relating to the question in hand. In the pleadings too, before the court, decision is to be according to the facts revealed in the trial. Indeed, the jurymen are sworn to render the decision according to the law and evidence. And all the arguments allowed in the case are to prevent the misunderstanding of either law or evidence. At least, such is the ostensible purpose of the pleading in the civil courts. Speculation as to the possible meaning of law is not tolerated, when the facts can be had by which the purpose of the law-makers can be known.

(c) The great teachers in the science of medicine have long held to this method of investigation. Medical associations have for their main object the increase of knowledge by the induction of facts. Hence, any one [88] in the regular practice who knows of any special remedy, for any ailment of the human body, is in duty bound to give others the benefit of his discovery. The thought of all this is, that, in order to deal successfully with the enemies of human life and health, they are in great need of all the facts that can be had; that, when all these facts are revealed, the healing art will be perfected. It is not to be denied that there are theorizers in medicine as well as in theology, but it remains true that Medical Science presumes, at least, on the induction of facts, and by their light the men of healing are guided. Of course, every year they are discovering that some of the former decisions were not correct; but this is the method by which facts are finally reached.

(d) The things already said of law and medicine may be truly said of political economy, history, or any other science or study that engages the attention of man. Facts alone are supposed to guide men in forming their conclusions. Speculators there may be, but the science of investigation in any of these departments of thought, is supposed to be conducted in the light of the inductive method. When our historians gathered up the accounts of the last war, they did it that the whole truth might appear. In doing so, they found that many things which had been reported and had been believed by very intelligent men, were not true. During the war it would almost have been impossible for any historian to have written correctly of any battle. All the facts could not at that time be ascertained. Hence they had to wait patiently
The Bible recognizes the correctness of this method.--When Jesus appeared to the two disciples as they went [89] into the country, he expounded to them all things found in the law and the prophets concerning himself, (Luke 24). He thus introduced all the facts from that divine source that would bear upon their minds, that they might understand the truth. When the apostles met with the elders and the whole church at Jerusalem, to consider the question of admitting the Gentiles into the church without circumcision or keeping the law, they first heard the testimony of Peter respecting the work of the Lord by him among the Gentiles, at the house of Cornelius. Afterwards they gave attention to Paul and Barnabas, while they recounted the things which the Lord had done by their hands during the missionary journey which had just closed. After this, James makes a speech to them reminding them of another witness which they had overlooked--the testimony of one of their prophets (Amos ix. 11, 12). Now, when all these facts were introduced, there was but one conclusion possible for them, which was that the Gentiles were under no such obligations as those Judaizing teachers had affirmed. When Moses wished to prepare Israel to go over into the land of Canaan, and inherit it according to the promise of the Lord, he made them three speeches, which constitute nearly the whole book of Deuteronomy. In these speeches he brings before their minds nearly all their history, with all the obligations that rested upon them to keep the commandments of the Lord. He does this, that they may have all the facts in the case before them, that they may be guided thereby. When Philip would convince the Ethiopian nobleman that Jesus was the Christ, and the only way of salvation, he began at the same Scripture which the man was then reading, and preached to him Jesus. [90] Now, what he did was to make him understand the testimony of the Lord respecting His Son. Fact after fact was in that way presented to his mind, till he became convinced, and asked for admission into the service of the Son of God. Nothing more respecting the Scripture method need be said, for it is everywhere apparent that when the Lord would conduct an investigation on any subject, He did it by the inductive method. When the devil wished to gain a point, he did it by quoting a text for its sound. When the Jewish rulers condemned the Saviour, they affirmed well but proved nothing.

(6.) Inference may be used legitimately in the ascertainment of facts, and also in the conclusions reached from them.--Many do not seem to know what an inference is; they speak of it as if it were a kind of guess, and therefore never to be used either in induction or deduction. The truth is, it is the logical effort to know the facts in the case, and to ascertain the facts from phenomena. Certain things seem to have been done; were they done or not? may require the best effort of the mind to determine. This is done by associating the whole number of things which are known, and reaching conclusions, in a logical way, as to what else was done or said at the time, or in connection therewith. A few illustrations will help us to know the place of legitimate inference.

(a) Abraham went down from Canaan into Egypt; when he came out from that country Lot returned with him. Though it is not said that Lot went into Egypt with him, we infer it. They had journeyed from Haran together; the same wants were common to them both; they remained together for some time afterwards; hence, though we did not see them going together into that country, the mind naturally infers that they did. And [91] we are about as certain of this fact as we are that Abraham went there.

(b) There were four kings who came from the east and fell upon the kings of the plain of the Jordan,
and overcame them, and took away much goods. Abraham took his trained men, and, joining with his friends, followed the returning victors and overcame them, and returned, not only with the spoil, but with the family of Lot and the women. Here are persons said to be brought back, that have had no mention as being among the captured, but we infer that they were captured. And we are just as certain of that fact as we are of the facts that have been recorded.

(c) If we read in the book of Joshua that the conquering army of Israel did to certain kings just what they did to the king of Jericho, and we learn that they hanged those kings, though nothing be said about what they did to the king of Jericho at the time they took that city, yet we infer that they banged him. We have the necessary premises, and can not reach any other conclusion.

(7.) Things assumed in the Bible are to be regarded the same as those which have been stated. In the first verse of the Bible it is said that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." It is not stated in this verse that God existed; that he had the wisdom and power to accomplish this work; but it is assumed, and, being assumed, no interpreter has the right to call it in question. Of course great caution should be had in the use of this rule, that we may not at any time be mistaken as to what has been assumed. Anything that God takes for granted is true; hence, anything which [92] He has assumed or taken for granted, we are bound to regard as true. Illustrations:

(a) God has everywhere treated man as if he could repent.--(1) He has nowhere said that man could not repent. (2) He has commanded all men everywhere to repent. Here our ideas of divine knowledge and justice come in to help us in the solution of the case in hand. We say that God knew whether man could repent or not; that He would not have required man to repent if it had not been possible for him to do so. With all this in the mind when we hear an apostle saying that He has commanded all men everywhere to repent, it is assumed that all men can repent, and that if they do not, the fault is their own; and if they are damned, they will have no one to blame but themselves.

(b) An honest heart is necessary to the reception of the truth.--It is never stated in so many words. And yet every attentive reader of the Scriptures recognizes the correctness of the statement at once. When the "sower went forth to sow," the seed must have found soil congenial, or there would have been no results whatever. And that which brought forth the thirty, sixty and a hundredfold, referred to those who received the word in a good and honest heart. The result of this condition of mind is seen in the difference between the people of Thessalonica and they of Berea, who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, to see if these things were so." Therefore, many of them believed. On the day of Pentecost, those who "heard the word gladly," obeyed the requirement of the Holy Spirit made known by the apostle Peter. The honest-hearted Cornelius was in the right condition to receive the pure gospel of the grace of God. His good and [93] honest heart was the right kind of soil in which to sow the divine seed, and from which there was an immediate and very large yield.

(c) Man's general wants are assumed.--When God provides for man a teacher, sending the revelator before him to mate known to hire his duty, it is not thought to be necessary to announce that man is ignorant and needs an instructor. God's treatment of His creatures is sufficient for that. When a sacrifice was required it was not preannounced that man was a sinner, and that for the sin he had committed his
right to live had been forfeited, and that God would accept of a substitute. His treatment of men carried that thought, and the lesson was taught in that way as effectively as it could have been done by the use of words. God does not stop to inform man that he is weak and wayward, that he is in need of a government to control and protect him. It would be a waste of time. He simply gives him that government and protection, and furnishes the necessary instruction respecting man's condition by the things He does for him.

And yet the wants of the world are known just as well in this way as if Jehovah had written a systematic theology on the subject. It does not seem to be known that God can teach in any other way than that which men have employed to get their theologies before the minds of their fellows. The truth which God acts is just as valuable as that which He has revealed in any other way.

(8.) When a result is spoken of which is commonly attributed to several causes, though, in mentioning the result, at a given time, no cause should be assigned: they are understood to be present.--It has first been determined that these causes are necessary to the result, hence if they had not been present the result would not have been reached. Since, then, their presence is necessary to the result, and the result has been reached, it follows beyond question that the causes were present. So with a part of these causes. If we find the result, and yet one or two of the causes are not mentioned, it is taken for granted that they were present. They have been associated with the result as causes, and, though not mentioned in a given case, we assume that these unmentioned causes were present.

(9.) Religious truth may be gathered from approved precedent.--We learn from the authorized conduct of the children of God. If we can first be assured that what is done is approved, we can know certainly what we are at liberty to do under similar circumstances. Indeed, if the conduct has been directed by men under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we learn from the example what we ought to do. If the Scriptures are to be our guide from earth to heaven, then to be religiously right we must be scripturally right. Or the statement may be made stronger in this way: no one can be religiously right and scripturally wrong at the same time. Or, again: no one can be religiously wrong while lie is scripturally right. Now, if the will of God has undergone no change since the New Covenant was completed, what was His will then is His will yet. And if those men did that will, and we do the same now, we will be accomplishing His pleasure.

But there is need of caution.--(1.) Because a man has been inspired for a given work or a single message, it does not follow that he is always under the direction of such wisdom. When Elijah directed the contest on the top of Carmel, and when he saw the plentiful rain in the little cloud, hanging over the Mediterranean, he was inspired. But when he was frightened at the threat of Jezebel, and fled to the Mount of God in the wilderness of Sinai, he acted on his own motion, for God does not approve of his course. When Peter spoke on the day of Pentecost, he did so as he was moved upon by the Holy Spirit, and when he went to the house of Cornelius and gave to them the way of salvation, his way and his speech were directed by the Lord. But when he went down from Jerusalem to Antioch, and ate with Gentiles till "certain came from James," and then withdrew from Gentile associations, he was doing things Peter's way. Paul afterwards, writing by the inspiration of the Lord, says that he withstood Peter to the face, for he was to be blamed (Gal, ii.11-14). (2.) We must also be careful not to confound mere
incidents or accidents with the approved precedents. The disciples met together in an upper room in Jerusalem, and so they did at Troas, but that does not make it binding on the disciples of to-day to meet in upper rooms. These were accidents or conveniences. And to elevate them into divinely appointed rules for the service of the Lord, would be to miss the purpose of the record altogether. The Master took all his journeys on foot, but it does not follow that we are only at liberty to travel in that way. (3.) There are things which they did not do, yet which it would be perfectly right for us to do. But they belong to the same class. There are matters of propriety that would, under some circumstances, render some things improper, and, though there would be no harm in the act itself, yet, owing to the surroundings, it would not be well to do them. Customs being entirely different in another place or at another time, these very things may be well enough. [96] The apostles built no church-houses or colleges, but this is not proof that the existence of these things is offensive to God. These things, too, they could have done, but they did not choose to do them. They were busily engaged in other work, which, for the time, was of more importance.

But the question recurs, How shall we determine what is an approved precedent? How shall we be able to separate the many things done in the times of the apostles which are merely incidental, from those that were meant for our benefit, that we may know what to do? (1.) Those actions performed by the apostles or other disciples in their day, which have a divine approval, or, if done by an apostle, nothing has been said by inspiration in opposition thereto. (2.) Customs of the Church under the eye and sanction of apostles. For if, in an unguarded moment, an apostle should turn aside, he would not continue in that condition. And if it could be possible for one apostle to continue to err in his public character, it would not be so with all of them. A general custom is established in harmony with that which is allowed, taught, approved by the many. If we shall find the whole church engaged in a common custom in religious service, no matter how we may come to that intelligence, if we can certainly know that such was the custom everywhere among the disciples in the days of the apostles, such practice will show certainly what was the will of God.

(10.) To know the meaning of any statement, we should know what the author was trying to say. The purpose before his mind will be a safe guide before the mind of the investigator in gathering the facts to put to record. [97] We know intuitively that no man should be made to say what he does not intend to say.

(11.) In searching for causes, that upon which all facts agree is the cause, or one of the causes. If any known fact denies that it was one of the causes, then it must be dismissed from such a responsible position. On the other hand, if any fact claims it as a cause, then it must be so enrolled. As there can be no opposing facts, we may experience a little difficulty in deciding between two supposed facts, one claiming it as a cause and the other denying it such an honorable place. In that case, we must continue to search till the mistake is discovered, then introduce the triumphant fact and listen to its decision. If it shall enroll any thing or act as a cause, it must be so regarded till there shall be some dispute, there being found some other fact, or supposed fact, which denies the conclusions already reached. When such questions arise, we are required to pass through the investigation again, and satisfy our minds as before.

(12.) We are not to reject a cause for the want of philosophical probability, when miracle is declared
or assumed to be present.--When Israel was called out of Egypt, many things were commanded which philosophy would never have suggested. No one could have seen why they should sprinkle the blood of the lamb on the lintel of the door and the two door posts. Philosophy would have said: The angel now knows whether the inmates are Hebrews or not; and, knowing that, they are as safe without the blood as with it. When they came to cross the sea, Moses was told to stretch out the rod over the sea, and that its waters would divide. Philosophy would have said: There is nothing in such an act to bring the desired result. When they thirsted for fresh water in the wilderness, and Moses was told to go and smite the rock, or, as afterwards, to speak to the rock, philosophy would have seen no connection between the act commanded and the water that was promised. Afterwards, when they were in the land of Canaan, they were told how to take Jericho; to march around it once every day for six days, and then on the seventh day to march around it seven times; and as they marched they were to blow on trumpets made of ram's horns, and, on completing the last round, they were to give a long, loud blast and a great shout. And the promise was that the wall of the city should fall, and they were to go up into the city, each from the point where he might happen to be. But if philosophy or military skill had directed the matter, the plan would have been different. We find a man from Syria, Captain Naaman, who was told by the prophet of the Lord to go and wash himself seven times in the river Jordan, in order that he might be cleansed from leprosy. At first he was insulted at the thought; but, when his servant reasoned with him, lie did what Elisha told him, and was healed.

We must remember, when we come to religious truth, that God is its author, and that it is His place to say what are to be the conditions of the reception of any grace or blessing. Our philosophies may be good in some things, but in the religion of the Bible they amount to but little. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." This is the manner of God's legislation. He has not asked the counsel of the wisest of His people, but held all authority in His own hands, and has, at all times, said what should and what should not be law. [99] One single fact of divine statement must settle any controversy on which it speaks.

(13.) Contrary or negative facts may be used in the establishment of truth.--"He that believeth not shall be damned," is sufficient to show that faith is at least one of the conditions of pardon. Like this is the statement of the Master: "If ye believe not, ye shall die in your sins, and where I am ye can not come." This would have the same bearing. "Ye believe not, because ye can not hear my words," would be just like saying that hearing His word was one of the conditions of becoming a believer. "Ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." His sheep heard His voice and followed Him. Hence, if they had listened to His teachings, and been in the company of those who followed Him, they too would have been believers. "For except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." This is equal to saying "those who repent not shall perish." This is the negative form of saying that repentance is one of the conditions of salvation. We read of some who "rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of John." This is saying in substance that if they had been baptized of John they would not have rejected the counsel of God against themselves. Hence we have it stated in this negative way that John's baptism was the counsel of God, or, at least, a part of it. "No man can come to me except the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day." This is a plain declaration that those who were drawn of the Father could come to Him. This is carried out by the Saviour as He continues: "It is written
in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God; every man therefore that hath beard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me." [100] So in this negative way we have opened to us the manner in which sinners could come to Christ, being drawn to Him by the truth of God, by having heard and having learned of the Father. When Jesus was approached by Nicodemus, who seemed to want to be admitted as a disciple without endangering his standing among his people, the Master told him that except a man be born again he could not see the kingdom of God. No teaching could be plainer to this Senator, that, though there might be other conditions of seeing the kingdom of God, beyond all question being born again was one of the conditions. And though he tried to break the force of the statement by his question, "How can a man be born when he is old?" he finds no way of escape, as the Lord turns upon him with the "Verily, verily, I say unto you except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God." This is as emphatic as language could make it, and leaves no doubt respecting the requirement that men shall be born of water and the Spirit, in order to enter the kingdom of God. We might continue this form of affirmation till we should find every duty marked out in this way, both as to the manner of becoming Christians and also as to how to live the Christian life. Indeed, the negative form of the statement is frequently used as a means of emphasis.

A wrong use of this principle is sometimes made by finding a negative, and arguing therefrom that no other quality or deed is demanded for a given purpose except the one implied in the one statement. To illustrate: it is said that "without faith it is impossible to please God:" from this it is contended that if faith is present, the possessor will please God. Nothing else is regarded as a necessity in order to please Him, simply because it [101] is not referred to in the passage. This is the same blunder that takes it for granted, from an affirmative statement, that only the one thing there mentioned can be requisite to the desired blessing; that if it were any part of the cause, it would have been mentioned in that one text. This is not a weakness of this feature of the inductive method, but a mistake in its use. When a truth is taught by the use of the negative, it is the same as if that truth were taught by the use of a direct statement. All that can be found in it is that the cause named is necessary to the result; but it does not follow that it is the only cause. We are at liberty to pray, "give us this day our daily bread;" but if we shall depend upon prayer alone for bread, we shall go hungry. While we should pray for food, there are other conditions by which it shall be acquired-finding, then, that any act is for a certain end, is not finding that it is the only thing necessary to that purpose.

(14.) Causes will frequently become obvious by arranging the facts in the order of intensity.

a. Illustrations of this rule.--Physicians sometimes are enabled to diagnose the case by the use of medicine. A small dose of medicine has a given result. The same remedy is increased, and the effect is increased; this is repeated several times, and the conclusion is fairly reached that a certain medicine has a certain result. And, as a certain condition of the system would be necessary in order that that medicine should have that result, the condition is determined upon, and the patient treated accordingly.

Any physician or scientist, finding that the increase of any chemical increased a certain result, would decide at [102] once that such result was produced, at least in part, by that act, chemical, or medicine, as the case might be.
b. If we find in the Scriptures that with the increase of testimony faith becomes stronger, we at once reach the conclusion that faith comes by the medium of testimony. If we find in Christian experience that just as the members of the Church increase their faithfulness in the worship, on the Lord's day, their uprightness and integrity is made to grow, every one reasons from cause to effect, and from the effect back to the cause.

c. On the other hand, if we find that as people have been deprived of the word of God, their faith becomes weak, we leer n by a negative rule that faith comes by the word of God. If, among the heathen, who have never heard of our Saviour, there are none who believe in Him, we conclude that, without this word, it is impossible to constitute people believers in Christ.

d. A caution is needed. --We may increase the testimony and not increase the faith, for there may be modifying causes that will remove all disposition to believe, or that will turn away the people from hearing the word of the Lord. Hence, when we are looking fog causes by arranging the facts in the order of intensity, we must be sure that there are no modifying forces; at least, that there are no more of them than there were before increasing the supposed power.

(15.) A particular fact can not be learned from a general statement, when other than the cause mentioned might have produced the result.--If it is ascertained that a gentleman went to the city on a certain day, the fact that he went does not establish the manner of his going, for there are more ways than one by which he might have gone. [103] A murder having been committed, no one man is to be hanged merely from that fact. Indeed, if it should be known that it must have been committed by one of two men, neither one is convicted by the general fact of murder, for it might have been done by the other.

In the case of the conversion of Lydia (Acts xvi. 13-15), it is said that "the Lord opened her heart, that she attended to the things spoken of Paul." It is easy to jump to the conclusion that this opening of the heart of that woman was by a miracle, for it might have been done in that way. But we are not at liberty to reason so hastily. We must ask, Could her heart have been opened in any other way? And if it shall be determined that her heart could be opened by natural means, and that such force was present, it is not reasonable to conclude that the result was reached by a cause that was not necessary and that was not known to have been present. If the preaching of the word had been found to be sufficient to open the hearts of other men and women, so that they would accept the gospel of Christ and obey its requirements, and that power was present, then there is no reason for the supposition that the abstract power was present, or that it bad anything to do with the opening of the heart of that pious Jewish woman. Again, should it be argued that the word attend means to consider, give attention to, it will be in order to ask, Is that is necessary import? And if it is found to mean to do the things spoken of, then no more will be found in the passage than that, hearing the gospel of Christ from this messenger of the Lord, her heart was so enlarged that she was ready at once to accept of Christ in all His demands.

This rule, however, does not interfere with the effort [104] to find the meaning the word may have in any particular occurrence. This is a lawful and just procedure. All we notice in this place is the error of reasoning from a general statement to a particular conclusion. [105]
CHAPTER V.

THE SEVERAL COVENANTS.

SEC. 37. THE NEED OF DISCRIMINATING BETWEEN THEM.

(1.) No one can understand his duty without knowing to what law he is amenable. God makes a covenant with Noah, and binds him to build an ark of certain dimensions and out of certain timber, and to put into it all kinds of beasts that could not pass the flood without such help. But I am not to learn my duty as a sinner, nor yet as a saint, by reading this covenant. It is not my duty to make an ark of any size. There are neither duties, threats, nor promises to me respecting anything of the kind.

So it is with all the covenants that God has ever made with man--each covenant is for the man or the men, to whom it was given, and for whom it was intended. It belongs to no other man, or men, except extended to them by its Author. In all the individual contracts that God made with the Patriarchs, the demands, duties and blessings were peculiarly the property of the men to whom the covenants belonged. Abel offered a sacrifice by faith (Heb. xi. 4); hence God had required the sacrifice; but it does not follow that I am to go to my flock and prepare an offering, and then come and burn it with fire. He has not required that of me, and therefore I would not be rendering him any service [106] by such a worship. So fathers were high priests, and the rulers of the tribes that grew up about them. They not only offered for themselves, but for their children and their children's children. To these men God gave many primary lessons, containing principles that should remain and have a place in the highest worship that would ever be given to the world. But there were also many things that were peculiar to the times and the people to whom these covenants belonged. Abraham was to go into the country of Moriah, and offer up his son, Isaac, on an altar; but the man who regards that as being direction given to him, is in a fair way to commit murder. That demand was made of Abraham alone. In like manner, the blessings that came to that man from such acts of obedience, were in consequence of the obedience which he rendered. But if any other man should have done that, it would have been a high crime.

It is known in all matters of law among men, that a man is amenable to the law under which he is living. The law of the United Colonies was good, in many respects, but a man would be regarded as bordering on insanity if he should go to it to learn all his duties as a citizen of one of the New England States. No matter if the present law now contains many things that are to be found in the old law, he obeys these demands not because they were found in the law of the Colonies, but because they are found in the law under which he lives.
In the Northern States it was once our duty to catch a colored man, and return him to his former owner; but if one should start out now to catch men and return them to the South, there would be some trouble in the matter. Common sense has everywhere been sufficient for this question, except in religion. Only when we come to ask the way to heaven, do we seem to lose our interest in the ordinary forms of intelligence, and gather up and appropriate language, and commands, and promises that do not belong to us. I open the Bible, and read that it is the duty of the parent to circumcise his boy of eight days; and I go about the task at once, but every one knowing me is shocked. Why? Is it not in the Bible? You say that it belongs to another people, and these rites and ceremonies are not Christian. That is the difference of covenant. That institution belonged to one age and one people, and I belong to another. Not being under that covenant, I am not to observe that commandment, unless I can find it in the covenant to which I do belong.

(2.) Each covenant that God has made with men may have many things in common with all the others, and yet be distinct. There is nothing more common than to mistake similarity for identity. Several things are the same in both, and therefore it is concluded that they are identical, except that the one is more complete in some particulars than the other. Every covenant that God has ever made with man has contained the thought that God is the supreme and rightful Ruler of the universe, and that it is the highest privilege of mortals to be in harmony with His wish. Hence, the idea of worship and obedience; can be found in every covenant between God and man. It may be said, too, that these things are the great essentials of God's dealings with men. And yet these covenants are not the same; they do not require the same acts of obedience, nor do they promise the same things; nor do they belong to the same people. Paul says (Rom. ix. 4, 5): [108]

"Who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever."

Here is a law and several covenants and promises that were peculiar to the people of Israel. Hence the duties required in these several contracts were not obligatory upon other nations and peoples, unless God had made similar covenants with them. But certainly the promises were peculiar to the descendants of Abraham, It was to be through him and his posterity that the Christ; should appear. The land of Canaan belonged to them of divine right; the rite of circumcision was peculiar to them; and the law that was given by Moses was for them during the time of their minority, and was only intended to serve as a school-master, or a leader of children, till the Christ should come and establish the faith by which men should be saved (Gal. iii. 23-25).

"And what great nation is there, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" (Deut. iv. 8).

In the mind of Moses, this law belonged especially to them, and was not the property of any other people.
(3.) Language under one covenant may explain duties under another, in those features in which the two are alike. Under all forms of divine law men have been required to worship God with a whole heart. Hence we know that the intention has been the same in that respect. Whatever, therefore, may be found in any one of these, on that topic may be used to enforce the thought and stir up the soul to that devotion which the Lord requires. The devotional Psalms [109] may be used by the Christian, that we may understand the frame of mind that should characterize all who serve the God of heaven and earth. Idolatry is a great sin and has been in all ages; hence any condemnation of that iniquity found in the law of Moses, may be used as an assistance in Christian study. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve," has been endorsed by the Master, and is for us. The two systems are alike in this respect, and therefore the teachings may be used interchangeably, belonging to one as well as to the other.

So it is with the fact that the Lord wishes men to do His will--that He has more delight in obedience than in sacrifice. This being true, it follows that we are at liberty to get illustrations of obedience and disobedience during any dispensation, that will enable us the better to understand our duty as the disciples of Christ; not in the thing commanded, but in the fact that strict obedience to the word and will of the Lord is required of us as His servants. We are now not to go to the slaughter of the Amalekites, as was commanded to Saul, or to march around Jericho with Joshua; but we are to do the things which are now required of us, as they were those things required of them; the demands have changed, but the absoluteness of obedience remains the same now as then. The Saviour brings a teaching to the disciples respecting the settlement of all difficulties before worship by referring to the altar service; and though this manner of service has been discontinued, yet before we bring our devotions before God we should first go and be reconciled to our brother, and then come and bring our gift.

(4.) The laws of each covenant are supposed to be complete in themselves. This does not indicate that a man [110] would understand Judaism as well if he had not studied the dealings of God with the Patriarchs as if he had familiarized himself with this feature of divine history. Nor does it mean that a man can ever be perfectly taught respecting the New Institution, without having had a knowledge of the Law and the Prophets. But it does affirm that if a man had never seen the law given by Moses, he could know all his duty toward God, by a careful and thorough study of the New Testament. There were many Gentile congregations which had no knowledge of the law of Moses, and who were entirely dependent upon the teaching of inspired men as they revealed Christ to them. We learn from Christ and the men He ordained, every precept which we are expected to observe--to hear His sayings and do them, is to do the will of His Father in heaven, and therefore to build on the solid rock. It is not now what "thou hast heard, that it hath been said," but the "I say unto thee," that is to control us in the service of God as Christians. If we are to be Jews, then we must study, that we may know the law and keep it. Christ has brought forward every grand feature of truth and right, and every act of piety and benevolence that can be of any assistance to us in the Christian life. Paul could afford to be indifferent about everything else but the law of Christ. He says:

"And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them.
The forms of the law he might or might not observe; it was to him a matter of indifference, a question of expediency; and as for morals and the principles of truth and piety, they were all to be found in the law of Christ.

SEC. 38. THE SEVERAL COVENANTS.

(1.) The covenant made with Adam, will be found in Gen. i. 28, 29:

"And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which is the fruit of the tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat" (Compare Psa. viii. 3-9; Heb. ii. 8-10.)

Here we have a part of the covenant. The other part of it consists of man's obedience to God. Hence, by a fall, man lost his divine right to be the ruler of the earth, and has to be re-instated in that position by the redemption in Christ. Just what would have been the result of that covenant having been kept, we do not know, but all the glories of the primitive state would certainly have been secured.

(2.) Covenant with Adam and Eve after the fall (Gen. iii. 15-21).--This contains a long struggle between the serpent and the seed of the woman, and the final victory in behalf of humanity. In the meantime the race will have to be purified by toil, and saved by sorrow, from those iniquities which would drown them in their abominations. They had failed to keep the first covenant, but this one they would keep, for they could not help it. This is the first promise of a coming Saviour, and is found to consist in toils and duties wrung from the inhabitants of the earth on the one side, and the blessed promise of God on the other, that some day there should come a deliverer to the world who would be able to destroy the works of the devil.

(3.) The covenant with Noah before the flood (Gen. vi. 13-22):

"And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is how thou shalt make it: the length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A light shalt thou make to the ark, and to a cubit shalt thou finish it upward; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it. And I, behold, I do bring the flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is a breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is in the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them. Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he."
Here we have all the features of a covenant revealed. God makes a contract with this man to save him and his family, and requires of them certain conditions to be kept. The ark was to be built, of the timber prescribed, and according to the manner indicated in the contract; the animals were to be gathered as God had ordained. Still more than this is implied. Noah had been selected from the world as the only man who was righteous in his generation, and whose sons were also free from polygamy, which was then the curse of the earth. The sons of God had gone and taken them wives of the daughters of men, thus mingling with the wicked, and becoming as corrupt as the rest of the world. This is the reason that Noah was chosen: he was free from the corruption of the times. Hence it is to be understood that he should remain free from the abominations of the age. So we understand that this man is to keep himself pure, continue to be a worshiper of God, and to do, in building the ark, just what God had commanded him. The salvation of this man is not reckoned as a matter of debt, but the obedience which he rendered was a necessity on his part to accept of that mercy that provided for his life and for the lives of the members of his family.

(4.) Covenant with Noah after the flood (Gen. ix. 8-17):

"And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, the fowl, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that go out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of the flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations; I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth." [114]

We have the Divine side of this covenant thus presented to us, and the human side of it will appear by turning to the eighth chapter and twentieth verse, and reading to the close of the seventh verse of the ninth chapter. This is seen in the offering of Noah, and the pure worship which the Lord had required, and in keeping the commandments which the Lord put upon the race, in showing justice and kindness toward man and beast.

Though duties are exacted only of men, still this covenant is made with all flesh, or it concerns all flesh. Thus again we see that the idea of a covenant implies obligations and a contract between two parties. And, as it will be seen hereafter, God's promises will not fail, except by the failure of man, in violating the terms. In that case God will cease to regard them, and the covenant will fail by virtue of the failure of the contracting or covenanting party.

(5.) The covenant made with Abram respecting Christ (Gen. xii. 1-3):
"Now the Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

In one form or another, this covenant was renewed many times. It contained two thoughts, seemingly distinct at the first, and yet they are bound together, as one is the medium through which the other is fulfilled. Making of Abram a great nation, was necessary in order to the coming of the Christ and the preaching of that truth [115] by which the world should be saved. God is preparing a receptacle of His truth—a nation that will guard it, and keep it, and give it to the world. They must be kept separate from the rest of the world, that God's promises may be fulfilled, that prophecies may be given and kept, and that the Christ may be given to the world, through whom the world may be saved. The following Scriptures contain references to this covenant: Gen. xviii. 18; xxii. 18; xxvi. 4; Gal. iii. 8, 16; Acts iii. 25; Heb. xi. 8, 17, 18.

(6.) **A covenant made with Abram concerning land** (Gen. xiii. 14-17):

"And the Lord said to Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for unto thee will I give it."

This covenant was referred to when Abram first came into the land of Canaan (Gen. xii. 7), but it was some time after this that it was confirmed, as seen in the account above. It was afterward referred to as having been already made (Gen. xvii. 8; xxiv. 7). Isaac was assured that it was because of Abraham's faithfulness that he should inherit the land (Gen. xxvi. 4, 5). And when Moses was taken up to the top of the mountain and shown the good land, he was reminded that the contract which the Lord had made with Abraham was about to be fulfilled (Deut. xxxiv. 4).

Although this covenant is distinct, yet it is based upon the thought contained in the promise made concerning his descendants—that they should become a great nation. [116] Indeed, the land never belonged to Abraham in person; hence the only way in which it could be fulfilled was by the means of establishing his seed in that land. To belong, then, to that covenant, was to have a right in that land, as an owner—as one who has a deed in fee simple.

*The human part of it seems more implied than stated.* Yet when Isaac is reminded of his inheritance, it is announced to be on account of the righteousness of Abraham. And all the way through the history of the children of Israel, it was understood that the inheritance was dependent on the continued obedience of the people to the will of God. And it was because of a failure in this respect that they were sold into captivity to the Babylonians, till they should learn to keep the commandments of the Lord.

(7.) **The covenant concerning circumcision** (Gen. xvii. 9-14):
"And God said unto Abram, And as for thee, thou shalt keep my covenant, thou, and thy seed after thee throughout their generations. This is my covenant which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every male among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of a covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every male throughout your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised; and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."

The ordinance was so distinctively Jewish that the apostles used the word *circumcision* many times to denote the Jews, and the *uncircumcision* to denote the Gentiles (Gal. ii. 7, 8).

It has been said by a few, that nearly all ancient nations had this institution. But of this there is no evidence. On the other hand, there is every reason to believe the statement to be untrue.

And again, while we call this a distinct covenant, yet it remains a fact that it attaches more or less to the covenant by which Israel became a great nation, and were made the owners of the land of Palestine. And again, it may be said that these have some relation to the one great covenant which God made with Abram that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. We find this relation between all of them. In order that in the seed of this man the world should have a Saviour, his posterity must be separated from the rest of mankind; hence the organization of a nation. And to fence them away from the nations that were round about them, this institution was given. The land of Canaan was donated to the same end. But while these covenants have just this much relation to each other, it is entirely improper to speak of them as but one covenant. All the contracts which God has made with the different portions of the race have had some reference to this great salvation in Christ; but that fact does not make them one and the same covenant.

[NOTE.--There are many other smaller contracts made with men; but they have nothing to do with the principles of interpretation, nor yet do they throw any particular light on any portion of the Scriptures. God promises to prosper Jacob and bring him back to his father's house in peace, and Jacob agrees, on his part, to tithe himself, in order that God's worship shall be [118] carried forward on the earth. But whether the covenant is between God and any man, or between two or more men, the thought of it is much the same: there are obligations on both sides, understood and agreed to. It is furthermore indicated in all these that if one party shall fail to keep his part of the contract, the other party is freed from all obligation. God has plainly said that He will act in that way.]

"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? And thou, son of man, say unto the children of thy people, the righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness: neither shall he that is righteous be able to live thereby in the day that he sinneth. When I say to the righteous that be shall surely live: if he trust to his righteousness, and commit iniquity, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered; but in his iniquity that he hath committed,
therein shall he die. Again, when I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die, if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had taken by robbery, walk in the statutes of life, commit no iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be remembered against him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11-16).

Now, though this was said under the law, which based a man's salvation on doing the things it required, still this principle is clearly stated, that whatever may have been the agreement between God and any man or men, if they shall forsake that covenant and turn away from Him, the covenant is broken, and He will not regard them. It is a thought that is by no means confined to the Old Testament. In the Covenant of Christ, it is [119] required that those having accepted of the salvation thus provided, shall continue steadfast to the end, in order to receive the crown.

(8.) The covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai (Ex. xx. 1-24):

[NOTE.--It is sometimes denied that this was a covenant. But this comes from not having any clear view of the meaning of the word. It is not now a covenant made with an individual, but with a nation. And it contains the substance of the covenants of flesh, land and circumcision. Its purpose was to serve as a school-master during the time of the minority of that people, to prepare them for the Great Teacher that should come from heaven. The purpose of this covenant is indicated to Moses when he was in Egypt, trying to bring the people out from that cruel bondage.]

"I am Jehovah: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah I was not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their sojournings, wherein they sojourned. And moreover I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am Jehovah, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage; and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments" (Ex. vi. 3-8).

In this we have the anticipation of the covenant that God intended to make with this people at Mount Sinai, over His own name, Jehovah. No former covenant had been completed in this name, but after this He was to be known to them by this name.

In Exodus xxxiv. 27, 28, we read: [120]

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words, for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments."

By referring to the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai, it will be seen that it has the form of a covenant--it is given to that people for a guide and a test of obedience, and it is sealed with blood, and enjoined upon them. It was not wholly religious, for the purpose of God in preparing a people ready to receive the Lord
when He should come to the world, made it necessary that a government should exist, and that, by the
means of a religious nation, He would be able to give a revelation of His will to the world. Hence the law
combines the purpose of those covenants of land and flesh, in order that the world may be prepared for
Christ (Gal. iii. 8, 16-25).

(9.) The covenant of Christ, made by Him and sealed with His own blood (Jer. xxxi. 31-34; Heb. viii.
6-13; ix. 15; Matt. xxviii. 26).--This covenant was in view during the former dispensations. Every
offering and service foretold of the coming redemption, and every prophet, priest and king typified the
coming Saviour who should be the Anointed of the Lord, representing the Father in His love for the race,
in the mercy and justice by which salvation could be possible to those who have sinned, and in the
unlimited authority and power and wisdom by which the world could be lifted up and made ready for the
heavens. As he is to provide salvation for the race, and extend it to us as a free gift, it belongs to Him,
and to Him alone, to say on what terms the blessings [121] of His sacrifice may be enjoyed: hence He is
the one Mediator between God and men (I. Tim. ii. 5.)

SEC. 39. THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE COVENANT MADE WITH ISRAEL AND
THE COVENANT MADE BY THE CHRIST.

(1.) The change in the priesthood.--It has been thought that Christ was a priest under the law, and that
He was introduced into that priesthood by John the Baptist. But of this there is no evidence. Christ did
not claim to be a priest while on the earth; and if He had been, there would have been a violation of the
law, which provided for but one high priest at a time, for no one can think that He would have been a
priest in any inferior sense. There were many opportunities for Him to have affirmed His priesthood, and
His failure to do so is sufficient evidence that He did not occupy that position on the earth. It should be
noticed, too, that no apostle ever insinuated, in any way, that the Master was high priest while he was
here on the earth. Indeed, Paul takes just the opposite view of the matter (Heb. viii. 4). He was not of the
tribe that had been designated for such honors under the law, nor were any of the services observed by
which he should have been initiated into that office. The theory has grown out of a felt need. Men have
wanted to conglomerate the law and the gospel in order that they might find some support for various
doctrines which could not be sustained in any other way.

(a) The high priesthood under that institution belonged to the tribe of Levi, the family of Kohath, and
the particular family of Aaron, but in this, it is in the line of Judah, of which tribe Moses said nothing
concerning priesthood (Heb. vii. 14). [122]

(b) In that, men were made priests who had infirmity, who needed an offering for themselves first
before they officiated for the people; but in this, we have a priest who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and
made higher than the heavens (Heb. vii. 26-28; v. 1-4).

(c) Those priests discontinued by reason of death, but Christ remains a priest forever (Heb. vii. 23,
24).
(d) Under that system one could become a priest without an oath, but Christ was made a priest with an oath (Heb. vii. 21).

(e) They were made priests by the law of a carnal commandment, but Christ by the power of an endless life (Heb. vii. 16).

(f) That priesthood belonged to the law of Moses, this to another covenant (Heb. vii. 11-13).

(g) The high priest under the law was not a ruler, and could have no connection with the government in any matter not connected with religious service, or the cleansing of the people from some disease or legal defilement; but Christ is king as well as priest. He was priest after the order of Melchizedek, who was king and priest at the same time. In Himself, He answers all human want--He is the prophet to teach the way of God, the priest to remove all sin, and the king to govern and protect all His disciples. So then we have a faithful and merciful high priest in things pertaining to God.

Paul says:

"Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest that can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need" (Heb. iv. 14-16).

Thus Paul connects the priesthood of Christ with the throne of Christ. Thrones did not belong to the high priest under the law, but in this covenant our high priest is also a king.

In Zech. vi. 12, 13, Christ is foretold as a righteous Branch, who should sit and rule on His throne, and be a priest on His throne, and that the government, or counsel of peace, should be between them both.

(2.) There was a change in the atonement.---The covering by the blood of animals could only serve to carry sins forward to the blood of the everlasting Covenant. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (Heb. x. 4).

From Lev. xxiii. 26-32, we learn that there was an atonement made once a year. It was on the tenth day of the seventh month. At this time there was a remembrance of the sins committed during the year, and those that had been carried forward (Heb. x. 1-4). Take some of the forms of atonement under the law and the difference between the two institutions will appear as distinct as it would be possible for type to differ from antitype. Ex. xxx. 15, 16, gives the atonement by the use of the half shekel. Lev. viii. 18-34, in the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the service of the Lord; as they must be pure themselves, there had to be an atonement for them. The whole of the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus is taken up in giving an account of the annual atonement made for the people. In all this we can find abundant features of typology, but the atonement differs--
(a) In the time of offering. [124]

(b) The priest making the sacrifice.

(c) The blood that was offered.

(d) The place where the offering was made.

(e) And the results of the sacrifice.

(3.) Change respecting limitation.--The intent of universality of application was never thought of during the times of the law of Moses. In Deut. iv. 7, 8, Moses says:

"For what great nation is there, that hath a god so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is whensoever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that hath statutes and judgements so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?"

The interrogative form in which this matter is presented here is the strongest form in which Moses could put an affirmative statement. It was the equal of saying, "we all know that no nation has a god so near to them as our God is to us, and no nation has this law, nor anything that approximates it."

There are many evidences that the law of Moses was never intended to reach beyond the nation to whom it was given. The Pharisees in later times did make efforts at proselyting, but it was the zeal of sectarianism rather than obedience to any command of God. The stranger that should dwell within their gates should be circumcised, and adhere to the commandments as they were found in that law, but the thought of bringing the world to the acceptance of Judaism was no part of the institution itself. Its forms and ceremonies were to avoid the idolatry of the times--to maintain that people intact, that it might be known in after times that the promise made to Abraham, to bring the Messiah into the world through his posterity, had been kept. But if that seed had been permitted to lose itself in the ocean [125] of human beings, no proof of such faithfulness on the part of God would have been possible. By paying attention to the sanitary provisions of the law, it will be seen that there are commands respecting the clean and the unclean, for which there can be found no reasons except in the fact that food which is proper enough in other lands, is not good for them in that country. Hence, when the gospel of Christ was given, all these appointments were removed.

The New Covenant was intended from the very inception of it, to be universal. The first feature of the commission is, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." All its ordinances are arranged with reference to the universality of its principles. It is intended not for a given period, but for all time; not for a portion of the race, but for the whole human family. It was not to know any difference between Jew or Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond, or free, for all should be one in Christ Jesus, the Lord of all, who would be alike rich unto all that would call upon Him.
(4.) They differ in the promises (Heb. viii. 6):

"But now hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by how much also He is the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises."

When Israel came over the Jordan, and temporary peace came, after conquering Jericho and Ai, the hosts were brought to the place appointed between Ebal and Gerizim, and heard the substance of the law, as it related to the promises. Their righteousness must consist in perfect obedience to all the demands of that law; and if such obedience should be rendered, they would be blessed in the basket and store, and in their flocks and herds, and in all the good things that pertained to this life. And, on the other hand, if they failed, they were to be cursed in all these respects. (See Deut. xxviii. 1; xxix. 1; Josh. viii. 30-35).

Even long before they came into this goodly land, they were made to know that the land which flowed with milk and honey was to be their inheritance, upon the condition that they would perfectly follow out the directions of the Lord. This was the good news that was preached to them in the wilderness, which did not profit (in many cases), not being mixed with faith in them that heard it (Heb. iii. 4).

It is not to be denied that those who were devout looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, and to the glorious redemption which He should accomplish for the whole race. But they saw through a glass darkly. Moses endured as seeing Him who is invisible; and Abraham beheld these things from afar, and by faith brought them nigh, so that he could embrace them; and yet it is too much to say that they were a part of the covenant made with them at Sinai, and that belonged to them as a nation.

But the promises in Christ are far better. They are complete pardon, sufficient help, every needed grace and providence, resurrection from the dead, inheritance in the mansions in the heavens prepared by the hands of the Master Himself. No wonder, then, that Paul says that this has been established upon better promises than that.

(5.) The law was written on stones, but the new institution, is put into the minds and the hearts of all who belong to it.

"Are we beginning again to commend ourselves? or need we, as do some, epistles of commendation to you or from you? [127] Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh. And such confidence have we through Christ to Godward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account any thing as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also made us sufficient ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven on stones, came with glory; which glory was passing away; how shall not rather the ministration of the spirit be with glory? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much rather doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For verily that which hath been made glorious hath not been made glorious in this respect, by reason of the glory that surpasseth. For if that which passeth away was
When Jeremiah saw the coming of this glorious institution, he announced that it would be unlike the covenant that God had made with the children of Israel in the day that He took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; but in this new institution He would write His law in their mind and put it into their inward parts.

That covenant was outward and formal, but this is inward and spiritual. Those who belonged to that, depended on the figures, types and symbols, for their knowledge of the Lord; but in this, the Lord from heaven has spoken to us in words that are spirit and life.

(6.) All that are to have a place in the new covenant, shall first know the Lord.--This is the statement that is made by Jeremiah, when he foretold of the coming of the Christian institution: "They shall all know me, from the least of them even to the greatest of them, saith the Lord." Paul quotes this in the eighth chapter of the Hebrew letter, and applies it to the New Covenant. In the service of God under the law of Moses, this never could have been said to be true. Into that institution they were brought when they were born, and therefore there would always be many of them who did not know the Lord; hence, if they ever should know the Lord, they would have to be taught to know the Lord after they were members of the covenant; but in the new institution it should not be so, for the first thing in it was to teach; and when they should be discipled, or become learners of the Christ, then they were to be brought into the kingdom.

(7.) Sin shall be remembered no more: when once pardoned, in the New Covenant they can not be remembered against the man again.--God said: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." But this was not so under the law of Moses. Sins not having been perfectly blotted out (Heb. x. 4), there was a remembrance of sin once every year. It is on this account that David asks God not to remember against him the sins of his youth. Had he lived under the reign of Christ, he could have been assured that his sins, having been pardoned once, could never appear against him any more. In that, they were rolled forward a year at a time, and on the day of atonement, the tenth day of the seventh month, they were called up, and azazel sent into the wilderness, that the sins of the people might go into oblivion again for another year. But sins pardoned in Christ once, can never come up again--they are blotted out, and gone forever.

(8.) Into the Old Covenant they were born by a birth of their parents, but into the New, they come by a New birth--of water and the Spirit.--This was the mistake of Nicodemus. He supposed that as he had been in the service of the Lord all his life, and was even a teacher of that religion, there could be no such demand made of him. He ought to have known better, and is therefore to be blamed for not knowing what he ought to have understood, without a teacher. Had he read the law and the prophecies closely, he would have seen that there was coming a spiritual kingdom, in which the law of the Lord should be written in the hearts of all who should constitute its citizenship, hence a new term of membership would be required. But he was disposed to make the same blunder that thousands have made since, in supposing that there is no difference between the two institutions.
(9.) They differ in respect to form and place of worship.--Sacrifices were once to be brought to the door of the tabernacle, and there offered to the Lord. When the temple was built in Jerusalem, that was the place where offerings were to be made. The Samaritan woman was anxious to know of Jesus which were right, the Jews or the Samaritans, respecting the place where men ought to worship the Father. One said at Jerusalem, the other on Mt. Gerizim. But Jesus told her that the worship of God did not belong to either locality, but that any place would do, if the worship was in spirit and truth. This was the only essential. This again shows that the old covenant was a national affair, and was never intended to go beyond the precincts of Palestine. The types and shadows then looked forward to the coming Saviour; and while they taught that man was a sinner, and had [130] lost his right to life, there would be a sacrifice offered by which his sins and iniquities might be washed away. But the ordinances of the church of Christ get their significance, not from the idea of a coming Saviour, but from a Saviour having come, and having died and risen from the dead.

(10.) The law has been abolished and the gospel remains.--This proposition is not readily accepted. During the dark ages Christianity was greatly corrupted. But in no respect did it receive greater injury than in being mixed with other religions. After four centuries of this doctoring, Christianity was little more than baptized heathenism, with lines of Judaism interwoven.

It is well to have the Scriptures clearly before us when we make a statement like this. The world will ask is why we make it, and we must be able to tell.

In Acts xv. 5, we have the demand made of the Pharisees, who had accepted the faith of Christians, that unless the Gentiles would be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, they could not be saved. On this question the convention was held, not that they might vote on the subject and determine what it would be politic for them to require, but to ascertain what God had revealed on the subject. They heard from Paul and Barnabas and Simon Peter as to what God had done by them, and then from James, as to his view of the evidence so far adduced, and that it agreed with the word of the Lord already revealed. And the conclusion of the whole matter was that they were not under that law, and therefore they should not require them to observe any such regulations, but only to observe a few necessary things. (See vers. 20-29.)

Does some one say that this did not free them from [131] the observance of the law, except in the matter of circumcision? That is a mistake. The whole question was before them at the time--being circumcised after the manner of Moses, and keeping the law of Moses. Now, if there was any part of that law that would remain binding on them by virtue of its having a place in that law, surely some one in that audience would have been aware of the fact, and would have made the statement. But nothing of the kind is mentioned. Certain features of the law were all they required them to observe. Hence, if they were then under the law, it is not too much to say that they did not know it. Hence, the man who says they were yet under the law assumes a wisdom which the inspired apostles did not possess.

Paul argues this question all the way through several of his epistles. I must quote from him several statements in their connection, that no mistake may be made:
"Wherefore remember, that aforetime ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands; that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the twain one new man, so making peace: and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh: for through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. ii. 11-18).

It would seem impossible to make a statement plainer [132] than this. The Gentiles and Jews have lost all distinction; they are all on the same footing; the law which had served as a partition wall between them had been removed. They were not under the law, but had been brought together in Christ, all differences having been removed.

In Paul's letter to the Galatians, this question is argued at length; in fact, the whole letter is largely occupied with it. In some way, some teacher had bewitched them with the idea that they must keep the law (iii. 1). To this Paul objects, assuring them that all their religious blessings had come to them through the hearing of faith, and not through the commandments of the law. He urges that the covenant by which they should be saved was by promise, and not by the law, and that all that was valuable in the law had been transferred to the scheme of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it hath been confirmed, no one maketh it void, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. Now this I say: A covenant confirmed beforehand, by God, the law,, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise: but God hath granted it to Abraham by promise. What then is the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made; and it was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law. Howbeit the Scripture hath shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given [133] to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept inward under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. So that the law hath been our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor. For ye are all sons of God, through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female, for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal iii. 15-29).

This argument can not be met. Paul has shown it to have been the purpose of God, in giving the law, to furnish the people of Israel with such primary lessons and such government as would, under the circumstances, do them the most good. But that institution was temporal in its purpose. It was intended to lead them during the days of their minority, and prepare them for the great Teacher that should come
from God, under whom they were to graduate for the heavens. During the days, of their minority they were under this pedagogue, but when the great Teacher is come, they are no longer under the tutor--this law and authority extended no further.

In the fourth chapter of the Galatian letter, verses 21-31 inclusive, we have full and complete instruction respecting this matter. Here the apostle brings up the question under the form of an allegory, and shows, beyond any doubt, that the law was to be cast out, as well as the bond maid. And in the third chapter of his second letter to the brethren at Corinth, he treats the subject in the form of antithesis, putting the gospel on one side and the law on the other. During this presentation he repeats it three times that the law is done away, [134] and makes especial reference to that part of the law which was written on the two tables of stone.

Then when we go to search for the duty of Christians, for the want of an understanding respecting this matter, many theologians have felt unsafe in adopting the plain truth as a rule of Christian life, lest the necessary authority by which proper conduct shall be secured shall be wanting. Some way they feel that they must come before the people with a "thou shalt," or they will not be able to secure the obedience which the Lord requires. It has been this feeling that has attached the law to the gospel. On this account they have called the first day of the week "the Sabbath." Yet every one knows that it is never so denominated in the New Testament; and any one acquainted in the early history of the church is aware that it was far advanced in the sixth century before such phraseology was employed by any one. Both the Ante-Nicene Fathers and the Post-Nicene Fathers speak of the day on which Christians met for worship as the first day of the week, the eighth day, which would be the next day after the seventh; resurrection day; but most generally they use the very words of the apostle John (Rev. i. 10), "The Lord's day." All have ever admitted that the ceremonial, judicial--the formal and ritual--features of the law were done away in the crucifixion of Christ, but many claim that something they call the moral law was retained. But for this division of the law there is no authority. There is no such division made by any inspired man, for the reason that no one directed by the Spirit of the Living God ever had any such an idea as that. Many parts of the Old Testament are called by the common term law; sometimes it is divided into the Law and the Prophets; [135] But the largest division that is found anywhere is in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel by Luke--the Law, and the Prophets, and the Psalms. Already we have seen that the apostle Paul makes no such difference as that insisted upon by modern theologians, but sums up the whole of the Old Testament institution, and says that it has been abolished.

In Col. ii. 13-17, Paul settles that question of the continuance of the Law as a rule by which Christians should live. He says:

"And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did he quicken together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses; having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross; having put off from himself the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's."
Let us realize, then, that the institution of Christ is distinct, and that if we would know our duty to God in this dispensation, we must learn it from this, not from that.

SEC. 40. HOW CAN WE KNOW WHEN THE COVENANT OF CHRIST BEGAN?—This is a question of no little importance. Even those who agree as to the difference between that made with Israel at Mt. Sinai and that made by the Saviour, are not sure respecting the exact time when the one was removed and the other began. We have learned, in many ways, that this covenant was not that which was made with Adam, or Noah, or Abraham, or the nation of Israel; but just when it did begin and just when all men ought to have yielded obedience to its requirements, is not so easily determined. We have a few facts, however, that may be of importance in determining this matter.

1.) Christ live and died a Jew: he walked in obedience to that law; he even went so far as to say:

"Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets; I came not to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 17-19).

It is impossible to think that Jesus at that time had an independent kingdom, or to suppose that He lived in any way indifferent to the demands of the Law that had been given by Moses. Whatever there was in that Law, He proposed to keep it—God was its Author, and men should observe it.

2.) During His life, His kingdom, was spoken of as being present, at hand, as if it had not yet been established, but would be in the near future.—When John came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, he said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iii. 2). And when Jesus went forth into Galilee, he preached "the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark. i. 14, 15).

Again, when the Saviour was about to begin the third tour throughout all Galilee, He called to Him His apostles, and appointed them to go into other places in this country, and said to them: "As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." [137]

Then again, just before His transfiguration, he said:

"Verily I say unto you, There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. xvi. 28).

Once more, when he was nearing Jerusalem, for the last time; He is at Jericho; is at the house of Zacchæus; and teaching them that the Son of man had come to seek and save that which was lost.

"And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear. He said therefore, A certain
nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (Luke xix. 11-13).

And when the parable is spoken, there remains no question in the mind of any reader that it relates to himself--that he was going into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return again, that He might reckon with His servants.

Hence he did not begin by establishing his kingdom; it was not established for him; it was not in existence at the time of His going up to Jerusalem to be put to death.

And supposing that his disciples were even tolerably well informed, the kingdom was not yet established when He ascended into the heavens.

"They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts. i. 6).

The answer that follows shows that if the kingdom was then in being, the Saviour did not care to inform them on that point. Indeed, He indicates that it was yet future, and that they should be His agents in the presentation of His claims; but that the time had not yet arrived for the work to begin. They must tarry at Jerusalem for the heavenly enduement; and when that should be received, the work might begin.

(3.) The kingdom was presented by the Saviour, as having so come that men could press into it.

"The law and the prophets were until John: from that time the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and every man entereth violently into it" (Luke xvi. 16).

There is a difficulty in the minds of many, in these statements. In a number of texts we are taught that, the kingdom of heaven was not established while the Saviour was on the earth; and now we come to an affirmation that men were pressing into it during even the lifetime of John. And as it would be absurd to maintain that men could enter that which had no existence, it is demanded that the kingdom be understood to have been in existence after the preaching of John the Baptist. This difficulty is rather apparent than real. The word kingdom in itself does not always have the same meaning. It implies: (1) a king; (2) laws; (3) subjects; (4) penalties for disobedience, and rewards for faithfulness; (5) a throne and power for the king. Any one of these may be put for the word itself, according to a figure yet to be considered. Also, like the word gospel, or good news, it may refer to the time of its coming or to a time when it shall assemble the world for judgment, or any time between these. But what is the meaning in this place? One thing must be conceded at the beginning of the investigation-the Scriptures must not be made to contradict. It will be impossible to make more or less of the texts that we have cited. This fact prepares us to understand the use of the word in question in an unusual sense. But what sense? This question will be best answered by determining after what plan John performed his work. Did he come to establish the kingdom or church of the Christ?

Gabriel tells Zacharias that John was to "Go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn
the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just; to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him" (Luke i. 17). In verses 76 and 77, of the same chapter, we have Zacharias saying, when the Lord had opened his mouth:

"Yea and thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people in the remission of their sins."

It is evident from all this that John did not come to set up a kingdom, but to introduce the King, and prepare a people for His reception. In harmony with this thought, he preached the approach of the kingdom; and that, in view of that fact, men ought to repent, to turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. Then, when the kingdom was preached in the days of John, it was preached not as having come, but coming--near at hand. Hence, when men pressed into it as if by violence, they pressed into that prepared condition which it was John's work to direct.

While this is the evident meaning of the language, it makes complete harmony with every other statement on the subject.

(4.) While there was a gospel in the sense of good news respecting coming events, there could be no gospel in the complete sense till Christ had come and been put to death, and had risen from the dead (I. Cor. xv. 1-4). Whatever else there may be in the word gospel, the record of the death and the resurrection of the Saviour was certainly a part of it. We can not think of the kingdom or church of Christ as having come, and the gospel not yet preached in its fullness. And yet it would have been impossible for any man to have preached it before His resurrection. The apostles did not know that He was to rise from the dead. And if they had, they could not have preached that He had so risen till He had been redeemed from death. Hence we conclude that it would have been impossible for the church to have been instituted before the crucifixion of the Saviour.

(5.) The limits of Judaism were upon the disciples during the days of the Saviour.--In the tenth chapter of Matthew we have the Master sending out the twelve into the towns and villages of Galilee, but straitly charging them not to go into any road that would lead to the Gentiles, nor into any village of the Samaritans, but to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

But when he gave them the great commission, after He had risen from the dead, all restriction is removed. It no longer contains promises for the Jew which are not also to the Gentiles. Then they were to be witnesses to Him in Judea, in Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. Then they were to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; they were to go and make disciples of all the nations. This could not be done while the bonds of Judaism were upon them. Hence the kingdom of Messiah could not have been in existence till the limitations of the Jews' religion were taken out of the way.

(6.) The law and the priesthood were changed at the same time.--This we have already seen, and only refer to it here by way of remembrance (Heb. vii. 11, 12; viii. 4). We have also seen that Christ was not a
priest upon the earth; hence that the law was not changed till He came into that everlasting priesthood after the order of Melchizedek; and this He did not do till He ascended into the heavens, to make an atonement for the sins of the whole world.

(7.) The new law of the kingdom of the Christ should go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

"The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 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 nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples 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 of 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" (Isaiah ii. 1-3).

Micah iv. 1, 2, contains the substance of the foregoing. This precludes the possibility of the law of Christ going forth from Jordan. But it has been objected that this does not refer to anything that could have taken place in the days of the apostles, as it relates to the last or latter days. But the last days of what? If Isaiah was prophesying about the world, then it would refer to the latter times of its history or being. But he starts to tell what awaits Judah and Jerusalem in the latter times. Hence this prophecy relates to the latter times of that city and people; before the Jews should be finally dispersed, and their city destroyed, the law should go forth. Those changes came in the year 70 A. D., and hence the law went forth before that time.

(8.) The apostles had the keys of the kingdom (Matt. xvi. 13-19), but they were not at liberty to use them [142] till after the first Pentecost succeeding the resurrection of the Saviour.

"And he said unto them, These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, how that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the Scriptures; and he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high" (Luke xxiv. 44-49).

In the appeal of the Saviour to the "thus it is written," reference is made to the language of Isaiah and Micah, for these alone tell of this new law of salvation going forth from Jerusalem. Just after the Saviour had risen from the dead, the fulfillment of that prediction was near, but it must wait till the heavenly enduement should first come. Thus again we see the impossibility of this law of salvation going forth from any other place, or at any other time than that indicated in the interpretation of the prophecies given by the Saviour himself.

(9.) No covenant could be, in force till it was ratified by the death of the sacrifice appointed to that end.
"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 doth it ever avail while he that made it liveth?" (Heb. ix. 16, 17).

It would be impossible, then, for the new covenant, or testament, to be of force while Christ, who had been appointed as the covenant sacrifice, was living.

A mistake is sometimes indulged here in maintaining that nothing can be regarded as a part of this [143] testament except that which had already been given by the Saviour. This, of course, would render all the writings of the apostles worthless, and rule them out, as being no part of the New Testament. This is to push the meaning of the language entirely beyond its import. All that is bound in a covenant may not have been mentioned at the time of sealing it with the people. At the time that Moses took the book and sprinkled it with blood, and enjoined it unto the people, but little more than the ten commandments had been stated. The whole of the priesthood and the law of sacrifices had to come afterward. They covenanted not simply with items of law, but with Him who had made the law, and, therefore, bound themselves to all that necessarily adhered in this law. So with the covenant of Christ. He gave them the great principles of the New Institution. But at the time He left them there were lessons which they could not learn. He had these things to say to them, but they could not bear them then. Hence the Holy Spirit had to be given to these men to lead them into all truth, to teach them all things, to bring all things to their remembrance that He had taught them before, to receive the things that belonged to Him and deliver to them. But it would be idle to say that these things that came to the apostles after the ascension of the Saviour were no part of that Institution, or that they were not confirmed unto them when the Lord made the atonement for the sins of the people. The one article of the Christian's creed being accepted, everything belonging to it is accepted with it. When men confess that they believe with all their heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, they have accepted everything of which He is the author. [144]

The order, then, of making a covenant, is to present the matter clearly before those who are to be parties to the contract, and then seal it with a proper sacrifice. So the great feature of the New Testament was clearly stated, and when sealed with the blood of the appropriate sacrifice, there is bound upon all who accept the Christ, all of which He is clearly the author. But Paul's reasoning on the subject remains intact—that it could not have been of force till after the death of Him who made it.

(10.) Christ was the corner stone. In Acts iv. 11, 12, Peter says:

"He is the atone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner. And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved."

In I. Cor. iii. 11, Paul says:

"For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

And again in Eph. ii. 19-21, he says:

http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/ddungan/hatb/HATB05.HTM (21 of 27) [30/08/2003 11:35:05 p.m.]
"So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, growth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are budded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit."

In every figure in which the Church of Christ is contemplated as a building, Christ is regarded as the chief corner stone. It is not necessary to say that those who have constructed this figure did not have it in their minds that the building could be erected first and the corner-stone afterwards. It is received without the statement [145] that they supposed the building was erected after the corner-stone was laid, and could not be built before that.

(11.) In all mentions of the kingdom, after the day of Pentecost, it is spoken of as if it were in existence.--A single exception is found in those passages in which the kingdom is spoken of in its triumphant state, in the period of the judgment and everlasting reward. In those the saints are waiting for the kingdom of God; not for its establishment upon the earth, but for the rewards for services rendered. A few of the affirmations of the inspired apostles upon this point will not be out of place. But before giving them, we wish to remind the reader of the statements that were made while the Saviour was living. Then everywhere it was said that the kingdom was at hand. If now it is said to have come, to be in existence, the impression will be unavoidable that it was established in the meantime.

"To the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into his own kingdom and glory" (I. Thess. ii. 12).

"Giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (Col. i. 12).

There is found nothing in the connection in which these texts occur to lessen the full force that should ordinarily be given to the words that are used. Hence we feel in duty bound to receive them in their full import.

"Let not then your good be evil spoken of: for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 16, 17).

While Paul is not aiming to define the word in this [146] text, be certainly does indicate that the kingdom with which they had to do was in existence.

In Rev. i. 5, John says that Christ was the ruler of the princes of this world, and in the ninth verse he says:

"I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus."
Sometimes the Church of God, of Christ, is employed to express the same thought; for instance, in Matt. xvi., the words church and kingdom are used interchangeably--"On this rock I will build my church;" "unto thee do I deliver the keys of the kingdom." In the use of these terms He is expressing the same thought. No one denies that the Church of Christ came and was fully established on the Pentecost next after the ascension of the Saviour. Hence whatever was the law by which His people should be governed till His return to us again, was sent forth at that time. This was the law of the Lord that should go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. It is that divine law by which all the people of God shall live, and contains the terms upon which sinners may be accepted in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Before this time the Master said, "I will build my church;" after that time, they all speak of the church and the kingdom as being in existence.

(12.) The kingdom of Christ was set up on the day of Pentecost next succeeding His ascension.--This statement is the result of the investigation already given. And while on this we might rest the case, it is still in order to give it further consideration, for there are other Scriptures which will throw light on the subject. [147] We wish now to examine the subject as if we were hunting the beginning of a section corner. We have certain field notes, and so many chains and links in one direction will give us a hidden stone which will serve as a witness. And a certain number of chains and links in another direction will give us a tree with a certain mark, which shall be another witness. So in this case, there are prophetic utterances and teachings of the Saviour which will serve as witnesses in the matter.

We have already heard from Jer. xxxi. 31-34, with Paul's assurance that it referred to the New Covenant. (Heb. viii. 6-13). Hence it marks the time when the law ceased to be the power that controlled the people, and when they became free in Christ.

We have also heard from Isa. ii. 1-3, and Micah iv. 1, 2, and have been informed by them that the New Law should go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And upon these texts we have had the comment of the Saviour, in Luke xxiv. After his resurrection, these passages had not been fulfilled, but would be in the near future, when repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Also, it is well to be reminded that the Saviour promised the fulfillment of all this when His apostles should be endued from on high. The enduement, too, is pointed out as the promise of the Father which they had heard. And now it is left for us to see what this promise of the Father was, and then find its fulfillment. In doing this we will, beyond all question, find the going forth of that new law spoken by the prophets and the Saviour himself.

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall [148] prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit" (Joel ii. 28, 29).

The Saviour announces the fulfillment of this prophecy in John xiv. 15-17, when he promises another comforter, who should abide with them forever. But in the following chapters (xv., xvi.), the promise is made still clearer, and the duty that will then follow:
"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."

Notice, that when the Spirit of truth should come and bear witness, the apostles should also bear witness. In chap. xvi. 12-14, this promise is made still clearer:

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye can not bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall bear, these shall he speak and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come."

Before the apostles would be qualified for the testimony which they should bear concerning Jesus, they would need this heavenly Comforter and Director, that they might be freed from any weakness in the discharge of the duties that would then devolve upon them. The Master had been more than three years in giving them this new law, by which men should have the remission of their sins and be admitted into that grace in which they would be regarded as the sons of the Living God. Still there were truths that they did not understand while the Lord was with them, and they could not, for their views concerning the Messiah were so erroneous that their minds were blinded. But when the Master had suffered death and had risen again, they were in a better condition to learn. So the Spirit is sent to complete their education, and fully qualify them for their work as the ministers of the gospel of Christ, to give the law of the kingdom to all the nations.

According to Luke, in his gospel (xxiv. 47, 48) and Acts i. 4, the Lord re-announced the commission just before leaving them for the heavens, but forbade them going out till they should receive the promise of the Father, that is—the heavenly Comforter, the Holy Spirit. When he should come to guide them into all truth, then should their work, as indicated in the great commission, begin at Jerusalem; they should then tell to the world the way of life through the Lord Jesus Christ, who is clothed with all authority in heaven and in earth.

To find this beginning of the way of life in Christ, we have only to find when the Spirit came into the world according to all these promises. We have not long to wait for the fulfillment. Within ten days after the Saviour ascended, the Spirit came. And with His coming all that had been promised was fulfilled, in their enduement and the witness that was borne by the Spirit and by the apostles.

"And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues: parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts ii. 1-4).

This has all the appearance of the fulfillment of the prediction of the prophet Joel, and the promise of the Saviour. When Joel wrote, it was a long way off; but [150] when the Saviour spoke, it was near. But Isaiah and Micah had also their minds fixed on the attendance at that time. They said that all nations should flow unto it; from which we understand that all nations should be represented at Jerusalem at that
time. And so it is stated by the historian (Acts ii. 5). "Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven."

We are ready to decide in our own minds that the time has come for the work to be done which had been entrusted to the hands of the apostles--to give to the world the new Law of the kingdom. But it is better for us to have the opinion of an inspired man on the subject.

"But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and spake forth unto them, saying, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and give ear unto my words. For these are not drunken, as ye suppose; seeing it is but the third hour of the day; but this is that which hath been spoken by the prophet Joel; "And it shall be in the last days, with God, "I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh: "And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, "And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams "Yea and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days "Will I pour forth of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy" (Acts ii. 14-18).

So, then, we have not been mistaken in the appearance of things. Inspired authority declares that this is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel. But this is not all--they understood now that the promise of the Father had come, and that at that time they were to declare all the words of this life in the name of the new King. And Peter therefore continues to announce that Christ has been raised from the dead, and made to be both the Lord and the anointed One. And when the people ask what they are to do, he tells them to submit to that same Jesus whom they had crucified, that they might be saved. This they did. After this, when Peter had been to the house of Cornelius and preached the gospel of the Christ to them, he was taken to account for it by the brethren who were at Jerusalem. He recounted the whole matter in order, telling them all things that had occurred in his call to that place and the work he did.

"And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, even as on us at the beginning" (Acts xi. 15).

Now there are a number of things that it will be well for us to note:

1. This new covenant should be unlike the old one (Jer. xxxi.; Heb. viii.).

2. It should go forth from Jerusalem (Isa. ii.; Micah iv.; Luke xxiv.).

3. All nations should be represented there at that time (Isaiah, Micah, Luke, in Acts ii. 5).

4. The Holy Spirit should be present at that time, and give them supernatural power (Joel, John, Luke, Acts).

5. The Holy Spirit and the apostles should bear witness at that time (John and The Acts).

6. The demonstration should be at the beginning of the gospel plan of saving men (Luke xxiv. 44-49; Acts ii. 4; xi. 15).
Surely this is enough. One who will not be able to see from this induction of facts that the kingdom of the Christ was set up on the day of Pentecost, is either unable or unwilling to see the plainest truth.

But against this there is an objection; it is this: If this is so, then there was fifty days that the world was without any authorized law. If the law was taken out of the way and nailed to the cross of Christ, and yet His law did not go forth till the Pentecost, which was fifty days later, then there was no law during the interregnum. Yet all men believe that the law did end with the crucifixion of the Saviour; that from that time there was no more offering for sin or other service in the temple according to divine appointment. And the simple truth is, that all men were amenable to God according to the light which they had. Those who had been the disciples of Christ and knew His requirements, were under obligations to obey them; and those who did not have these advantages, were amenable to God for such light as they did possess. In any age of the world, when any man has done the best that be knows and could know, he has been free from iniquity in the sight of God. And it was then the same that it has ever been in that respect.

From that time the world was not under law to Moses, nor according to Moses, but under law to Christ (I. Cor. ix. 21). It is not now the law that was given to the patriarchs, nor to the people of the Jews at Mt. Sinai; but we are to be the servants of God by accepting Christ and doing His will, as found in the New Testament. Every truth that will malice for our spiritual good is to he found in it. Every sin is there condemned; hence it is to us the perfect rule of life.

Some one again objects that the early Christians did not have the New Testament, and therefore were without the law necessary to perfect Christian character. But they had the apostles and direct inspiration, and this was all that they could have needed. The Lord's will was the same then that it is now, and it was revealed to them then as they needed the knowledge.

SEC. 41. THE TRIAL AS TO THE TIME OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM.--We have already seen that any theory which is opposed by any known fact, can not be true. Hence we desire to have our theories tried by the facts that have been induced.

(1.) If the kingdom of the Christ was in existence, during the time of John the Baptist, then there were two Laws in force at the same time.--As it is impossible for God to be the author of such a state of things as that, it seems unreasonable to contend that John introduced it.

(2.) Those texts which place the establishment of the kingdom later than the time of John upon the earth, can not be true, if the church began during his life. It was after he was dead that the Saviour sent out men to preach that the kingdom was at hand.

(3.) The Jewish limits or restrictions that were upon the apostles would be incomprehensible upon the hypothesis that kingdom of the Messiah was then in existence. There could be no such limitation to the institution of which Christ was the author, for His was intended to go to the ends of the earth.
(4.) *If Christ had been king while on earth,* then he would have been priest as well for he became a priest after the order of Melchizedek, who was king and priest at the same time. And if he had been priest on the earth, he would certainly have been high priest, for no one can think of the Saviour taking an inferior rank. And if he had been high priest on the earth, then they would have had two high priests at the same time, and that, [154] too, by divine authority. Paul says, "If he were on earth, he would not be a priest."

(5.) If John instituted, the kingdom by the baptism of Jesus then it was not set up at Jerusalem, according to the prophetic promise, and according to the clear teaching of the Saviour Himself.

(6.) If the kingdom had been established at a time prior to the resurrection of the Saviour, then it could not have been unlocked by the keys held by Peter, for neither he nor any other apostle was at liberty to use such authority till the coming of the heavenly enduement.

(7.) If the church came into being prior to the death of the Saviour, then it was built before the laying of the corner-stone. We have already seen that Christ was, and is, the chief corner-stone; and the idea of building the church before the laying of the corner-stone is preposterous.

(8.) If the Covenant of Christ was in force while the Saviour was yet alive then Paul's illustration must pass for nothing. He thought that a covenant was of force after the death of him that made it, not before.

(9.) We have also seen that if the kingdom was established before the ascension of the Lord, then it was established without the apostles knowing it. If they had committed such a blunder as that, it is unaccountable that the Master did not correct them.

(10.) We have already seen, that, the gospel in its fullness was not and could not be preached till Christ had died and risen again from the dead. Hence, if the church was established before that time, it was in existence before the gospel was, or could be, preached. [155]
CHAPTER VI.

THE VALUE AND USE OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY
IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

SEC. 42. WHO WAS THE WRITER?--That is about the first question on opening any book. If we know not its author, we shall be quite in the dark, much of the time, while trying to interpret its pages. Large and small, there are a great many questions we may ask about the writer or the speaker that will assist in the interpretation of what has been said. We have not the space to devote to their discussion, and will leave it to the genius of the exegete. But there are a few questions that we must ask.

(1.) Was he an inspired man?--Is God the author of the communication? Did He direct the wording of the letter, or the speech? or did He give the writer or speaker the ideas and then leave him to his own selection of words and manner of speech, in presenting these ideas to the people? It is evident to every careful student of the Bible, that both of these plans have been followed. Generally God gives the inspiration, and leaves the man to present the thought in the words he chooses. But at other times it was impossible for men to hold the thoughts that God had to communicate. Under such circumstances He gave the words, for man could not be trusted with any part of it. At such times they spoke as the Spirit of God gave them utterance. [156] But it is fair to say that the most of the Bible has been given by men who were inspired, but who were left to do the work according to their own methods of expression. This will account for the difference that may be found between almost any two of the writers of the Old and New Testaments. Matthew is not like John, nor is James like Paul, nor is the style of Isaiah the same as that of Jeremiah.

(2.) Was the author an educated man?--If we could know that the writer has been left to himself in the selection and use of terms, we should deal with him as we do with any other writer in the use of grammar. If the writer was scholarly, we may be assured that the laws of the language in which he wrote are not violated, and the strictest rules of its grammar should be applied in the interpretation. But a less scholarly person may be held less firmly by such rules of interpretation. Most of the prophets seem to have been speaking men, and their sayings and predictions were gathered up by others, and recorded. But Isaiah was a writing prophet, and his language may be regarded, for the time, as strictly classical. He differs from Jeremiah, in that his figures are completed according to rule, while those of the latter are frequently broken off at their height, and the communication concluded in literal language.

Knowing first that Luke was a physician, prepares us to anticipate the marks of his profession on his
writings. All through his account of the teachings and doings of Jesus he has left the shades of his culture. The orderliness of his record is that of a student. This is true, not only of his gospel, but of the Acts of the Apostles. When the other writers say that a man having the leprosy said to the Master, "If thou wilt, thou canst [157] make me whole"; and He said, "I will, be thou whole." Luke reports the man as "full of leprosy." By that expression he indicates that the man was in the third stage of that disease, and therefore incurable. The others say that "Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever," but Luke says that she was "holden of a great fever." Thus he gives the extent of the trouble--she was bedfast, holden, or bound down. When a man in the synagogue whose hand was withered, was healed by the Saviour, Luke is particular, and says it was his right hand. And so it is all the way through the narrative--he enters into all the details, both in describing the diseases and the manner in which they were healed. To a physician, these would seem to be matters of importance; but they would not impress others in that way. His profession appears clearly in his statement of the prayer of Jesus in the garden (Luke xxii. 44, 45): "And being in agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground. And when he rose up from his prayer, he came unto the disciples, and found them sleeping for sorrow."

It would not have been apparent to another man that they were asleep because of sorrow. Even most of the theologians of the present time have charged upon these men an indifference to the occurrence of the hour. But Luke has redeemed them from that imputation. He could understand how the undefined sadness of that awful night could so entirely overcome these strong men that, as an infant cries itself to sleep, so they were exhausted by sorrow, and slept. It would be his place, too, to describe the bloody sweat, which would, to him, indicate the near approach of death. But for the angel [158] that appeared to strengthen the Saviour, the sorrow of the night would have been too much for him, and He would have been dead before the morning.

Knowing this man's culture beforehand, we are ready to enter with him into all the details, and understand him.

(3.) What religious bias or prejudice?--We have before seen that God has not always directed the very words of the men through whom He has made a revelation of His will. And it is not too much to say that they had feelings like other men; and that their speech partakes more or less of these feelings, is evident to every careful reader. Sometimes these men write history, and were in need of no guidance from the Lord, being competent to tell very clearly the facts in the case. When we find that Isaiah would not speak to Pekah in a respectful way; that he does not call him king, nor even speak of him by his own name but as "that son of Remalia," we would think it strange to find that he has embellished the qualities of the man. When Elisha speaks of the king of Israel as "that son of a murderer," we expect him to be fairly explicit in stating the faults of the man. But while we feel compelled to say this much, even respecting men who were divinely employed to reveal the will of the Lord, we must remember that many of the characters of the Bible were not inspired, and did not claim to be. Hence their words are to be understood in the light of their prejudices, and allowances to be made on that score, just as if we were reading an account of their sayings in any other book. The Bible is responsible for nothing but a faithful record of what was said and, done. The language of the worst men that have ever lived is to be found in the Bible. The sons of Belial have had their [159] say, and even Satan himself has given his falsehood in
his most attractive manner. Hence we should know who speaks, and especially his heart condition. It is unreasonable to quote the language of Job's comforters as containing the will of God perfectly, for God condemns their views, and the men themselves. It is just a little more in order to quote Job himself. And yet he undertook to speak of things of which he had no knowledge. The Lord reduces the sage somewhat, and Job confesses that he had presumed on intelligence that he did not possess.

(4.) *What of the style?*—That speakers and writers greatly differ in their manner of composition, no one calls in question. Two men may have the same thing to say, but the manner of saying it will show all the difference of mental temperament and drill. One presents his thought by the use of florid rhetoric, while another proceeds by the shortest lines known to the art of communication. Some are closely logical, while others pay but little attention to any relation between premise and conclusion. The logical mind will follow one, topic, with another having direct relation with the preceding and succeeding statements. Others are haphazard, and put many strange things in juxtaposition. Nor are these peculiarities removed by inspiration.

The eight writers of the New Testament exhibit so many styles of composition. Some of these writings are in short sections, so that no particular violence will be done if the usual method of verse interpretation should be followed. But most of them have a subject that must be considered as a whole, or the meaning will never be gathered. Paul is peculiar for his logical acumen. It never [160] forsakes him. Commonly, when a writer or speaker reaches the lofty heights of exultation, all signs of logic drop out of sight. But not so with Paul. From first to last he is severely logical. It was his mental nature, and any inspired thought that will come to us through him must assume that form. Even his rhapsodies are finely inwrought with syllogism. Not only so, but he starts out with the purpose which can not be accomplished with a single verse or chapter. He ordinarily presents his topic, directly or indirectly, and divides and subdivides, and brings out all the truth that relates to the matter in hand, and reaches his conclusions by a careful induction of the facts. Not only so, but he anticipates the objections that may arise in the minds of his readers, and shows that they are not well founded, or, in the nature of the case, the conclusions they have reached are untrue.

Now, what I insist upon is that each writer shall be studied as to his manner of composition, for not until we shall understand the writer will we comprehend the writing.

Paul is not only a logical writer but a very versatile writer. He seems to have a large vocabulary from which to make his selections of terms. Hence, even when he is presenting an antithesis he will likely change the terms on both sides every time he makes the comparison. The best illustration that now occurs to the mind is in II. Cor. iii. 6-12. There the Law and the Gospel are referred to by so many different terms, that one who has not paid attention to the style of the writer, in this respect, is very liable to miss the meaning altogether.

(5.) *A writer usually, condemns the evils, which, appear the most dangerous to him.*—Hence, if he has been converted from any particular doctrine, he is likely to regard [161] that as the prince of evils, and give his time largely to opposing it.
The fact just mentioned will account, in part, for the great space that Paul gives in efforts to show that Christianity and Judaism were distinct, and that we are not now under the Law, but under the Gospel of Christ. To know the history of the man, therefore, will greatly assist in understanding him.

SEC. 43. WE SHOULD KNOW TO WHOM THE WRITING IS ADDRESSED.

(1.) What is their history?--Where have they been? What have they done? From whom have they descended? A reference being made to such matters would be quite unintelligible to one who knew nothing of their antecedents. If they had been Gentiles, carried away unto dumb idols, we should know it, and all about the character of that worship in which they had been engaged. If they had been Jews, raised and trained in the Law and the traditions of the times, we need to know that also, for these things may be referred to, and leave us in doubt as to their import without such previous intelligence.

(2.) We need to know their education.--It is presumed, at least, that every wise author will speak in the language of the people. Hence the words he uses, if they have any unusual signification, it will be because of the people to whom the words are employed. When Jesus said to the thief on the cross: "To-day thou be with me in paradise," He certainly employed the word paradise in the sense in which the thief and the people of that day would understand the term. Hence, the best dictionary that can be had respecting that word will be found by referring to the use of the word made by the people. The Sadducees did not employ the term at all, but the Pharisees did, and meant by it, a place of abode for righteous spirits between death and the resurrection. Hence, unless He deceived the man, and that intentionally (for He knew in what sense he would understand it), He employed the word in its common or accepted sense. This rule is usually, if not universally, agreed to, that, in finding the meaning of the word, we must know the import given the word by those to whom it was used.

(3.) It is very necessary to know their customs.--Many references to such things may be made which we can not comprehend, unless we have been first informed in these things. Not only so: there may be prudential measures adopted, concerning which there is no divine command, and yet an apostle may recommend a certain course. And without attention to this matter, these prudential recommendations have been elevated into divinely directed rules of life. It might be a shame for a woman in the city of Corinth to be unveiled. And under such circumstances Paul would have her wear a veil; but it would not follow that every woman in the world must wear a veil, or be regarded as unchristian. So he would advise respecting meats that had been offered to idols. If there is any danger of leading any one into idolatry by eating such meats, then he should refrain. It would be better to do without the needed food than to endanger the salvation of one for whom Christ died. So it would be better for the gospel to be preached only by a portion of the church than to give such offense to the community that the people could not be had to hear the claims of Christ.

(4.) We should also know what are the sins to which they have been addicted.--In the city of Corinth, a member of the church had taken his father's wife, and was living with her as if she were his own. Now we ought to know why it was that they were not humbled, but rather puffed up, on that account.
To what temptations were they subject?--Were they exposed to Grecian philosophy, or to the arguments of Jews, or half-converted Christians, who were more Jews than disciples, and who were trying to bring them again into the bondage of the Law? Were they exposed to that subtle philosophy that claims to have received the good of all systems of religion and philosophy, and to have thrown away the evil and retained all that was valuable, and would therefore lead them into a conglomerate system made up of Judaism and heathenism, baptized in the name of Christ? Were they surrounded with the deceitful claims of the Nicolaitans, and urged to believe that a Christian can not sin in doing his own pleasure--having been begotten of the Father, and His seed remaining in him, it would be proper to follow his promptings, as they would be the result of the divine seed, or regeneration? Were there men among them who claimed to be apostles, and who would readily make merchandise of them? Were there false teachers among them, as there had been false prophets before them? The prophets had many a tilt with false teachers who claimed that God was the Author of what they said. And the disciples were troubled with those grievous wolves who rose up to head parties in their own interests. There were foolish and vain talkers whose mouths had to be stopped. They withstood the teaching of the apostles, as Jannes and Jambres had withstood Moses, when before the court of Pharaoh. For such contention, men had to be prepared, and many a lesson was given for that purpose. [164]

But false doctrine was not the only temptation that was in the pathway of the early Christians. Persecutions were before them, and for these they must be prepared. When the Saviour sent out the twelve and the seventy, He felt that they should be prepared to stand up against the persecutions that awaited them. And Paul, knowing the trials of the Hebrew brethren, tried to arm them for the conflict, so that they might endure to the end. To know these trials through which they were passing, will greatly assist in the interpretation of those Scriptures.

SEC. 44. WHO ARE SPOKEN OF?--Knowledge of these is not as essential as in the other cases, and yet many references will be much more easily understood by having the same question asked and answered, as in the previous inquiry. Though less absolutely demanded, the same questions ought to be answered respecting them, to enable the reader to know the strength and point of the remark. We read many times in the New Testament of Herod, of Herod the king, of Herod the tetrarch. But who these Herods are, or if they are all just one Herod, many readers do not know. Their characters and power should be in the mind of the reader, for without such knowledge the pith and point of many things said will not be apparent. One will be greatly assisted in reading the Gospels and the acts, by knowing the characters that figure in government. So it will be in order to inquire about Pontius Pilate, Felix, Festus, Ananias, Agrippa. When the Master was in Perea, they came and told him that it would be better to depart out of the coast, as Herod would try to put him to death. He answered: "Go and tell that fox," etc. The point of that remark is not seen without a knowledge of the character [165] of this ruler. So it is all the way through the Scriptures--their meaning will be much more apparent after a careful study of the persons spoken of.

SEC. 45. THE CHARACTER OF THE WRITINGS, OR THE KIND OF COMPOSITION.--In the Scriptures we have history, biography, law, prophecy, praise, poetry, the words of anger and of exultation. If we were reading any other book, we would not think of using the same rules for the interpretation of those several kinds of composition. While the historian or the biographer may deal in splendid rhetoric and occasionally embellish with a highly wrought figure of speech, yet we know that it is his aim to present
us with a number of facts. And we interpret in the light of the work he was trying to accomplish. Generally, however, such writers deal in the plainest words and easiest sentences.

If law is being interpreted, we do not expect to find a single figurative expression. The author has evidently tried to be severely plain and definite. The very purpose of law precludes the thought of anything in the composition but the plainest and most direct form of speech. It has been the intent of him who gave the law to have his will carried out by the people. Hence we expect him to use every precaution to prevent any misunderstanding.

But when we come to condemnation, or exhortation, or any words prompted by mental ecstasy, we naturally look for the overflowing of all the lower grounds of thought and communication.

Poetry, whether found in the Bible or elsewhere, is granted a license of extravagance. It is supposed to have a right to play upon words for their sound. It is the style suited to strong imagination. It will [166] tell the story of the dreamer or of the pathetic lover in language suitable to the mentality that employs it. No one thinks of interpreting the language of the poet as he does that of the essayist. And yet a very large portion of the Bible is in poetry. The simile, the metaphor, the allegory, the hyperbole, furnish gorgeous chariots for the conveyance of the rhythmic mind. All of the Psalms, most of the book of Job, and a very large portion of the prophecies, are in poetry. It is, then, of as much importance to regard the different kinds of composition, while reading the Bible, as in reading any other book. The Oriental trope should have as much latitude as the modern rhyme. For instance, in Job xxix. 16-xxx. 31, when the good man of Uz compared his former, with his present condition, his words are very strong. He shows his honor, as compared with the very low condition of those who then mocked him, in true poetic style. The very occasion seemed to be poetic, and the atmosphere was burdened with hyperbole. There is no danger of being deceived by this, if we are aware of the kind of composition.

SEC. 46. WHEN WRITTEN?--At first thought, this is a question of no importance. But when we think again, that by it we will determine under what law or dispensation the writing or speaking was done, it becomes of great moment. If a man should ask what he should do to be saved, during the existence of that law of Moses, every one would expect an answer that would harmonize with the demands of that law. Its righteousness consisted in doing, perfectly, the things which it required. And if the inquiry was, What will it profit a man if he shall do the things which the law demands? he would be answered by any one informed in the matter, that he should [167] be blessed in the basket, and in the store, and in his cattle, etc., etc. But no one at all acquainted with the teaching of the New Testament would think of giving these answers to these questions. It is seen, then, that it makes a great difference as to the time that the writing or the speaking was done. No one should, then, go to the Old Institution to learn how a sinner can become a Christian, for the two covenants are radically different in that respect. In that, they were saved by the deeds of the law; in this, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. When the rich young ruler came to the Saviour and said, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" the Master directed him to the practical features of the Law. But when He sent out His disciples to go to the end of the earth and preach the gospel to every creature, He said that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." The difference in these answers is because of the difference in time and the change in covenants that has taken place.
"My Spirit shall not always strive with man," is quoted again and again as if it related to the present hour. Many would no doubt look for it in the New Testament. And yet it was spoken before the flood, of the wicked antediluvians, and concerning the one hundred and twenty years that yet remained before the world should be carried away with a flood. About as apt as this is the quotation generally indulged, "Yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau." It seems to be supposed that God did actually hate Esau before he was born, and love Jacob at the same time, for no other reason than that He could. But those who stop and ask when this was said, are enabled to see that the language was employed [168] by Malachi, the last of the Old Testament writers, when, in person, both Jacob and Esau had been dead for twelve hundred years. Hence the language was not spoken concerning these men when they were infants, nor when they were come to maturity, but concerning their descendants; and hence it was selected by the apostle Paul to prove that God was no respecter of persons--that He had selected Jacob, because He knew that his people would be superior to the descendants of the older brother. Their violence to Jacob, as Israel came out of Egypt, and God's hatred of them for it, proved that they were an unworthy stock, and that God did well in selecting Jacob, whose descendants were a much better people.

The language of the thief is not understood by many persons, on account of not noticing under what covenant they were yet living.

It should be borne in mind, too, that time brings a change of circumstances, and that with such a change customs, thoughts and feelings change also. Hence, with such difference, all prudential matters will correspondingly differ. While faith and obedience will ever remain the same, there are things which are neither right nor wrong in themselves, and are of no interest, except as they are wise or unwise methods of carrying forward the will and work of the Lord. They are merely the circumstantial or local details, and would not be proposed beyond the conditions that made them valuable.

SEC. 47. THE PLACE OF WRITING OR SPEAKING.--If we could always know the surroundings, we would know very much of the intention of the speaker. An illustration will be clearer to the mind of the reader when he can be made to see the things referred to by the [169] writer or speaker; and to have that knowledge, sometimes, it is necessary to know where the author was at the time of speaking. When Jeremiah stands in the gate of Jerusalem and preaches to that people, there is peculiar significance in the place in which he was at the time of the address. If King Uzziah or Azariah was ordered out of the temple, one must know why he was not at liberty to remain, and where he was, that he was profaning the house of God. Much of the life of the Saviour is not understood because the reader does not know where He and His disciples were at the time. There is a careless way of reading the Scriptures that marks nothing, and knows nothing of the passing events. If the reader of the Gospels would read each of the evangelists, so as to get the order of the events of the Saviour's life, he would then know the things which preceded and the language which he is investigating. One of these writers has not told all the occurrences, but the others have filled out the account, and, from the whole story, the truth of any particular part of it can be the better understood. Perhaps the meaning of the sixteenth chapter of Matthew, verses 13-19, would not have been in doubt if the people knew where they were at the time that Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church." If we could see the disciples with their Lord in the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, and, therefore, looking into that city, we could easily see the illustration of
the Master. There was a city built upon the rock, and Jesus intended to build His church on a foundation just as solid as that. And when He proposed to give the keys into the hands of Peter, He intended to make him a gatekeeper--give to him a post of honor, such as was probably held by some one plainly in sight. With this in [170] mind, no one would think of Peter being the rock on which the city was to be built. How a gate-keeper might serve in the capacity of a rock foundation on which the city itself should rest, would never be seen by any one.

When Jesus gave His disciples the figure of the vine (John xv.), it should be borne in mind that they had been in Jerusalem, and that they had just gone out into the Mount of Olives; and hence, at the time of giving this figure, they were on the hillside east of the city, and were looking down at those who were raking together the withered and dismembered branches, and burning them in the night when they would not be liable to set fire to anything else; or that they were then passing through the midst of such scenes on their way out of the city. In either case the illustration becomes very forcible. There was the vine, the keeper, the pruner, the withered branches beings raked into heaps and burned, and there were also the living vines which would likely bear much fruit, being purged for their good.

So when the Lord gave His disciples the allegory of the good shepherd. It was at the "feast of dedication, and it was winter." During the winter season the shepherd put the flock into the fold at night, and took it out in the morning. Hence He presents Himself in the light of a true shepherd, and also the door of the sheep. These have a common thought, and were offered to make them understand their relation to Him, and His care for them. If they would accept of Him as their teacher and guide, they should find food and protection at all times, for He so loved them that He would even lay down his life for them. [171]