

THE  
ORGANON OF SCRIPTURE:  
OR,  
THE INDUCTIVE METHOD  
OF  
BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION,

BY  
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*THE LOGIC OF SCIENCE IS THE UNIVERSAL LOGIC,  
APPLICABLE TO ALL INQUIRIES IN WHICH MAN CAN  
ENGAGE.—Mill.*

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## PREFACE.

THE principal reasons which have induced us to add another to the already long list of works on Exegetical Science, will be given in the body of the present volume. In this place it will suffice to say that, as its title-page indicates, the publication which is now offered to the public differs in its whole design and execution from all that have preceded it. It purports to be, radically and essentially, a new work, and not a remodeled edition of Ernesti, Michaelis, Stuart, or Horne. True, it does not claim to have discovered a new method of investigating phenomena; it merely adopts, and applies to the Scriptures, a method which has been satisfactorily tried in other departments of study, but which, it is believed, has never been presented and urged as *the* Method of Biblical Interpretation. On this it bases its chief if not its sole claim to the attention and favor of the public.

That Method takes precedence and control of Rules, and cannot be superseded by them, is a proposition which seems never to have been considered by any of the writers on Hermeneutical Science. Hence they have not only failed to elaborate and insist upon the Inductive Method, but have been equally silent with reference to all others; and their works, which have so long been held as standard authorities in this department, are wholly destitute of any well-defined Method of Interpretation. Whereas, unless we have wholly misapprehended the fundamental principles of the subject which we have presumed to discuss, it will be seen, as we advance, that the glaring discrepancies which have marked, and which continue to mark, the interpretations made by different individuals of equal intellectual and moral qualifications, are to be traced directly to this very deficiency—the absence of a well-established and all-comprehensive Method.

The following work, it is hoped, will be found to contribute something towards supplying this evident defect.

It will not, however, be supposed that because methods have not formed the subject of discussion in our exegetical works, the Bible has, therefore, been interpreted without them. What we complain of is, not the absence of methods, but the failure to settle which one of those in use is right, and to determine with accuracy the principles and laws contained under it. Men have pursued now

one and now another method, according to their fancy or the exigencies of the case they desired to make out, while the general rules of interpretation have been either applied or disregarded in obedience to the requirements of whatever method happened for the time to be in use. It has, therefore, been deemed necessary to discuss the claims of those which have hitherto been pursued, before entering upon the exposition and application of that which gives the title to the present work. And, notwithstanding the space covered by this preliminary review, it is hoped that its importance as a preparation for what comes after will be a sufficient apology for its introduction.

It is hardly to be expected, considering the prevalency of religious error and the multiformity of religious prejudice, that we have, in this part, entirely escaped giving offense. Still, we have carefully shunned all unpleasant allusions to denominational peculiarities, and have left the various fruits of false methods to their own fate, confining ourselves almost exclusively to the exposure and eradication of their common cause. On the subject of Human Creeds—involved in the discussion of the Dogmatic Method—we have spoken with great freedom and considerable elaborateness. We felt justified in adopting this course, without fear of encountering partisan prejudice or personal ill will, from the fact that creeds were regarded as the common ground of nearly all Protestants, how widely soever different in other particulars. And we have no doubt that even those who may dissent from the conclusions introduced, will cheerfully accord to us the privilege of exercising that right which is at once the proud distinction and impregnable defense of Protestantism—assured as they are, that it has been exercised as temperately as our profound convictions of duty would allow.

As to the style of the work, it is sufficient to say that perspicuity has been the object of our chief solicitude. We have constantly had reference to that class of readers whose studies have not been directed into the channels from which the subject matter of this work is derived. How far we may have succeeded in bringing the History, Philosophy, Theology, and Science involved in our plan within the grasp of such readers, it would be impossible now to say; but we have constantly felt that if our arguments were sound, they could only be effective by being understood; and if

they were not, we had no desire to conceal their weakness by enveloping them in, the fogs of mystical or metaphysical obscurities. The whole arrangement of the different books, parts, and chapters, has been made with reference to what seemed to be their logical connection, relation, and dependence; and this, if no mistake has been made, will itself contribute to that perspicuity which we have sought to make characteristic of the style.

The various works which have been consulted will be referred to as they are quoted. It may not, however, be improper for us here to state our indebtedness to Dr. Enfield's excellent edition of Brucker's *Historia Critica Philosophiæ*. In the historical exhibition of Mysticism and of Scholasticism this work has been particularly valuable to us. In the second book we have freely availed ourselves of the lucid and able works of Sir John Herschel, John Stuart Mill, and others, and have not scrupled to quote largely from them, whenever by so doing we thought the object we had in view could be best promoted.

Conscious as we are of many imperfections in the work which is now submitted to the public, we doubt not that a discriminating criticism will discover many more. But in view of the numerous other duties which lie before us, we cannot hope to be able at an early day to give it a thorough revisal, and do not feel justified in withholding it longer from its mission. Hence, such as it is, it is sent forth, to meet with whatever reception may be granted to it by an intelligent Christian community.

AUGUSTA, GEORGIA, May 18, 1859.

BOOK FIRST:  
*OF THE METHODS HITHERTO PURSUED.*

# PART I: PRELIMINARY.

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## CHAPTER I:

### *Characteristics Of Current Skepticism.*

IN submitting to the Christian public a New Method of Biblical Interpretation, it seems proper to begin with such preliminary considerations as may serve to justify the course proposed, and to prepare the way for its adoption. And foremost among these, is the attitude of the masses to the Book whose communications are to be investigated; because it is for them the Christian lives, and not for himself. However well, therefore, he may be satisfied of the truth of conclusions to which he himself has been brought, in following the existing methods of exegesis, he cannot have discharged his whole duty while he remains indifferent to the condition in which those methods have left his fellow citizens.

What, then, is the relation sustained by the great body of the people to the Holy Bible? How do they regard it? To what extent is its authority recognized and respected? Is its influence such as should satisfy the reasonable desires and expectations of enlightened philanthropy? If not, what is the cause of the failure, and how can it be removed? Such are the questions which we are to attempt to answer in this preliminary part.

And here, in the outset, we feel constrained to pronounce the great masses of men and women in Christendom reared and educated though they have been under the direct and indirect influences of the Bible—*Skeptics*. By this we do not mean that they hate the Scriptures, or that they would be willing to put forth any positive effort to destroy them, for this is true of the fewest number. The skepticism of our age is not so coarse and dogmatic. It is more subtle and refined; more timid and retiring; but at the same time more insinuating and dangerous. Ours is *actual*, not *positive* skepticism.

The nineteenth century has produced neither a Voltaire, a Gibbon, nor a Hume. True, it has witnessed the promulgation of

the Positive Philosophy of VI. Auguste Comte,—a philosophy whose direct object is to prove that religious belief is the transient state of human nature; but even this profound work furnishes indirectly the strongest proof of the immovable stability of revelation, in the fact that the only means which appeared to so great a thinker and so earnest an opponent, of arresting its influence and disproving its claims, was to annihilate the Being who is claimed as the Author of it. And, when it is *proved* that there is no God, we shall admit that ours is not a revelation from God. But we are not prepared to give up our conviction of the existence of a Great First Cause, in order to perceive the positive dependence of effects upon proximate causes. Nor is it necessary. We can believe that the universe is controlled by laws; but it only strengthens our faith in the being and the wisdom of a Law-maker. And we are persuaded, whatever influence the writings of M. Comte may have had upon a few mortified metaphysicians, that his postulates concerning God and his religion have not been, nor can they ever be, widely embraced.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> THE system of M. Auguste Comte is based upon the discovery of what he calls the law of human progress, viz.: "That each of our leading conceptions, each branch of our knowledge, passes successively through three different theoretical conditions: the Theological, or fictitious; the Metaphysical, or abstract; and the Scientific, or positive." The first stage he regards as the necessary point of departure of the human understanding; the third, as its fixed and definite state; while the second, which is but a modification of the first, is only necessary as a bridge over which the understanding passes from the first to the third. He looks upon theology, therefore, as only fit to occupy the attention of children, while men, fullgrown in understanding, are to be concerned alone with positive science.

Without pretending to give, in this place, the results of a somewhat careful examination of this system, we may be permitted to say that, to our mind, it appears to be a continual, though perhaps unconscious, perversion of history to the establishment of a foregone conclusion. Even if we should admit that human progress is regulated by the law we have mentioned, would it follow that the last stage must necessarily be free from all the elements which distinguish the first? What does the history to which appeal is made really prove? This, is our judgment, namely:

In addition to the above monstrous attempt, which would sacrifice the living Creator as an offering to His own laws, a few smaller stars have made feeble efforts to cover the face of the sun; but their transit was only known to philosophers, and they have passed on into merited oblivion.

We may therefore conclude, almost without qualification, that the skepticism of the nineteenth century has not developed itself in that absolute and positive form which distinguished it in the eighteenth. And we may further remark, that the violence and force of the attacks made upon the truth in the preceding age resulted, in the providence of God, in ultimate good. Men were raised up to meet the emergency, who were enabled not only to sustain triumphantly the claims of the Bible against the most powerful opposition that can, perhaps, ever be brought against it, but also to disarm their adversaries of all their weapons of offensive warfare. Thus the Scriptures have been transmitted to our age, securely

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1. That men, in the infancy of the world, or the beginning of their advancement, account for phenomena by referring them immediately to God, *without the intervention of law*.
  2. That, in the next stage, they abstract phenomena from the control of a *superintending deity*, and *deify the forces* supposed to be inherent in them.
  3. That they finally perceive that *God* governs and controls all things *through the intervention and instrumentality of law*. This law they recognize as positive, *because* they believe that its *author* is wise and unchangeable, and not, like M. Comte, because they believe it has no author. We, therefore, regard him as standing upon the same ground with the metaphysicians whom he ridicules, in that he virtually deifies law, while they virtually deified a capricious force.

History, then, teaches us that the theological or first stage, reappears in the scientific or last, which is built, and necessarily built upon it. Admitting, then, the law of M. Comte, which is true under certain important limitations, he has erred, as we think, from his inability to connect things which are naturally and *positively* associated. He seems determined to believe in the existence of active forces and unchanging laws, without admitting their only possible cause. Hence, he speaks of "the *illusion* of an illimitable power residing above;" "the positive philosophy, as free from *monotheistic* as from polytheistic or feticch belief;" of "feticchism as no theological aberration, but the *source of theology itself*," etc. etc.—See *Cours de Philosophie Positive*, *passim*.



entrenched, as it were, behind bulwarks of impregnable strength, and free from all danger of successful assault from any possible quarter.

Hence it were ridiculous for us to stand behind our parapets and hurl shafts against a foe that has retired from the contest. We have a different work to perform. It is the enemy that now acts on the defensive; and he will never be routed while the friends of the Bible continue merely to walk over the old battle-fields, recounting the deeds of glory and triumphs of skill which were there achieved by our fathers. In other words, we do not deem it necessary or wise to be perpetually repeating the masterly arguments of our ancestors against a species of infidelity that no longer exists—or, if it exist, is no longer formidable; while a living enemy, as destructive and deadly, is permitted to lurk unrebuked in our families, and to sit unassailed in our churches. When the old enemy ventures forth in hostile attitude, it will then be time enough to draw out from our armory those weapons which repelled him before; but certain are we that this is not now the daily and appropriate work of the church.

What I have denominated *actual skepticism*, is not a determined *opposition* to the faith, but rather a simple *want* of it. It is ignorant of the truth, and distrustful of its ability to find it. It is a skepticism which terminates upon the Church rather than the Bible. It admits that the Bible contains the truth, but thinks that the Church is not able to determine what is that truth. It says: "We concede that the argument for the Divine inspiration of the Bible is unanswerable; hence we do not oppose it—we say not a word against it: but what does it *mean*? What is it that it would have us *believe*, and what does it require us to do?" These questions it asks the Church, and the Church returns all manner of conflicting and contradictory answers. Christ has made his people the light of the world; they have invited and urged the world to come to them for light—to look to them as the exponents of Scripture truth; but when the direction is heeded, the very answer that one Christian returns is stoutly contradicted by another, while both are opposed by a third, and all pronounced false by a fourth; until, discouraged and hopeless, men have settled down in actual skepticism to wait for some other manifestation. They are hence ready (for men will seek to satisfy their religious cravings) to embrace any new thing

that promises satisfaction. Thus Mormonism, with all its absurdities, is greedily swallowed; Spirit-Rapping finds its thousands and tens of thousands of deluded votaries; and all manner of frauds and impositions gain credence and support, in consequence of the absence of a fixed and positive faith in Christianity.

But that this *want of faith*, this actual skepticism, differs from positive infidelity, is evident from the fact that nearly all these deluded people seek to exhibit an agreement between their schemes and the Bible. They are not prepared wholly to give up that book. They are not willing to abandon altogether its doctrine and its hopes; but they must have satisfaction as to its meaning. This they have tried to find in the existing churches, and have failed; and now, as a last resort, they have taken hold of "Spiritualism," or some other ism, which, though it cannot and does not fill the vacuum in their hearts, can at least withdraw attention from it for a time, while it gives promise that when the system, now in its infancy, shall be perfected, their highest hopes shall be realized.

This, however, is but a single development of the skepticism of our age; and its magnitude will be very imperfectly estimated if we suppose it to be confined to the comparatively few who are drawn off into these absurd schemes. It pervades the great mass of society. Its baneful influence is insinuated into the hearts of the high and the low, the wise and the unwise alike. It fills our chapels every first day of the week with crowds of its respectful and respected votaries. In all sections of the country, among all classes, conditions, professions, and occupations, there is exhibited this quiet, unobtrusive, inactive want of faith; a skepticism of the most hopeless kind, which places men in that state in which "it is impossible to please God," but which is likely to be altogether pleasing to the flesh. The *dangers* of skepticism, and the arguments against it, are not appreciated by our actual skeptic, for he is not conscious of being such. He feels that he is not averse to the truth; he even takes pleasure, it may be, in witnessing its success. His difficulty is, that he is *waiting for something*. He is not yet fully *satisfied*. In the conflict of opposing creeds and contradictory doctrines, he has not been able to *make up his mind*. He is in doubt as to which of a number of proposed systems is true, not as to

whether there be truth; and hence he lives, not *opposed* to faith, but *destitute* of it.

The great voice which rises up from this mass of doubting, hesitating, unbelieving mind is, "Point out the truth, and we will receive it; tell us what the Scriptures *mean*, and we will follow them; but amid the thousand discords and clamorous strifes, the antagonistic doctrines and discrepant interpretations, we cannot determine what to believe or what to do." And thus infidelity—routed from the ground it once so proudly and defiantly occupied, and compelled to relinquish into the hands of the Church its hold upon science, criticism, and history, with which at one time it threatened the overthrow of the truth—has taken refuge in a *fortress built by the Church*. Our divisions, contentions, and differences have given birth to, and builded the stronghold of, a skepticism the most pernicious and insinuating, which prevails as widely as Christendom; which is giving life and support to all manner of false religions; a skepticism which often sits at the communion table of the Lord; which grows up with our religious education, and is confirmed by the weekly preaching from our pulpits; and which the Church can never reach till she becomes able to destroy her own work.

For it must be evident that the evil cannot be eradicated by the arguments used by the opponents of a different skepticism. No reasoning against the result can avail so long as the cause which produces it is present and active. Former skepticism was based upon *imaginary facts*, and was routed when they were shown to *be* imaginary. But the skepticism of our age is based upon *actual* facts, and can only be overcome when those facts are *destroyed*. The infidelity which founded its opposition to the Bible upon the contradictions it was supposed to contain, or upon the opposition of its communications to the truths of established science, or upon the unreasonableness and insufficiency of its evidences, was disarmed and silenced when it was shown that no such contradiction or opposition existed, and that the evidences upon which it commanded our faith *were* accordant with the demands of right reason and common sense, and were stronger, clearer, and more numerous than those which were held to establish any analogous proposition. And so the skepticism which is based upon the *uncertainty of biblical interpretation*, as manifested in the

contrariety of faith and practice exhibited in the Church, admits of but one conclusive answer, and demands but one argument,—the removal of the foundation upon which it rests.

This brings us to the consideration of the present state of hermeneutical science; for we attribute our disagreements not to the Bible, nor yet to the depravity or incompetency of those who have studied it, but to the imperfections and perverting influences of the methods which have been followed.

## CHAPTER II:

### *The Present State Of Hermeneutical Science.*

THE science of Biblical Interpretation may be superficially judged of, either by the amount and variety of labor and learning which have been devoted in bringing it to perfection, or by the effects it has produced. In the one case we should probably conclude that nothing, in the other that everything, remained to be done. But if we look into the science itself, and carefully weigh the principles it has brought to light, and compare them with the results that have followed their application, we shall arrive at a conclusion neither altogether favorable nor wholly unfavorable to its merits. We shall conclude that the science contains many excellent Principles, and has laid down many valuable laws, but that it is wholly wanting in the establishment of an all-comprehensive and pervading *method* which alone can properly *apply* those principles, and determine where and when to *enforce* those laws; and hence, that good rules have been improperly used, neglected, or violated, for want of a presiding and predominant power to direct and govern their employment. Every interpreter has pursued his own method, and has called in the aid of such hermeneutical principles only as that method required. Hence, if those labors were multiplied a thousand-fold, and were all to be confined, as they have hitherto been, to the axioms and rules of exegesis, the same results would continue to follow.

The distinction between the province of method and that of rules we deem of sufficient importance to have a separate chapter devoted to its illustration; in this place, therefore, we can be better

occupied in showing that the discrepancies which exist are really traceable to the perversity of the methods which obtain.

And in the first place, let us inquire, what aids do we now possess in coming to a consistent and true understanding of the sense of Scripture? Let us cast in our minds the number and transcendent ability of the Commentaries, Notes, Scholia, Paraphrases, Rules of Interpretation, Keys to the Bible, Introductions, to the Scriptures, Sacred Hermeneutics, Principles of Exegesis, Sacred Geographies, Bible Dictionaries, Biblical Antiquities, *et cætera ad infinitum*,—and we pause and ask ourselves whether anything of value can be added to labors so abundant and learning so various and profound? The question is pertinent and forcible. And certainly it were the height of immodesty to attempt to rival, to undervalue, or to set aside such able and invaluable productions. The author has no such chimerical purpose, and no such unworthy desire. But he cannot conceal from himself the fact that these works have failed to render Hermeneutics what it ought to be—a *science*, in the true acceptance of the word. He cannot ignore the fact that they have failed to accomplish what should have been, and what doubtless was, the ultimate object of their production, and that, consequently, our interpretations are characterized by as much discrepancy and uncertainty now as before their publication.

Subjects of the highest practical moment, are still in controversy. Earnest and studious Christians are still arrayed in opposition to each other. The membership of one church are conscientiously debarred from the communion-table of another; while the serious preaching from one pulpit is seriously contradicted by that from another. Men equally distinguished for learning and piety take opposite views of the same passage, and are taught irreconcilable doctrines from the same page. But we shall be told by someone who is satisfied and even pleased with this state of things, that the points concerning which differences exist are all of secondary importance—the mere drapery of Christianity; and that our exegetical science has proved abundantly equal to the settlement of all the weightier matters. But does he reflect that, in this statement, he charges the whole Protestant world with the guilt of making or perpetuating divisions in the body of Christ upon trifling considerations? Whereas, if his statement be false, a large

majority of Protestants must be in error on subjects that are of vital moment. But it must be either true or false; and, therefore, divided Protestants must be either guilty of schism, or a majority of them have mistaken falsehood for truth. They are either involved in a malignant sin, or they are in imminent danger. For one, we believe that the points of disagreement are, many of them, of the greatest importance. All Divine truth is important, and all radical misapprehension of it to be deprecated; but when the subject of it pertains directly to the matter of our salvation—to the divinity or non-divinity of the Author of it; to the terms of accepting and enjoying it; and to the daily and weekly worship and service superinduced by it,—we can hardly think a Christian man serious who calls this the "drapery of Christianity." Does not the earnestness and pertinacity with which the dispute is carried on demonstrate the importance that is attached to it? Does not every man feel that his position cannot be yielded without his suffering the loss of valuable truth? He may regret the condition in which he finds the Church, and may labor to correct it; but we are slow to learn that our divisions are not healed by singing hosannas to union once a year in our Tract Societies, or by laying aside for a week our peculiarities in order to have a union revival. Nor will the evil ever be corrected by the dignified assemblies and powerless *resolves* of Evangelical Alliances, or Young Men's Christian Associations. Sincere convictions cannot be corrected by a vote, nor made to yield to a resolution, nor be sacrificed to a love of union. The *cause* of our differences must be ascertained and removed, and then the evil will correct itself.

This cause we have attributed to the insufficiency of our exegetical science.

But is our science alone at fault? May not the discrepancies in our interpretations be accounted for by reference to the peculiar character of the Bible itself, or the moral obliquity of those who consult it? In reply, we submit, that when different interpretations exist, as they now do, *respecting the practical details of Christianity*,—its laws, ordinances, membership, officers, and order, together with the great Foundation upon which all profess to stand, they can only be accounted for upon one of the following hypotheses:—

Those who profess to draw their conclusions from the Bible are dishonest; or

The Bible itself is unintelligible; or

It teaches the contradictions which are professedly drawn from it; or

It is not interpreted according to the proper Method.

We will glance at each of these suppositions:—

**First.** That those who consult the Bible are dishonest, or insincere, considered as a whole, is the last assumption that reason could admit or charity approve. The hypothesis, indeed, is clearly incompatible with well-known facts. Those who differ on the above subjects are, for the most part, men whose whole lives have been but a series of noble and generous deeds and self-sacrificing devotion; men characterized by the strongest faith, the most ardent love, and unaffected piety. Certainly, if any satisfactory evidence can be given of honesty and sincerity, it is furnished by those who suspend their own eternal interests, and those of their families and friends, upon the correctness of their faith and practice. Exceptions there may be, and doubtless are—men pervaded by that widespread skepticism we have pointed out, who, having no faith in any system, profess that one which is most pregnant with worldly promise; but these only prove the correctness of the general rule. The first hypothesis, therefore, will not serve to account for the disagreements complained of.

**Second,** The second is, that the Bible itself is unintelligible. But, then, why study it at all? Why ever contend for its meaning? Why ever feel confident in a position? According to this supposition it is all a transparent farce. It is neither a revelation, nor a safe directory. Its meaning, if it have a meaning, is placed upon a par with the ambiguous oracles of Delphi, and we are never less profitably or less wisely employed than when seeking to understand it.—But it is a revelation. Its very nature and design is to unfold and make known. It is declared to be able to make us "wise unto salvation," which it can only do by being understood. We should expect that a Being of infinite wisdom and goodness would, in giving directions to his creatures how safely to prosecute the journey of life, make those directions what they are declared to be, so plain that the wayfaring man, though a simpleton, need not err in them. The Bible, then, at least in so far as its practical parts

are concerned—those upon which we all so widely differ—admits of being understood, and if it is not, the reason must be sought in some other quarter than its native obscurities.

**Third.** That it teaches those contradictory and irreconcilable doctrines that are greeting our ears and our eyes from all the pulpits and presses in Christendom, is what no Christian believes and no infidel can prove. But if it cannot and does not *teach* contradictory doctrines, it follows that those which obtain in religious society cannot be drawn from it by any sound principles of exegesis.

It is admitted, then, we may now safely conclude, that men of great mental capacity and power do honestly and sincerely differ in their interpretation of the Bible, and take opposite ground respecting its teaching; on subjects, too, which are eminently practical and transcendently important; and this, when every consideration of reason, its own express declarations, and the character of Him who is revealed as its author, concur in bearing testimony that there is no contradiction in its doctrine, and that no one need mistake its meaning. There remains, therefore, but one other hypothesis, viz.:—

**Fourth.** It is not interpreted according to the proper Method.

The language a living writer<sup>1</sup> applies to Lord Bacon is singularly applicable here: "He attacked the ancient philosophy without having thoroughly understood it; he attacked it, because he saw that *a method* which conducted *great intelligences* to such absurd conclusions as those then in vogue, *must necessarily be false*." And the distinguished author of the *Organum* himself asks:—

"Whence can arise such vagueness and sterility in all the physical systems which have hitherto existed in the world? It is not certainly from anything in nature itself; for the *steadiness and regularity of the laws* by which it is governed clearly mark them out as objects of *precise and certain knowledge*. Neither can it arise from any *want of ability* in those who have pursued such inquiries, many of whom have been men of the highest talent and genius of the ages in which they lived; it can, therefore, arise from

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<sup>1</sup> Lewes's *Biog. His. Phil.*, vol. 2: p. 418.



nothing else but *the perverseness and insufficiency of the METHODS which have been pursued!*"

This language, *mutatis mutandis*, we repeat as our own conclusion from the premises and arguments which have gone before.

Whence can arise such vagueness and sterility in the *religious systems* which have hitherto existed in the world? It is not certainly from anything in the *Book of Scripture* itself, the very nature of which indicates that its laws must be objects of *precise and certain knowledge*. Neither can it arise from any *want of ability* in those who have pursued such inquiries, many of whom have been men of the highest talent and genius of the ages in which they lived; it can, therefore, arise from nothing else but the *perverseness and insufficiency of the METHODS which have been pursued*.

Protestantism expressly recognizes the Bible as the only rule of faith and directory of conduct. Thus far it leaped in the beginning; but here it paused, and transmitted to the Protestants of our age the responsible duty of determining the means of its successful investigation; of ascertaining *that method of interpretation* which will enable individuals, not to *choose their own faith*, and mark out their own course of conduct—(for we have a *Rule* of faith and life)—nor yet to bind themselves to the dogmas or fetter themselves by the rules of a self-styled orthodoxy, but to *ascertain* with certainty what is *the faith* and what *the requirements* taught in the Bible. Hitherto this important work has not been accomplished. And, until it be, it is most evident that the formidable evils existing in, and growing out of, disunion and partyism—evils which have never perhaps been appreciated in all their magnitude and influence—cannot be removed. Until then, skepticism must revel and destroy, beyond the reach of argument or the hope of correction. Until then, church will be arrayed against church, and Christian against Christian; doubt will be mingled with faith, and a hesitating uncertainty exert its congealing influence upon both individual and associated effort.

From the whole premises we conclude that, notwithstanding the time, labor, and learning which have been devoted to it, the science of Biblical Interpretation is still wanting in some powerful and essential element; or else, that it embraces in itself incongruous and countervailing principles of sufficient potency to

neutralize its influence. In either case we feel justified in making an attempt, however humble, to discover and remove the cause of its inefficiency; while we seek to find a Method that will furnish the diligent and earnest student with more satisfactory assurances that he has acquired the real sense of the Holy Bible—which sense alone is Divine Truth.

## CHAPTER III:

### *The Dependence Of Rules Upon Method.*

WE have promised to devote a chapter to the distinction which we conceive to exist between the province of Rules and that of Method in Biblical Interpretation. And the consideration of this subject alone, unless we have wholly misapprehended it, will justify us before the reader in writing a treatise on *Methods*, notwithstanding the number and value of the works which have been given to the public on *Rules*.

Webster's definition of method is: "1. A suitable and convenient arrangement of things, proceedings, or ideas; the natural or regular disposition of separate things or parts; convenient order for transacting business, or for comprehending any difficult subject. Method is essential to science, and gives to knowledge its scientific character. 2. Way; manner. 3. Classification; arrangement of natural bodies according to their common characteristics." Perhaps the following definition, expressed in general terms, will serve to show the sense in which the word is used in this work. *The way or manner of proceeding in the investigation of the causes or explanations of phenomena.*

This definition permits us to use the term *false*, (which we may frequently have occasion to do,) as descriptive of method; which could only be allowed in strictness of the second of Webster's definitions. For, though we might speak of false classifications, or false arrangements, it is evident that they could not be at the same time "false," and, as the definition says, "suitable and convenient," "natural and regular," made "according to their common characteristics," i.e. upon their *true* principle.

By a rule is meant, "That which is established as a principle, standard, or directory; that by which anything is to be adjusted or

regulated, or to which it is to be conformed; that which is settled by authority or custom for guidance and direction." And by rules or canons of Biblical Interpretation, we mean those principles or standards which are established for our government in determining the sense of Scripture. These also may be true or false—general or special.

With these definitions laid down, we proceed to consider the relation existing between method and rules. And this may be expressed in the proposition, that method exerts a controlling influence over rules; determines when, where, and to what extent, they are to be employed; and modifies the results obtained by them to suit its own purposes. While, therefore, the immediate result is obtained by the instrumentality of rules, the ultimate conclusion—that which is the object of the whole proceeding—is dependent upon the method which presides over them. Hence, whatever be the nature of the rules employed, as is the method so the final conclusion. If different persons pursue different methods they will require the use of different rules in the interpretation of the same passage. They may perfectly agree as to the correctness and importance of each one of the whole system of rules contained in the standard works on hermeneutics, while every man proves by established and recognized principles of exegesis that his interpretation is right; and this he can continue to do, so long as the *application* of those principles is left to chance. Correct rules, therefore, without the concurrence of a correct method, or, what is the same thing, with the predominance of a false method, so far from leading to truth, do but give plausibility and confirmation to falsehood.

Hence, in all scientific inquiries, the ascertainment and pursuit of the true method of investigation, is justly regarded as the first consideration; for, this being settled, all the rules and principles necessary to aid in carrying it out will spring up spontaneously, as it were, while each one occupies its natural place, and exerts its legitimate force. Thus a sort of governmental system is formed, comparable to that of the military, in which method is the General, and the various special laws and canons the subordinate officers, which, in obedience to the General, govern the individual facts, while all concur in carrying out the same plan and accomplishing the same object.

Being thus, in practice, uniformly associated and co-operant, it may be difficult, without improperly anticipating our subject, aptly to illustrate their separate influence and distinct office. We shall, perhaps, however, be understood if we say that, in the collection and observation of individual facts, their classification and arrangement, though it is all done in obedience to the direction of method, rules are the immediate agents. These being servants, act only in harmony with the requirements of the master. And hence we look finally to this all-pervading and predominant method, as the genius that determines where facts are to be sought, what particulars are to be collected, and what order and arrangement are to be given to them. If this be false, it places individual facts in *false relations*, destroys or disregards their natural connections, forces them to unite by artificial ones, and all this by the aid, it may be, of correct rules falsely applied. But if the method be the true and natural one, drawn from a careful study and comparison of the facts themselves, it not only leaves them to speak their own clear and unbiased language, but points out kindred facts which support their testimony, until, having weighed with accuracy and fairness their several communications, it conducts us to general truth and scientific knowledge.

Rules, then, are immediate and special, methods ultimate and general in their application. According to the rules of cutting, sawing, hewing, and splitting, we provide ourselves with the materials for a building. Method, which has been directing all the while, now takes these and constructs the edifice. It may form them into a barn, a kitchen, or a residence; a house of one story or two; with few windows or many; adapted to this purpose or that and, in any case, we use the same rules of measurement and mechanics; place the posts perpendicularly, the sleepers horizontally, the boards and shingles in a certain established order—and all is done regularly and according to rule. But it is the method which controls the rules, determines when and where this or that one shall be employed, directs the shape and arrangement of the materials, and, in short, constructs the building.

We are now prepared to account for the fact previously alluded to, that, notwithstanding the valuable contributions which have been made to hermeneutical science, but little has been done toward the ultimate object of that science. It is because those

contributions have been made in the form of *rules alone*,—which, as we have seen, are subservient to method; and hence the results of their employment, even allowing them all to be correct, must be as diverse as the methods which apply them. They resemble a treatise on book-keeping, in which the author, with much learned amplification, lays down and illustrates rules for judging the quality of paper, pens, and ink; introduces a chapter on the importance of accuracy in keeping accounts, to aid in which he gives a clear statement, with numerous examples, of the rules of addition, multiplication, subtraction, and division; then some important observations on acquiring the habit of neatness, and of being strictly honest and faithful, brings him, by a graceful peroration, to the end of the work. Such a work would be filled, we may suppose, with nothing but truth; and all its rules and observations would be pertinent and valuable. It would be deficient in but one thing—the method of book-keeping! And a thousand such works, brought to the utmost perfection of their plan, would leave the subject just where they found it; that is, every man would observe the rules given, and keep books according to his own method.

I have no serious objections to the exegetical canons that the wisdom and piety of Christendom have handed down to us. Most of them are but the obvious conclusions of ordinary intelligence. I think they have been needlessly multiplied, and that many of them could be improved in their phraseology, while not a few have been called into existence by some false method, or laid down to serve a partisan purpose. Still, in the main, they are obviously correct. Through their influence much has been done in determining the meaning of words, the sense of particular texts, the signification of parables and figures; in short, in supplying all men with the materials or individual facts of revelation. And on these, as individual facts, most earnest students are agreed. It is only when we come to adjust these materials to their place in the great temple of truth that we are made painfully sensible of the utter insufficiency and incompleteness of our science. Then every builder has his own method, and immediately there springs up an interminable controversy about the *design* of this, the *location* of that; the use of one thing, and the *non-essentiality* of another.

Every one uses the Scripture materials, and honestly believes that he is building the veritable temple of God. And, by rejecting what he cannot use, as non-essentials, and supplying what the Scriptures do not furnish, under the warrant of expediency, every one succeeds in giving to his edifice an air of perfection and finish, and in fitting into it a large number of the most excellent of the divine materials. These serve to support and beautify the structure, while they furnish to its friends the standing proofs that it is indeed the house of the Lord. And in this, mark you, he has applied *correct rules* to the texts he has employed. He has been careful in this matter. True, he has not needed *all* the rules that one might suppose belonged to the subject—and why? Because there was a *method* above, that controlled him in the selection of them. Thus a second, a third, and a fourth—thus, in fact., a hundred different structures might be reared out of the Scripture materials, and each one claim to be supported by the best-established principles known to our hermeneutics!

What we need, therefore, is not rules of interpretation, nor yet more laborious study or profounder intelligence, but the discovery and establishment of the *true method* indicated by the nature of the *Scriptures themselves*.

At the risk of being thought tedious, I must introduce one more illustration, as well to show the point we have previously been considering, as to indicate *how* this method is to be drawn from the Bible itself.

Solomon's temple, we are told, was "built of stone made ready before it was brought thither; so that there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building." If now, while those stones or blocks were all spread out upon the ground, before the building was commenced, as, for the sake of the illustration we may suppose them to have been, a skillful architect had gone with rule in hand, and carefully measured and compared every several piece, he could have determined with accuracy the place of every stone in the future building. And if he had been employed to superintend its erection, he could have had the work carried on according to the *method* or plan which was *indicated by the stones themselves*. Every piece *had* an appropriate place, and the marks upon it showed what *was*

that place; and when they were all arranged agreeably to those indications, the structure was Solomon's Temple.

But suppose it does not occur to this architect who is to superintend the building, that its plan can be ascertained from the materials themselves, but must be gathered from the various rumors and traditions which are in circulation on the subject; or, if you please, we may imagine that, as he stands looking at and admiring those stones, he frames in his mind the plan of a building which he thinks equal or superior to that they are now fitted to produce; in either case, having decided upon his method of proceeding, i.e. the arrangement he will give to the materials, he begins operations. Everything goes on bravely for a time, for he is engaged on a part of the work which must be the same in any method. But after awhile, when the proportions of the building begin to come out, he finds places that not a stone on the ground will fit; and now commences an infinite series of changes. He cuts off a tenon here, fills up a mortise there, leaves out this block, places that on the side opposite to its intention, turns this one over, changes the ends of that one, and after all his powers of change and adaptation have been exhausted, he sees whole piles of marble lying around which he cannot use, while his building is still unfinished. Hence, he must send to the quarry and procure other materials to supply places that nothing in the original design can be made to fit; and so, at length, he finishes the edifice; and, doubtless, it is a very fine and beautiful one, but—*it is not Solomon's Temple!*

It is thus in the Scriptures. The materials of the Temple of Truth are accurately fitted, marked, and numbered, and spread out before the reader, it may be in some confusion, enough to arouse him from indifference to careful examination; and now if he will earnestly consider and carefully compare these materials, it is next to impossible for him to mistake their method, or to fail to arrange them in the precise order designed by their Author and Giver. And simple as it may seem, this just and natural arrangement of the facts or materials of the New Testament, without adding to or subtracting from their number—assigning to every fact, precept, promise, doctrine, blessing, and privilege its own exact place in the collection of the whole—will conduct us in the most direct manner to the clear, full, and correct understanding of Christianity. For the

entire business of interpretation consists properly in the careful observation and comparison of the phenomena of revelation, preparatory to the determination of their respective places and relative bearings in the grand synthesis of the whole. The *rules*, therefore, by which we come to a just understanding of individual facts, and the *method* which controls the operation of those rules, and arranges those facts into the true Christian system, must be drawn from the nature of the subject as presented in the Bible itself.

If there be any soundness in the reasonings which have gone before, it is now established—1. That actual or practical skepticism everywhere prevails. 2. That the principal cause, and certainly the main obstacle to the removal of this skepticism, is found in the differences of Christians respecting the practical requirements of the gospel. 3. That these differences are not the result of deficient intelligence or vitiated morals, nor yet of causes inherent in the word of God, but alone of the perverseness and insufficiency of the methods pursued. 4. That these methods must produce such results in spite of correct and well-established rules of exegesis.

Our future course is, therefore, plain. We must examine and expose in the clearest light those methods which have hitherto been pursued, and show, from their own nature as well as from their history, their necessary tendency to perversion and deception. This will occupy a large part of the present work. But as the evil is deep-seated and formidable, and as the results to be anticipated from the general adoption of the one true method are of the happiest and most important kind, it is hoped that the reader will not rush impatiently over what is deemed necessary as a preparation for it—the exposure of the germ and radix of all our mistakes. It should not, however, be supposed that the methods to be examined are as numerous as the errors that have grown out of them, for in that case we should indeed have before us a wearisome and hopeless task. Fortunately, we know that one initial error may be the parent of a thousand, and one or two false methods give birth to any number of untrue systems. And, excepting the perversion of the Inductive Method, which will be considered in its proper place, we think the thoughtful reader will find that all false methods of interpretation, however numerous they may have been developed, are resolvable into these two—the



*Mystic, and the Dogmatic Method.*<sup>1</sup> Dwelling upon these *sources* of error, we shall be relieved of the otherwise ungracious necessity of exposing denominational peculiarities, as these, in so far as they may be false, will all be included in the original error which underlies and supports them.

In order that the reader may have a clear appreciation of these methods, I shall deem it expedient to conduct him back to their origin, far beyond present influences and prevailing prejudices, that he may there first gaze upon them as they exert their pernicious and unqualified influence. After viewing them thus in their pristine vigor when they rule without a rival, we shall trace their history in a rapid sketch through the intervening periods down to our own times; and then attempt to show to what extent they are now employed by Protestants, with the various modifications and qualifying influences which accompany them. Having thus thoroughly examined and exposed them, and having shown their utter insufficiency, and their inevitable tendency to error and delusion, the way will be prepared for considering the only remaining and true method, to which we shall devote the second book of the present work.

## PART II: OF THE MYSTIC METHOD.

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### CHAPTER I: *Origin Of The Mystic Theology.*

IN entering upon an inquiry into the origin, nature, and influence of Mysticism, as an element in Hermeneutics, it is first of all necessary to fix clearly the sense we attach to the word. And

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<sup>1</sup> *Rationalism* is the counterpart of *Dogmatism*. The latter seeks to enlarge the domain of Scripture till it covers some artificial system; the former would lop off everything that goes beyond the narrow confines of reason. On this subject the reader will find some judicious remarks in a work which has been issued since my manuscript was finished: *Mansel's Bampton Lectures—"The Limits of Religious Thought,"* lec. 1

this is the more needful from its being a term very loosely employed, and somewhat vague in its signification.

Our standard lexicographer defines it to be: "1. Obscurity of doctrine. 2. The doctrine of the Mystics, who profess a pure, sublime, and perfect devotion, wholly disinterested, and maintain that in calm and holy contemplation they have direct intercourse with the Divine Spirit, and acquire a knowledge in Divine things which is unattainable by the reasoning faculty." This definition admirably describes the Mystics, but seems to leave us in the dark as to mysticism, unless some ray of light can be drawn from the phrase "obscurity of doctrine!" We resort, therefore, to Mr. Mill's definition, which appears to be both philosophical and complete. He says: "Whether in the Vedas, in the Platonists, or in the Hegelians, mysticism is neither more nor less than ascribing objective existence to the subjective creations of the mind's own faculties, to mere ideas of the intellect; and believing that by watching and contemplating these ideas of its own making, it can read in them what takes place in the world without."<sup>1</sup>

It proceeds, therefore, upon the principle, that whatever can be clearly and separately conceived in the mind, must have a separate and substantive existence. And as the mind not only forms distinct ideas of general laws, but as these are truly the objects of scientific research, there must be general objects in existence corresponding to such conceptions or ideas. Hence truth is not to be acquired from the observation of individual facts, but by absorbing all the faculties into contemplation—the one great purpose of life. Thus when the mind, removed as far as possible from the influence of all individual facts, and shut up within itself, forms conceptions or ideas, these are the images of a reality, of which individuals may be a modification, but never more than a modification. In other words, the Mystic who clearly perceives the idea generated in his contemplations, may be able to trace it, grossly and imperfectly presented, in facts; but as these are in perpetual flux and transmutation, while the idea with its corresponding object is permanent, *that* becomes the standard to which *they* must be adjusted. That is, before facts can express the actual truth, they

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<sup>1</sup> System of Logic, p. 464.

must be made to conform to the ideal—and this is the work of the Mystic Method.

If, after this brief explanation, any obscurity still lingers around the subject in the apprehension of the general reader, we trust it will be dissipated by considering the historical development which we shall presently proceed to exhibit. But lest the philosophic terms employed by Mr. Mill should embarrass those not familiar with such language, we may add this to what is said above, namely, that we shall use the term mysticism to signify any system which professes to see more in natural or revealed phenomena than is cognizable by common sense, whether this enlargement of mental vision be the result of the transference of ideas arising from contemplation, or of those drawn from any other source; while the course pursued to make the facts appear to justify such increase or change in their natural meaning will be recognized as the mystic method.

In tracing theological mysticism to its origin, we may be surprised for a moment to find ourselves wandering in the gloom and darkness of the ancient philosophy of Chaldea, or attempting to explore the cryptic learning of the Persian Magi. This, however, is its true source, and we can but congratulate ourselves that a correct analysis of the stream is not dependent upon an intimate acquaintance with the fountain. For, owing to the meagre accounts which have come down to us from the remote antiquity in which it flourished, as well as to the cabalistic symbols in which it was often communicated, the philosophy, or, what is much the same, the theology of the East, is very imperfectly known.

The sum of what may be collected from the accounts of Berosas, Diogenes Laertius, Herodotus, Xenophon, and Strabo, as given by Brucker, is, that the Chaldeans believed that in the beginning all things consisted of darkness and water; that Belus, or a divine power, dividing this humid mass, formed the world; and that the human mind is an emanation from the divine nature. The Persians conceived light (or those spiritual substances which partake of the nature of fire) and darkness, or the impenetrable, opaque, and passive mass of matter, to be emanations from one eternal source. These active and passive principles they conceived to be perpetually at variance; the former tending to produce good, the latter evil; but that, through the mediation or intervention of the

Supreme Being, the contest would at last terminate in favor of the good principle. They also believed that various orders of spiritual beings, gods, or demons, proceeded from the Deity, among which the human soul is a particle of divine light, and will return to its source and partake of its immortality.<sup>1</sup>

This is regarded, with good reason, as the source of the philosophy of several other countries, particularly of India and of Egypt; and it is not improbable that an influence so extensively active, affected all the speculations of ancient time. It is not, therefore, surprising that in process of time attempts should have been made to reform other systems by adjusting them to this ancient standard. How often this might have been done it does not concern us now to inquire; suffice it to say that, before the close of the second century of our era, Ammonius Saccas had formed the stupendous design of harmonizing all the learning and philosophy of the world upon this basis—believing it to be the root whence all else had sprung. "He maintained," says Mosheim, "that all the different religions which prevailed in the world, were, in their original integrity, conformable to the genius of this ancient philosophy; but that it unfortunately happened that the symbols and fictions, under which the ancients delivered their precepts and doctrines, were, in process of time, *erroneously understood* both by priests and people *in a literal sense*; that, in consequence of this, the invisible beings and demons, whom the Supreme Deity had placed in different parts of the universe as ministers of his providence, were, by the suggestions of superstition, converted into gods, and worshiped with a multiplicity of vain ceremonies. He therefore insisted, that the religions of all nations should be restored to their original purity, and reduced to their primitive standard, viz., 'The ancient philosophy of the East;' and he affirmed that his project was agreeable to the intentions of Jesus Christ, whose sole view, in descending upon earth, was to set bounds to the reigning superstition, and to remove the errors that had crept into all religions, but not to abolish the ancient theology from which they were derived."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Enfield's Hist. of Phil. book 1: chapters 3: and 4

<sup>2</sup> Ecclesiastical History, Cent. ii, par. 2.; chap. 1

Collecting thus a mass of heterogeneous tenets, speculations, and principles gathered indiscriminately in the aggregate from enlightened philosophers, heathen priests, and inspired Apostles and Prophets, he forced all, by the "violent succors of art, invention, and allegory," to bear some resemblance to the primitive model. And as Plato was thought most nearly to resemble the original, or rather most clearly to express its cardinal doctrines, which he was supposed to have rescued from the corruptions of the Greeks, and as his name was in itself a tower of strength and a guarantee of soundness, the amalgamated philosophy was called Platonism—better known and distinguished as the New or Neo-Platonism.

The impetus thus given to "investigations," if such they may be called, will be readily imagined. Here was the whole world of mind, embalmed in a thousand voluminous works, and exhibited in ten thousand different manifestations and developments, all to be studied and interpreted in the light of an obscure theology, the very language of which was confessedly symbolic and mystical. What a field for the exercise of genius! A universe of facts pregnant with a new significance, discoverable without examination, and confirmable without proof! The rhapsodies of Hindoo priests became visible in Plato's Dialogues; the mysteries of Persian Pytheri were the foundation of Pythagoras' numbers; the Ethics of the Stagirite squared with the wisdom of Chaldean soothsayers; while the sublime principles of the Gospel could be read from the Hieroglyphics of Alexandria! But with eyes to see the invisible, and ears to hear the inaudible, and a mind to understand the incomprehensible, what wondrous things may not be seen, and heard, and known!

After all, however, the original movers in this scheme imposed upon themselves and the world by a fallacy. They began with the assumption that the ancient philosophy of the East was not to be understood literally—that its real meaning was something altogether different from the obvious sense of the words in which it had been taught. Whence, then, was this meaning to be derived, if not from the philosophy itself? Where was the instrument that could disclose a sense in it contrary to that of its language? Evidently in the *mind* of the founder himself. This, by means of mere contemplation, without basis or standard, generated the ideas

which were transferred, first to that philosophy, and afterwards to all philosophy and all religion. But this is precisely the definition of mysticism—"ascribing objective existence to the subjective creations of the mind's own faculties, to mere ideas of the intellect." And if Ammonius did not believe, in the first instance, that "by watching and contemplating his ideas, he could learn what existed in the world without," he did that which was equivalent to it—embalmed those ideas in one system, and then read in *that* the contents of *all others*.

Here, then, we begin our survey of mysticism, not because it is the first manifestation of it, but because all the streams of truth and falsehood were here first brought by its fell influence to mingle into a current whose pestilential miasmata has been diffused over all Christendom; because here first the limpid stream of Christian doctrine was forced into the channel of its turbid waters, and made to receive a pollution from which it has not even yet been wholly purified.

Although the reader may have anticipated, from the remarks which have gone before, the influence which such a system as that we have been considering would be likely to exert upon Christian doctrine, it will still be profitable to observe it more minutely, and to dwell upon it with some specification and detail. For this purpose let us contemplate it as it gradually enlarges its sphere and discloses its true character.

Very soon after the establishment of the New Platonism, towards the conclusion of the second century, a considerable number of its adherents were converted to the Christian faith, among whom were Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Clemens Alexandrinus,<sup>1</sup> and Origen. But although, as we have said, they were converted, in some sense, *to* the Christian faith, they were not converted *from* their Platonism. This they still retained and loved. True, their faith in it might not have been as implicit as in the Bible, but they were, nevertheless, as fully persuaded of its general verity, and its essential importance in the perfection of a *system* of

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<sup>1</sup> Clemens Alexandrinus held that it was a meretricious practice for a woman to look at herself in a mirror; "because," says he, "by making an image of herself she violates the commandment, which prohibits the making of the likeness of anything in heaven above, or on earth beneath!"—*Pædagogus*, 1. 3: 100: 2

truth, as they were of the truth and value of the Canonical Scriptures. They were delighted with the divine assurance of the Scripture doctrine, but they also saw in Platonism, as they imagined, many divine truths, which might be legitimately transferred to the Church. They were strengthened in this view by an opinion which had gained currency, but which, it is hardly necessary to say, was wholly without foundation, that Plato had acquired the elements of his philosophy from the Old Testament—either from the Alexandrians, who were informed to some extent of the contents of the Hebrew Scriptures, or from a Greek translation made at an earlier date than the Septuagint. In their eyes, therefore, his whole system was but an elaboration of revealed truth, a full development of principles of divine verity. His inferences and reasonings might sometimes be erroneous, and upon these they felt some little freedom in pronouncing a judgment; but the essential and fundamental doctrines he inculcated they looked upon as very high, if not the highest authority.

But it is not only true that they cherished a decided predilection for the sage whose name they revered; it is also to be remembered that the great mass of unbelievers were Platonists. His doctrines—remodeled and unjustly represented, it is true, but still held under the sanction of his name—formed the staple of every conversation, and the perpetual topic of every discourse. The whole circle of learning and speculation revolved round this centre. It was the point of departure in every investigation, and the established test of every new proposition.

It was but natural, under such circumstances, for those learned Christians who believed both the Bible and Plato, to attempt to show a "harmony and coincidence in their capital doctrines." And as the philosopher was already the accredited standard, it is by no means surprising that those attempts should have been made rather with the design of proving that the Bible agreed with Plato, than that he agreed with the Bible. "This coalition," says Brucker, "was attempted to be made in the second century by Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, and Clemens; and the corruption of faith which led to this formal effort doubtless existed still earlier."

"The New Philosophy," says Mosheim, "was imprudently adopted by Origen and many other Christians, to the prejudice of

the cause of the gospel and the beautiful simplicity of its celestial doctrines. For hence it was that the Christian doctors began to introduce their perplexed and obscure erudition into the religion of Jesus; and to involve in the darkness of a vain philosophy some of the principal truths of Christianity, that had been revealed with the utmost plainness, and were, indeed, obvious to the meanest capacity; and to add to the divine precepts of our Lord many of their own, which had no sort of foundation in any part of the sacred writings."<sup>1</sup>

This was mysticism in contact with the Bible. Every one who looked upon its sacred pages converted them into a mirror that should reflect his own ideas, or those which he had accepted from the philosophers around him. For, we repeat, it was not Platonism, nor yet the ancient philosophy of the East, that constituted the *real* standard of truth—for they were as flexible and mutable as anything else—but it consisted alone in the baseless ideas of the philosophers themselves; ideas whose objective existence they saw, as they supposed, in the Bible, in Plato, and in every other system.

But how, it may be asked, could such wonderful phantasmagoria be generated out of the plain and simple truths of revelation? What magical art could be employed that would enable them to exhibit to others the marvelous visions of their own imaginations? The process was simple—a mere method of interpretation.

They reasoned about in this way: "There can be no opposition in truth; the Bible and what we call Platonism is truth; therefore the Bible must agree with Platonism. If this agreement does not appear in the plain letter, it is because the plain letter does not communicate the true sense; then it must have a mystical meaning, which does agree with the standard." What that meaning was, whether reached by allegorizing the passage, or by any other process, we can be at no loss to determine—it was one that coincided precisely with the ideas they carried with them to the investigation. And the same argument which justified them in turning the truth of the letter into a heterogeneous myth, proved the

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<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastical History, Cent. 2: par. 2: chap. 1



truth of the myth by a process of ratiocination whose premises none in that day would have dared to question.

But let us do those fathers the justice to believe that, in addition to the motive already mentioned, they were, in many cases, actuated by a genuine but misguided philanthropy; a mistake from which Christian philanthropists might even yet draw warning—that, namely, of accommodating the truth to the prejudices of the age. They doubtless believed that the Church would gain an immense accession of strength, and greatly enlarge the sphere of her usefulness and the area of her blessings, if the great body of philosophers at Alexandria and elsewhere could be propitiated to Christianity; and to effect this, the surest and most direct road seemed to be to prove that the doctrine of the New Testament did not differ, in its true sense, from what they had already received from Plato. It seemed, indeed, but the dictate of common sense for them to hold that if what the Alexandrians believed and cherished upon the authority of Plato could be shown to have been inculcated also upon the authority of Jesus, *his* authority would be elevated at least to an equality with that of the philosopher; and this would be placing it very high, if not, in their judgment, high enough.

The prosperity of the Church, therefore, the interests of humanity, and their own convictions of truth, might all have concurred in directing them to pursue the course they did, and to adopt as their *golden rule* of interpretation, "That wherever the literal sense was not obvious, or *not clearly consistent with their philosophical views, the words were to be understood in a spiritual or mystical sense.*"<sup>1</sup>

According to Mosheim, "They all attributed a *double sense* to the words of Scripture; the one *obvious and literal*, the other *hidden and mysterious*, which lay *concealed*, as it were, under the veil of the outward letter. The former they treated with the *utmost neglect*, and turned the whole force of their genius and application to unfold the latter; or, in other words, they were more studious to darken the Scriptures with their idle fictions than to investigate their true and natural sense." Again, he says, "Origen was at the head of this speculative tribe. This great man, enchanted by the charms of the Platonic philosophy, *set it up as the test of all*

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<sup>1</sup> Brucker, book 6: chap. 3

*religion*, and imagined that the reasons of each doctrine were to be found in that favorite philosophy, and their *nature and extent to be determined by it*."<sup>1</sup>

Upon a general survey of all the facts, Dr. Enfield concludes, "That the seeds of the Scholastic Theology<sup>2</sup> were sown when the dialectics of Aristotle were first introduced into the controversies of the Church; and the Mystic Theology took its rise when the enthusiastic notion of union with God, and other fanatical principles taught by the Alexandrian philosophers, were embraced among Christians; and was established when the spurious writings of Dionysius<sup>3</sup> obtained credit and authority in the Christian world. From the Peripatetic school, Christians learned to perplex the truth by subtle disputations; and from that of the later Platonists, they received a powerful bias toward enthusiasm. Hence, with the professed design of exploring truth, they involved it in a cloud of obscure notions and subtle distinctions; and under the pretence of sublime piety, enfeebled and enslaved the human mind by the extravagancies of mysticism; in both ways opposing the true spirit, and obstructing the natural operation of Christianity."<sup>4</sup>

## CHAPTER II:

### *Sketch Of The Mystic Theology.*

If a volume were filled with the history of the Mystic theology, as a system, it would be but a volume of absurdities—a perpetual recurrence of human abortions, exciting the ridicule of the thoughtless and the pity of the wise. The only good which could be anticipated from such a work, would be the warning it would give, on every page, of the danger of slighting common sense; and this, we hope, will be as effectually accomplished by the facts exhibited in this brief chapter, and in that which has preceded it.

It has been said above, that though the Mystic Theology *originated* with Origen and his contemporaries, it was *established* through the influence of the reputed works of Dionysius. It will be

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<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastical History, Cent. 2: par. 2: chap. 1.

<sup>2</sup> See par. 3: chap. 1; *infra*

<sup>3</sup> See next chapter

<sup>4</sup> History of Phil., book 7: chap. 2.

remembered that about A. D. 54, through the instrumentality of Paul's preaching in Athens, one of the judges of the Areopagus, bearing the above name, was converted to Christianity, (Acts, 17: 34.) Some four hundred years afterwards a number of works made their appearance, on "The Heavenly Hierarchy," "The Names of God," "The Mystic Theology," and "The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy," which, owing to the credulity of the age, were palmed off as the productions of this early Christian convert. "Though it is certain," says the Encyclopedia Americana, "from internal evidences, that these writings could not have been written earlier than about the beginning of the fifth century, they contained such fantastic descriptions of the Deity, and of the orders of angels and blessed spirits, borrowed from the New Platonic philosophy—such brilliant representations of the Catholic ceremonies, exaltations of the hierarchy, praises of the monastic life, and mystic interpretations of the doctrines of the church—as gave them the highest charm in the eyes of the ignorant clergy, who had no doubt of their genuineness."<sup>1</sup> Thus the wildest vagaries of an unknown and unscrupulous fanatic were clothed with the sanction of a supposed apostolical name; and now, to evaporate, as it were, the reason in fumes of murky mysticism, was esteemed the duty, as it had been the delight, of almost the entire Church.

The sacred charm which those wonderful writings threw over the naive and the person of Dionysius can with difficulty be appreciated by a Protestant of the nineteenth century. Canonized with the apostles and early martyrs, he became the patron saint of France, whose convents quarreled about his bones, and ended by proving him a monster. For, too churches, in the heat of their controversy concerning the possession of his genuine skull, referred the important matter to the pope—the highest recognized authority—who, with characteristic infallibility, sustained the claims of each!<sup>2</sup>

It will not surprise us to read, that the works of a saint so highly venerated, and which were so serviceable to the hierarchy,

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<sup>1</sup> Art. Dionysius

<sup>2</sup> Ency. Amer.—Another church, in the fourteenth century; claimed a third head; but for want of authoritative sanction the matter must still be considered as involved in some doubt!

were translated in Paris in the ninth century. This was done by the celebrated Joannes Scotus, under the patronage of Charles the Bald. And thus the stream whose origin we traced to the darkness and mists of ancient Chaldea. and Persia, and which became strong and bold in the days of Origen and Ammonius, poured the whole of its accumulated tide of waters into the Western world; while every drop was thought to have been consecrated by one who was religiously venerated as a saint, and heard as a prophet of the Most High. Popes and cardinals, bishops and priests, monks and laymen, all vied with each other in the fanatical attempt to smother reason with enthusiasm, and to cover the inscriptions of sense with the incoherent rhapsodies of dreamy contemplation. They not only set limits to the pretensions of reason, but "excluded it entirely from religion and morality, as they considered that true knowledge, being unattainable by study or reasoning, was the fruit of mere contemplation, inward feeling, and passive acquiescence in divine influences." We need scarcely inquire how the Bible fared in the hands of such interpreters. "° They pretended," says Mosheim, "to draw from the depths of truth (or rather of their imaginations) what they called the *internal sense and marrow* of the Scriptures, i.e. their hidden and mysterious sense; and this they did with so little dexterity, so little plausibility and invention, that the greater part of their explications must appear insipid and nauseous to such as are not entirely destitute of judgment and taste. The Mystic doctors carried this visionary method of interpreting Scripture to the greatest height, and displayed the most laborious industry, or rather the most egregious folly, in searching for mysteries where reason and common-sense could find nothing but plain and evident truths. They were too *penetrating* and *quick-sighted* not to perceive in the holy Scriptures all those doctrines that were agreeable to their idle and fantastic system."<sup>1</sup>

In an age when the learning of the world was confined to the Church, and when its most reverend dignitaries could barely read; when men regarded their fanatical dreams and extravagant reveries as the depth of wisdom and the certain index of divine truth; when the chief requisite in a good priest, apart from his ability to dream dreams and see visions, was familiarity with the principles and

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<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastical History, Cent. 13: par. 2: chap, 3

practice of music, we cannot be surprised at any absurdities, nor marvel at any exhibitions of folly. It must not, however, be supposed, because mysticism reigned over reason, and fancy took the place of revealed truth, that there were no common bonds of union, and no general agreement in their sentiments; for, as Mr. Hallam judiciously remarks, "Though the number of those who *professed* themselves to be under the influence of supernatural illumination was very great—with the exception of a few founders of sects, and lawgivers to the rest—the Mystics fell into the beaten track, and grew mechanical even in their enthusiasm."<sup>1</sup> The great multitude were more prone to follow the "inward light" of others than to cultivate the dubious flickerings of their own. They looked for some authority upon which to repose, "and instead of builder, became, as it were, occupants of mansions prepared for them by more active minds."

Hence, when at length the scholastic system had filled all Europe with puerile controversies and profitless logomachies, until many persons, disgusted and almost disheartened, perceived that, in committing themselves to such a guide, they were sacrificing things for names and substances for shadows, the *rebound* into mysticism which followed was not characterized by any great individual and independent "meditations." Bold and daring originality was not then so common as it has since become. Men felt safer if they could have some great name of antiquity to lead them. And as those disaffected scholastics were seeking to free themselves from the subtleties of Aristotle, it was the most natural thing in the world for them to call in the aid of Plato. Of him, however, they knew little or nothing except what they could learn through the school of Alexandria, which, as we have seen, transmitted—not Platonism—but a forced and incongruous agglomeration of all isms, both human and divine, which were held together by the cohesive power of allegorized mysticism.

To this system, as if not satisfied with mere incomprehensibility, they added the mysteries of Pythagoras and the occult learning of the Jewish Cabala. This latter consisted in a very specific and complex system concerning the nature of the Supreme Being, the emanation of various orders of spirits in

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<sup>1</sup> Introduction to Literature, vol. 1: p. 118.

successive links from his essence, their properties and characters. It is evidently one modification of the Oriental philosophy, borrowing little from the Scriptures, at least through any natural interpretation of them, and the offspring of the Alexandrian Jews not far from the beginning of the Christian Era.<sup>1</sup> Thus Neo Platonism, Pythagoreanism, and Cabalism, each mysterious enough, one would think, to satisfy a taste only ordinarily perverted, were compounded into a sort of system paradoxical and esoteric in the highest degree, but which was religiously held as the embodiment of all ancient wisdom.

Such was the Mystic Theology which was revived and invigorated as a refuge from scholasticism. And can any two systems be found, in the whole history of the Church, so perfectly contrasted and yet so equally worthless? The one deprived religion of its spirit, the other destroyed its body. The one quarreled over forms without substance, and postulated dogmata without meaning or importance; the other, with a sublime contempt for the vulgar inlets and sources of knowledge, transported itself beyond the precincts of reason, and mistook the phantoms of imagination for the images of spiritual truth.

But let us do justice, even to "man's miraculous mistakes." Abortive as was this attempted reformation, in itself considered, and wild and deluded as were the votaries of this system, they, nevertheless, exerted a sort of conservative influence upon the religious society of their times. It was something, in that age, to tell men there was a spiritual religion, even if they were unable to point it out. I cannot despise the man who has a heart to expose the errors of the world, though he may not have an intellect that can grasp the whole truth. It was thus with the Mystics at the period immediately preceding the Protestant Reformation. For, to quote from an eminent historian, "while superstition reigned supreme, while empty and gorgeous ceremonials had supplanted the spirit of worship, and while every germ of truth and holiness seemed to be ignored by the clergy or blasted by the wranglings of the Realists and Nominalists, this sect, renouncing the subtleties of the schools, the vain contentions of the learned, and all the acts and ceremonies of external worship, exhorted their followers to aim at nothing but

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<sup>1</sup> Hallam's Lit., vol. 1: p. 119

internal sanctity of heart, and communion with God, the centre and source of all holiness and perfection."<sup>1</sup> We may, therefore, admit that they approximated more nearly to piety than any others in that dark and licentious age, if we remember that it was *but* an approximation. For their piety, if such it must be called, was by no means an intelligent and reverent communion with God, and appreciation of his word, but merely the extreme of contemplative enthusiasm, or, in one word, fanaticism.

After the great battle for reform had been fought by Luther and his compeers—and notwithstanding the light which the rough conflict struck from the Scriptures—George Fox, in the seventeenth century, and, after him, William Law and Emanuel Swedenborg, in the eighteenth, bring down the developments of the Mystic Theology to a very recent period, and, indeed, transmit them to our day.

That both the "Friends" and the Swedenborgians have all the essential characteristics of that mysticism whose history we have rapidly sketched, will not, I presume, be denied by the intelligent members of those two societies. "The former, in their notions concerning the Holy Scriptures, the internal word, the divine light within and its operations and effects, so perfectly agree," says Mosheim, "with those Mystics who lived before George Fox, as to leave but little question that he was indebted to their writings, directly or indirectly, for all the capital articles in his theology."<sup>2</sup> Nay more, the Friends took "the famous Mystic Theology which arose so early as the second century," and "set off the motley form with their own inventions." And Mr. Bancroft says, "The faith of the people called Quakers is, that every heart contains an incorruptible seed, capable of springing up and producing all that man can know of God, and duty, and the soul. An inward voice, uncreated by schools, independent of refinement, opens to the unlettered hind, not less than to the polished scholar, a sure pathway into the enfranchisements of immortal truth." Again, "The inner light is to the Quaker not only the revelation of truth, but the guide of life and the oracle of duty."<sup>3</sup> I am unable to perceive any

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<sup>1</sup> Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Cent. 16: sec. 1: chap. 1

<sup>2</sup> Ecclesiastical History, Cent. 17: sec. 2: par. 2: chap. 4:

<sup>3</sup> History of the United States, vol. 2: chap. 16

essential difference between this and the mysticism of earlier times.

The Swedenborgians, also, or members of the New Church, in their fundamental postulate, that the Scriptures are to be interpreted according to the doctrine of "correspondences"—from which, as a matter of course, the whole system must spring—seem to me to set aside the rational understanding as an incompetent judge of the sense of Scripture, and refer us for the true meaning to what we must regard as questionable—the inspiration of Swedenborg himself, their founder and leader. Origen and his co-laborers, as we saw above, ascribed a "double sense" to the words of Scripture—the one natural, the other spiritual; Swedenborgians simply go one step farther, and give us a triple sense—the "natural," the "spiritual," and the "celestial." It would seem, then, that whatever may be predicated of the first mystics, may, with even stronger reason, be affirmed of these.<sup>1</sup>

Swedenborg himself was a man of learning, and has transmitted an unblemished reputation. In his works there are many excellent remarks, and some just representations of Scripture doctrine. They contain many things which all approve, and to the knowledge of which intelligent and independent Protestants have been conducted, without reading a line of his voluminous productions, or laying the least claim to any "inner light," or angelic association. It is unfortunate that he should have handed down to posterity the only qualification of an otherwise illustrious fame—his lofty and unsupported pretensions to inspiration, with the errors to which those pretensions necessarily gave birth. As it is, he must be classed among the most extravagant of mystics, whose early instruction and accurate learning, while they could not save him from the vortex of error into which the whole tribe before

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<sup>1</sup> Our opinion of Swedenborg and his system is drawn from a patient examination of his *Vera Religio Christianis*, which embraces the sum of his theological system—"continens universam theologiam Novæ Ecclesiæ." We have also consulted his "Heaven and Hell," "Apocalypse Revealed," and "Arcana Cœlestia." It is not pretended that the text exhibits his position in any other light than as it is presented to the subject of hermeneutics; and, although it may be difficult to comprehend his system of theology, we feel sure that we have not misrepresented him as an interpreter, nor his system in its bearings upon exegesis.



him had been drawn, were sufficient to add dignity to a system that might else have fallen, long since, into merited contempt.

If Swedenborg was really inspired, then it follows that his own works should be classed with those of the apostles and prophets; in which case, they themselves must be interpreted "correspondentially." But as this has not hitherto been done, we may suppose that the true sense of his writings has not yet been ascertained, and that it must remain locked up until some future Swedenborg shall furnish the key that will open all their secrets. Till then we must stand, therefore, with respect to biblical interpretation, just where we would have stood if he had not written. Or, if the interpretation of his writings, according to the ordinary laws of language, supplies us with their true sense, we may conclude that the same is true of all other inspired productions. But if his writings are not inspired, then they are without authority, and we are left where we were before—alone with the Bible and common-sense.

Thus mysticism increases in mystery the more it is examined. Its devotees must believe it at the expense of truth, and follow it at the cost of safety. They must hush the voice of God without, in order to distinguish the confused noises that are within. I will, however, leave the reader to make his own reflections, and will conclude this brief notice of the New Jerusalem Church and its founder by a quotation from an eminent French philosopher of the Eclectic school:—

"In the midst of the eighteenth century, has not Swedenborg united in his own person an exalted mysticism and a sort of magic, opening thus the way to those senseless persons who contest with me in the morning the solidest and best-established proofs of the existence of the soul and God; who propose to me in the evening to make me see otherwise than with my eyes, and to make me hear otherwise than with my ears; to make me use all my faculties otherwise than by their natural organs, promising me a superhuman science on the condition of first losing consciousness, thought, liberty, memory, all that constitutes me an intelligent and moral being? I should know all, then, but at the cost of knowing nothing that I should know. I should elevate myself to a marvelous world, which, awakened and in a natural state, I am not even able to suspect, of which no remembrance will remain to me—a

mysticism at once gross and chimerical, which perverts both psychology and physiology; an imbecile ecstasy, renewed without genius from the Alexandrian ecstasy; an extravagance which has not even the merit of a little novelty, and which history has seen reappearing at all epochs of ambition and impotence."<sup>1</sup>

Such is a faint outline of the rise and progress of the Mystic Theology; a system which began with Origen in the absurd attempt to adjust the infinite to the finite—the word of God to the varying philosophies of men; which was established by the fraud of a pretended Dionysius, made honorable by the patronage of the Medici, and influential by the support of Paracelsus and the learning of Boehmen, Van Helmont, and Poiret; a system which was modified at one time by the pseudo-science of the Scholastics, and super-excited at another into the frenzied ravings of Theosophism; which was rendered sacred by Fox, and respectable by Law and Penn; which Emanuel Swedenborg garnished with the drapery of learning, and commended by the power and *prestige* of distinguished talents and a blameless life; and which, in one form or another, has ever been, and is now, a controlling element in the most important of all undertakings—that of arriving at the true sense of the revealed word of God. Modern "Spiritualists," with the undignified designation of "spirit rappers," have capped the climax of unblushing pretension. Like the Theosophists of the sixteenth century, their converse with angels, their rapport with departed spirits, and their brilliant internal light, will hardly bear being treated in a grave discussion; it is transcendental fanaticism, mysticism carried out; the frenzy of the Rosacrusians, coupled with vanities and puerilities that would make even a Scholastic blush! Let us hope that this monstrous departure from reason will be the last of the numerous schemes of systematized mysticism, for the construction of a religion which, while it professes attachment to the word of God, is really infidel and destructive.

As a system, the Mystic Theology will not again attract attention in these pages. We have deemed it advisable to exhibit it first in this light, to enable the reader better to understand its real nature and tendency. Henceforth we are to consider it as a concomitant power, secretly present and insidiously active, which

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<sup>1</sup> Cousin's Lectures on the Truly Beautiful and Good, lec. 5

negatives but *partially* the conclusions of common-sense, and counteracts, only to a *limited extent*, the influence of reason and of Scripture.

## CHAPTER III:

### *Mysticism Among Protestants.*

Is it possible that any intelligent Protestant of our days has the least confidence either in the theology or the method of the Mystics? Are we to believe that that system which we have seen springing up among the earliest corruptions of the Church, and culminating in the age of its grossest darkness—a system whose uniform tendency has been to supplant the plain truths of the Bible by the speculations of philosophy or the fancies of a morbid imagination—is still cherished and respected in the midst of the effulgent light of this nineteenth century? No. As a system it is distinctly repudiated. Its postulates are rejected, and its conclusions laughed at. It is not to be supposed that we could have seen the hundreds of eminent philosophers and theologians it has wrecked upon the hidden rocks of a specious infidelity, and have taken no warning from their fate and learned no wisdom from their example. On the contrary, an open avowal of confidence in the system would excite the mingled commiseration and ridicule of every man whose judgment would be worth regarding.

Why, then, have I introduced it as one of the existing impediments to the acquisition of truth? Why have I occupied so much space in tracing its origin and progress? what practical value can there be in anything I have yet written on the subject? My answer is, that notwithstanding the distinct repudiation of the Mystic Theology *as a system*, and the emphatic condemnation of its method as the sole and exclusive guide to truth, that method is still employed to an extent varying with the necessities of every several sect. But being commingled with other methods, and being kept as much as possible out of sight, it would have been difficult to have shown its presence, its influence, and its dangerousness, without having first pointed to its portrait as it stands out in bold relief upon the canvas of history. Now I hope to be able to identify

it, even in its present form and surroundings, with a known and recognized enemy.

The change has been one of *degree*, not of *kind*. Protestants would be indignant at the idea of interpreting all Scripture upon Mystic principles; they think that only *a part* of revelation is to be thus construed. They have in this taken one step, and a very important one too, in the right direction. We now believe—and let us keep this in mind, and be thankful that we do believe it—that the "internal sense and marrow" of only a part of Scripture is concealed "under the vail of the outward letter;" and let us show all becoming contempt for the absurd Origen, who so ridiculously presumed to extract this "marrow" from *every* passage! How monstrous, for him to think that all Scripture had a double meaning, when it is so evident that this is true of only a part! Ay, but *what* part? What chapters, what verses, what particular forms of expression, are we to look upon as containing this deep and hidden sense? And what *is* that sense? How is it to be known? How are we to reach it? How prove it? Here, it seems to me, we are all adrift, without chart or compass.

Still, I grant you, the Mystic Theology is *walled out*, if we may so express it, by Protestantism. And let us give thanks that our fathers, and our cotemporaries, with ourselves, have had the ability and the manliness to complete so herculean a work. For it is indeed a great work. And now, as we stand upon this mighty *wall*, and gaze upon the slimy and pestilential waters with which our ancestors sought to purify the healthful stream of truth, let us drop a tear for the weakness of poor human nature, and then come down and examine the stream on our side of the wall. Why seems it so dark and turbid? What mean those particles of filthy green that we see floating on its surface? Why is it not clear and sparkling as when it gushed at first from the fountain-head? It is because our fathers left a *flood-gate* in the wall, which we have never had the courage to close. In fact, we find it very useful as a means of communication between the present and the past; and there are, besides, many other important uses connected with it, which we will try to make you understand.

Just observe, if you please, while I shut down this floodgate. The water very soon, you perceive, becomes clear as crystal, and seems to be fresh and living. But do you not see that it has retired

into a narrower channel? To this your attention is particularly directed; because, although it is a very small matter in itself, "our church," as you must have noticed, is built upon such *high* ground, that the water is beyond our reach when it gets so low. And look all along down the stream at the various denominational establishments—some upon higher and some upon lower ground—but none of them in reach of the water when the whole of this mystic current is shut out!

But why not remove those establishments down to the stream? Softly, my clear sir—let us not cast reproach upon our ancestors! These all stand where they placed them; and it is not well to interfere with existing institutions! Let us maintain our consistency! We occupy a high place in the world, which has been gained at much cost of labor, money, and talents, and we must not sacrifice it to an experiment. Besides—and now I will raise this gate again—do you not see that it does not deprive us of a single particle of truth? We have the *whole of the water of life* flowing by us, while this gate is merely a contrivance for elevating it to our level. I declare to you, so admirable is this arrangement, that I have not language to express my abhorrence of the gross and corrupting plan adopted by Clemens and Origen. *They*, instead of moderately using mysticism for good, and bringing it to the support and enlargement of the truth, carried the truth into it, where its stream was soon lost in the immensity of the horrible gulf which received it. But here, examine this swelling current, *analyze* it, and you find truth in every particle of it! And say what you will, as human nature now is, the success of the Church is not to be expected in any other way. We have known several small parties of very fastidious tastes, spiritually, who seemed not to relish this *mixed water of life*, and who colonized far up above this flood-gate, but low down by the fountain-head of the stream. They never seemed, however, to attract much attention, and their movement was generally regarded as a presumptuous insinuation that the water below this is unwholesome; a sentiment which, whether expressed or implied, has been decided by the best and ablest men to be heterodox! And in this decision the world has almost unanimously acquiesced. We must, my very dear sir, keep pace with the upward and onward progress of the world!

I am sorry to hear you ask me how we manage to agree upon the height this gate is to be raised; for, to be frank with you, this matter has given us a good deal of trouble. Now and then a captious radical insists upon closing it altogether; but in the main, our difficulties are of a different kind. Several short-sighted denominations, not making allowance for the influence of this flood-tide in changing the place of the original current, have spent a great deal of time in watching the direction of the current above the gate, and in making calculations to ascertain where it should be at any given point below, as they think that part of the mixed stream must be rather purer and more delicious than any other. And hence they have built as near the point indicated by their calculations as the nature of the case would admit. But the elements of these calculations are so various that they have reached very different conclusions; and the consequence is, that while some are nearly flooded by the stream, and are using every exertion to lower the gate, others are barely within reach, and are becoming clamorous for its higher elevation; while "our church" is just situated as it should be, and I trust we have sufficient influence to prevent any change being made for many years to come.

But it is a lamentable fact, that ignorant and thoughtless persons, who seem to have at heart neither the beauty of Zion nor the well-being of the world, have often tampered with this gate after the most shameful sort—some jerking it up to an alarming height and letting in whole floods of Arianism and Antinomianism, while others have slammed it down so recklessly as to shut out the ritual of the law, and the covenant of circumcision, and have thus made sad havoc of the peace and prosperity of the Church. To prevent such misfortunes in the future, we have succeeded in constructing a *gauge*, which we call "*Evangelicalism*," by which we can determine precisely how high the gate is to be raised; and if anyone ever ventures to elevate it more or less than he should, we have able and skillful men at the head of affairs, who instantly rush to the rescue, and, by means of a powerful *lever* we have invented, called "*Orthodoxy*," they very soon succeed in getting it back to its proper and evangelical elevation.

This is the way the work goes on. Every new interpreter, if he will but put his hand upon that *lever*, however lightly he may bear, and keep his eye fixed upon that *gauge*, which has various degrees

marked on it to suit the different tastes of those who adopt it, will be honored by some and tolerated by all. But he who presumes to lift the gate higher than the prescribed limits, is an enthusiast and a fanatic; while if any one dare to lay the hand of common sense upon it, and shut it altogether, he, forsooth, is an uncharitable exclusive—an unmitigated bigot—a radical and a heretic!

But perhaps the reader would like to have this matter exhibited without a figure; to see it in its native, unadorned shape and coloring. If so, though we cannot, without changing our fixed plan and purpose, enter into specifications which might excite the ill-will of some whom we hope to benefit, we will do the best we can to gratify him in the way of general allusions.

It may be remarked, then, of Protestant interpreters generally, that, in consequence, it may be, of early education, or in the absence of thorough investigation, or from some other cause, it matters not what, they are led to believe a certain doctrine, or system of doctrines, true. Let us do them the justice to admit that they are honest in this belief. Their opponents, however, call up before them an array of Scripture texts, the *plain and obvious meaning* of which is directly antagonistic to their cherished belief. There is now but one alternative: they must either abandon sentiments and doctrines to the advocacy of which they have long been publicly committed, or they must persuade themselves and others that the Scriptures adduced have a *spiritual sense* different from their literal signification; nay, so widely different that it harmonizes with doctrines confessedly the *opposite* of their literal meaning. And can we hesitate in deciding upon the course they would adopt in a case like this? Their genius is set to work; their imagination, their learning, all their powers, are called into requisition, for the purpose of finding that in those texts which is already in their minds. They "ascribe an objective existence to the subjective creations of the mind's own faculties—to mere ideas of the intellect"—and this is mysticism. And now, the means which are made use of for the purpose of seeing, and of showing to others, that agreement between the subjective and the objective, whatever be their peculiarities, constitute the Mystic method. Such an effort as that we have supposed in the above case, would be singularly unsuccessful if it failed to involve the subject at least in doubt. It is no very difficult matter to weave almost any text into a

sort of metaphysical web that can mean anything or nothing, *pro re nata*. Then some show of learning—an appeal to the original, and a quotation from the fathers—will be ample preparation for a climacteric stroke of ridicule,—and the work is done!

Meanwhile their opponents have been treated to a catalogue of texts which, it is insisted, teach clearly and unequivocally that *they* are wrong. In self-defense, they leave the prosecution of their charges, and engage with pious courage to prove the consistency and scripturality of their church and doctrines. And here begins a new series of *spiritual meanings*. The commentators are called in; the critics are summoned to take part; the absurdity of the letter is insisted upon; while divers mortal dangers are discovered to be lurking in it by the light of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians;<sup>1</sup>—and presently their case is made out. Their assailants are hushed—awed into silence, mayhap, by the presence of the learned divines introduced—everybody sees that the passages *might* mean so and so—the debaters insist that such *must* be their meaning—and the point is settled.

And thus the work proceeds. A third party, and a fourth, a fifth, and a tenth, each *spiritualizes* a part, and each contributes something toward the general uncertainty of all interpretation.

In this way the door has been opened for the plausible introduction of all manner of crude and false interpretations; and when thus opened, no party has been able to close it, because each one has found it necessary to pass through it for a portion of its belief. Any one of them would gladly use the knife of common sense with which to cut off the spiritualized authority of its neighbors, if it were not conscious that the same instrument applied to itself, would deprive it of many fair proportions. All are, therefore, estopped by their own records, from exposing and eradicating a method which, in the case of others, they perceive to be false. Hence it is, that the wildest vagaries of the most ridiculous fanaticism can be supported by Scripture arguments analogous to those of our more sober and less visionary fellow-Christians.

It is true, then, of Protestants, (although it may be less palpable, less open and avowed than in the case of Origen and his

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<sup>1</sup> See next chapter.



compeers,) that they too have their various philosophies as so many touchstones of biblical interpretation. It may be the real or the corrupted philosophy of Plato, that of Aristotle, of Locke, or Cousin—or it may be a system fabricated by themselves—the effect is the same, the principle is the same, and the method engendered by it is the same. In every such case, their interpretation is but an effort to reconcile revelation with their favorite system of religious philosophy. When the literal meaning fits the pattern, that is accepted, and the excellent rules in our hermeneutics on the importance of abiding by the obvious sense, are quoted and applied with a hearty good will; but in all other cases resort is had to the Mystic method, under the specious and self-deluding pretense of *spiritualizing* the Scriptures, until the agreement is satisfactorily brought about. This is often done when men are unconscious of it themselves. They nearly all have their philosophies of conversion, for instance, or regeneration, or sanctification; and believing them to be true, they can hardly avoid viewing the Scriptures through them as a medium, and transferring them to the Scriptures as their meaning. Even in preaching the gospel, very few feel satisfied until they have shown its harmony, as they understand and proclaim it, with some recondite philosophy of the mind—its affections, will, power, and disability; while in nine cases out of ten, this can only be done by perverting or mystifying the Scriptures.

What can be expected from pursuing such a course? If it should be adopted in the study of the book of nature, (as it once was,) we know full well the results that would follow. Science would be paralyzed. The facts which speak to us in the rippling stream, the falling shower, the flashing spark, the changing seasons, and the revolving spheres—in all things above, beneath, around, and within us—would become as the fairy tale. Their voice would lose its distinctness; and their revelation of law and truth would be metamorphosed by this alchemic principle into a base counterfeit or an empty nothing. And can we expect a different result when it is followed in the study of the Bible? Will not its revelation of spiritual law and divine truth be lost upon one who refuses to see that law or to understand that truth otherwise than as they agree with the ideas which already fill his mind? Let a man but take to his soul the flattering conviction that in some sense and to a certain

degree he is inspired to know the hidden mysteries of revelation, and he is lost to common sense. Every appeal made to him from the Bible falls powerless upon his ears, because he attaches a secret meaning to it. The pertinency and authority of the word are only recognized when his explanation is placed upon it, and his explanation, however far-fetched and absurd, favors his position. Question the correctness of his interpretation, and he speaks of the mysteries of the faith and the deep things of God, beyond the reach of vulgar sense. He *knows* that he is right—he has the consciousness of it within him. It would be next to infidelity for him to doubt the correctness of conclusions to which he has been guided under the gracious illumination of the Holy Spirit. And here are ten, twenty, fifty such men—all led to conclusions by the Holy Spirit, and all led to different ones!

Such are the more striking characteristics of the Mystic method, as pursued by Protestants. Not that they are all equally guilty; for the evil is almost infinitely various in the degrees of its manifestation. Some have seen the perverseness of the method, and have abandoned it. Others have perceived that its *reckless* employment was pernicious, and have sought to limit it by various precautionary rules, which, however, are generally too indefinite to be enforced, and too loose to be practically useful. While not a few recognize no limit to its employment but the necessities of their own foregone conclusions,—which, filling their minds and occupying all their thoughts, are transferred to every passage they read, and are seen everywhere in the fathomless deeps beneath the letter, be it what it may. They have thus become a sort of spiritual Bletonists, whose senses are so acute that they can perceive the presence of water far down beneath the surface, while ordinary mortals must either dig at random, or else remove to the springs which gush spontaneously from the bosom of the earth.

We conclude, then, from facts which are of every-day occurrence, which are embodied in our standard theological works, and which are everywhere well known: 1. That Protestants do still resort to the Mystic method of biblical interpretation, some with reference to one text and some to another—some to a greater and some to a less extent. Though they do not, like Origen, turn the whole Bible into a mystery, they bring mystery into the Bible—which is an evil identical in kind, though different in degree. 2.

That, while it is generally conceded that this method is only to be followed in the interpretation of a *part* of Scripture, still, as there are no well-defined and controlling principles which regulate its pursuit, and decide *what* part of the Bible is to be thus construed, this limitation itself is of but little practical force. Hence, the method is used as we have seen, by the different parties, to pervert almost *any text* to the support of a foregone conclusion, or to be in harmony with a pre-existent idea; while the result has been that general indefiniteness and uncertainty of interpretation, which it should be the immediate object of hermeneutics to correct. 3. That this method is pursued simultaneously with others, both correct and incorrect, which results in the incongruous commingling of truth and falsehood. Hence every denomination can prove its doctrines true, because, by analysis, the truth may be found in them; while, as a system of doctrines, every one, perhaps, might be shown to be false—to give an incorrect and inconsistent exhibition of Christianity as a whole. The truth they contain gives them permanency, and supplies to their advocates arguments for their defense; while the error mixed in with it engenders opposition and multiplies divisions and sects. 4. And finally, that this state of things must continue, unless we can determine upon great and certain principles which shall effectually set aside the method that has produced it; for nothing can effect a permanent cure that does not eradicate the cause of the disease.

It therefore becomes incumbent upon us, before proceeding to the discussion of other methods, to contribute what we may be able toward the settlement of those things in this, which are now left to every man's prejudices or interests. And to facilitate our progress toward a clear comprehension of those important principles, the establishment of which we deem necessary to the completeness of the subject we have had under review, and which must be drawn from the nature of the Bible itself, we shall, for the time, arrange the communications of that book under two grand divisions or heads—the one embracing all those Scriptures which are *literal*, and the other those which are *figurative*; to each of which we shall devote a brief chapter, for the purpose of showing the inappositeness of the Mystic method to any text of Scripture.

## CHAPTER IV:

### *Of The Literal Parts Of Scripture.*

ALL writings must be either literal, or figurative, or a mixture of both. The Holy Scriptures, like most, and, perhaps, all other productions, are of this last kind. Some of their communications are delivered in language wholly free from metaphor, simile, or figure of any sort; while others abound in these beautiful adornments of speech. In order, then, to determine whether either of these classes of texts is to be interpreted according to the Mystic method, we have resolved to consider them separately. Now, therefore, we are to be occupied with the literal parts of Scripture. And for the sake of a nucleus round which to collect our observations, we will begin by submitting the following proposition:—

*That Literal texts of Scripture have that meaning, and no other, which their words fairly import or necessarily imply, when viewed in the light of all their circumstances.*

If this proposition can be established, it will effectually supersede the employment of the Mystic method, so far as the texts embraced in it are concerned. It might be thought necessary for us to give rules for ascertaining what texts *are* literal; but this will be determined indirectly when we get to the next chapter, in which we shall have occasion to show what texts are *figurative*; when, from the nature of the case, it will follow that all others are literal. We will proceed at once, therefore, to the proof of the proposition.

1. And first, we argue that its truth follows from the nature of human language. All the confidence a writer can have that he will be properly understood, and all the assurance obtainable by a reader that he has grasped the true meaning of a writer, are based upon the tacit agreement that both will be governed by the principle of this proposition—the writer in the use of words, and the reader in the interpretation of them. If I could bring myself to believe that the authors whose works are on my shelf, had violated this compact, I should lose, all confidence in the things which have hitherto been most surely believed by me. I should be in doubt whether a battle were really fought at Waterloo or Bunker's Hill—whether Newton discovered the law of gravitation—whether the planets move in elliptical orbits—or, in short, whether anything is

as it has been represented to me. May not many or all the words have been used in some peculiar sense which I cannot certainly know from the circumstances, but which I am to guess at? No. Language is regulated by laws as fixed as any in nature. It may change, indeed, but not arbitrarily. The change must be in obedience to rule. An author may, if he please, use a word in a sense never given to it before; but if he do, he is bound by law to explain that sense. And if he fail to comply with the law, he fails to make himself understood. I may tell my servant to feed the *horse*, when I mean the *cow* just as I *can* violate the laws of the land; but in either case I suffer, and for the same reason, because law is violated. We may, by mutual agreement, resolve to apply the name *horse* to a certain convenience for sawing wood; but we must indicate by signs or circumstances when that application of the word is intended. And when I thus indicate it, by telling my servant to *saw wood* on the *horse*, he is not at liberty, according to our paction, to disregard the signs or circumstances connected with the word, and to understand me in this case to mean the *animal horse*. Thus the whole apparatus of verbal communication, however arbitrarily it may have been formed, is regulated by a principle as fixed and certain as anything else, viz.: That words are to be understood in their usual and most obvious signification – that which men have agreed to give to them—and which agreement is indicated by custom—except where circumstances necessitate a change, in which case the amount and kind of change is to be measured and determined *by* the circumstances.

But our proposition says, not only that literal texts have that meaning which their words fairly import or necessarily imply when construed as above, but *that they have no other*. The truth of this also will be best seen at first in human compositions. When we read and comprehend the plain account of all the events, circumstances, and results of the battle of Waterloo, we conclude that we have the full meaning of the narration. Other things connected with, and bearing upon it may also be true; but unless they are introduced or alluded to, or necessarily implied by what is said, they form no part of the signification of the story as narrated. We might interpret the whole matter according to the Mystic method, and say that by Bonaparte is meant the Devil, by Wellington the Prince of Peace, and by their respective armies the

angels of darkness and of light; while St. Helena might be held to signify Tartarus, and London or England, Paradise; and the only objections to this interpretation would be: 1. That it is unauthorized; and 2. That it is false. It would, however, have as much authority, as much reason, and as much truth, as many Mystic expositions of Scripture history.

The reader will admit, then, that in human compositions there are fixed and necessary laws; that they are written in obedience to these laws; and consequently, that they must be interpreted by them. If so, the Mystic method, whose very nature is that it is above law and independent of it, can have no place whatever in their interpretation. But the Bible is written in human language—by human beings—for the benefit and instruction of human beings; therefore, it must observe the *laws of human language*. They regulated its composition, and must necessarily, therefore, regulate its interpretation. Hence, this argument alone disproves the applicability of the Mystic method to the Scriptures.

2. But not only is this shown from the nature of language in general; it follows also, and with even greater force, from the nature of the Bible in particular. It purports to be a REVELATION in human language; to have been written for the purpose of *making known* those things which are necessary to our enjoyment here and our salvation hereafter. Now, unless it *mean what it says*, when construed as human language requires to be construed, *it is not* a revelation. It may be a convenient medium through which we are to *derive* a revelation, but in itself, it is an anomaly—an enigma—an unmeaning jargon. We may *guess* at its sense; but we might have guessed at the truth without a line of Scripture. It does not *make known* what we so much need to know; it merely shows us our *ignorance*, excites our curiosity, worries our patience, and leaves us to the tender mercies of chance. If it does not mean what it says, it must, if it have a meaning, mean something that it does *not* say. What is that something? How shall we learn and understand it? Not from revelation—for we have, by the hypothesis, confessed that it is not revealed. *All idea of a revelation in words is given up as impossible, when we exclude such revelation from dependence upon the laws of words.* This something, then, is not revealed—for no truth is revealed; and if we ever find it out, it must either be by shrewd guessing, or by

obtaining personal and miraculous inspiration to enable us to explain inspiration! Mysticism, therefore, renounces all pretension to accuracy of interpretation, except upon the claim it necessitates to fresh inspiration; while its principle, necessarily and from the nature of things, abandons all belief in the Scriptures *as a revelation*. This is the goal to which it inevitably conducts. Hence, perceiving this fact, we have felt justified in saying that those who were deluded by it, were "wrecked upon the rocks of a specious infidelity."

From the nature of human language, therefore; from the fact that the Bible is written in human language; from its special province as a *revelation* of truth; and from the consideration that the opposite leads directly, though insidiously, to infidelity, we conclude that our proposition is true; or, that literal texts have that meaning, and no other, which their words fairly import or necessarily imply, when viewed in the light of all the circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

Here the subject might safely and properly be left, to dissipate by its own light such objections as may be urged against it; for, certainly, none can be half so strong, in the judgment of a devout Christian, as the reasons exhibited in its favor. It may serve, however, to give double assurance of the truth of the proposition submitted, if we pause here to show that such opposing arguments as have heretofore been introduced, are really confirmations of what they would overthrow.

1. The first objection is based upon the fact that the Scriptures contain the word *mystery*. It is urged, and truly, that they expressly declare, that, "without controversy, great is the *mystery* of godliness;"<sup>2</sup> that deacons are to be men "holding the *mystery* of the faith in a pure conscience;"<sup>3</sup> that the Apostles "spoke the wisdom of God in a *mystery*;"<sup>4</sup> with other passages of similar import; and hence it is inferred that all our reasonings are clearly opposed to the plain teachings of Scripture.

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<sup>1</sup> The nature and principles of language will be more elaborately treated in the concluding part of this volume, book 2: par. 2:

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. 3: 16

<sup>3</sup> 1 Timothy 5:9

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. 2: 7

And for one moment let us admit, for the sake of argument, the justness of the inference deduced from these texts. What follows? Evidently just what we attributed to the Mystic Method, that the Scriptures do not *reveal* the gospel—they merely make known our *ignorance* of it by telling us of its existence, while they declare it to be a mystery. It appears, too, that it is not only a mystery, but an incommunicable one; for, notwithstanding all the "inner light," and the "angelic intercourse" of eighteen centuries, it remains as great a mystery as ever. Direct inspiration, or special revelation, may enable one to understand it for himself, but he cannot make it known to others. He can be a sort of center of infallibility for his countrymen, directing them from his inner light how to live—but he cannot elevate them to his favored position. It would seem that the learning of the church would have been much more wisely employed in teaching men how to be inspired, than in framing rules of interpretation, which must be worthless. The Bible *is* a mystery, and its principal value consists in the fact that it makes known that it is a mystery. As a mystery does not fulfill the requirements of a revelation, our confidence or faith in *it* must be transferred to the inspired and infallible *interpreters* of it—to those who alone can illuminate its darkness by casting upon it reflections from the "Divine Light within." This, if we understand it, is infidelity clothed in the habiliments of "spirituality"—a something like "an angel of light," which beckons us away from the Bible to find that truth which it declares is not made known to us in the Bible!

What, then—for surely the reader is prepared to look upon the other side of the question—does the word "mystery," as used in the Scriptures, "fairly import or necessarily imply, when viewed in the light of the attending circumstances?" We answer that its ordinary and obvious meaning is, *a secret*—by which we understand something easily intelligible when made known, but wholly unintelligible *until* made known. The "secrets" of Free-Masonry, for example, are utterly inscrutable to the uninitiated—to those to whom they have not been communicated; but are as plain and intelligible as anything else to those to whom they have been made known. So the gospel was a "secret" up to the time of its revelation; and after that time it is still *called* the mystery or secret of the faith—just as Masons speak of what are, not what were, the



mysteries of their order. The whole question then turns upon this point: has the mystery of godliness been revealed or made known, or has it not? Because, as in either case, it will still be *called* a mystery, nothing can be inferred from the mere fact that that *word* is employed. We are, therefore, forced to a direct appeal to all the facts in the case. What say the Scriptures?

Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, uses this language: "Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the *revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest*, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, *made known to all nations* for the obedience of faith,"<sup>1</sup> etc. Also, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, he says: "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, (if you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward; how that by revelation he *made known* to me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, whereby when *ye read ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ*,) which in *other ages* was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."<sup>2</sup> Again, to the Colossians he writes: "Whereof I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; even the mystery which *hath been hid* from ages and generations, but *now is made manifest* to his saints."<sup>3</sup> And even the passage which tells us that, "without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness," immediately *makes known* what that mystery is, viz.: "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

If anything can be made clear, and placed beyond dispute, these quotations establish the correctness of our position—while they show that the difference between Paul and our Mystic friends is this: he preached—the *revelation* of the mystery, and they the *mystery* of revelation; he declares that it is, they that it is not made

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 16: 25, 26

<sup>2</sup> Eph. 3: 1-5

<sup>3</sup> Col. 1: 25, 26

manifest and known to the saints; he assures us that *by reading* we may understand *his knowledge* of the mystery, they that this knowledge must be derived from some "internal light" or special inspiration; he says that the mystery was hid *before* its revelation, they that it is hid *in* its revelation! Thus, in every aspect, mysticism is directly antagonistic to the plainest declarations of the Bible—not only destitute of Scripture support, but opposed to Scripture.

2. A second objection is based upon Paul's language in 2 Corinthians 3: 6, which reads as follows: "Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." This passage is thought to teach not only that the literal meaning is useless, but that it is full of danger. And as those who have embraced this conclusion have drawn it from the *letter* of this text, it would seem that they are involved with us in mortal peril! To preserve them from being *killed*, therefore, by their inconsiderate adoption of the letter, we will say that the above text has some secret spiritual sense which does not appear upon the face of it. They are now safe—and so are we. For, of course, nothing but this secret sense can apply to our position, and for aught any one knows, *this* is directly in our favor! The objection, therefore, is engulfed in the very ground upon which it was based. But suppose we take the literal meaning of the text—and thus inconsiderately abandon what we thought to prove by it, so far as the text itself is concerned; then—as all Scripture is profitable—we will use the destructive force of the *letter* to *kill* the objection based upon it; for in this sense it clearly proves our proposition.

The Apostle is contrasting Judaism and Christianity. The former he calls the "letter;" the latter the "spirit." In harmony with his argument to the Romans, that the commandment which was ordained to life, he found to be unto *death*; that sin taking occasion by the commandment, deceived him, and *by it slew him*;<sup>1</sup> he here says that he is a minister, not of the Old Testament, for it is the ministration of death written and engraven in stones—but of the New Testament—*i. e.* not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. The New Testament, then, as it stands—the New Covenant, the New Dispensation, the New

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 7: 10, 11

Institution of Christianity—as it is revealed and made known in the plain and literal sense of the words of the gospel—which we are to understand, Paul says, as we *read* them—this is the *spirit* referred to in the text.<sup>1</sup>

I have now disposed of the two most plausible objections that have been urged against the position I have adopted; and have shown not only their impotency as objections, but that the very texts upon which they are based do really and strongly confirm the truth of my proposition. It only remains, in this place, for me briefly to remark upon the limit of our sphere as interpreters of Scripture—the confines outside of which we are never to pass. And to these remarks I would take the liberty of directing the special attention of the reader.

I submit, then, the following obvious but highly important canon: *That in the interpretation of Scripture we are to restrict ourselves to what is expressly revealed or declared, i.e. to the words or phenomena of the Bible.* The absolute and essential nature of revealed things, with their remote causes and reasons, must remain in this life an inscrutable mystery. They are beyond the limits of possible knowledge, and, consequently, beyond the comprehension of exegetical principles. But the same is true of everything in the natural world. "Of things absolutely or in themselves," to quote a distinguished authority, "be they external, be they internal, we know nothing, or know them only as incognizable; and we become aware of their incomprehensible existence only as this is indirectly and accidentally revealed to us, through certain qualities related to our faculties of knowledge, and which qualities, again, we cannot think of as unconditioned, irrelative, existing in and of themselves. *All that we know is, therefore, phenomenal,—phenomenal of the unknown. . . .* With the exception of a few late Absolutist theorizers in Germany, this is, perhaps, the truth of all others most harmoniously re-echoed by every philosopher of every school."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "The spirit here means," says Bloomfield, "that new spiritual system, the gospel."—"The spirit here seems to refer," says Barnes, "to the *New Testament*, or new dispensation, in contradistinction from the Old."

<sup>2</sup> Sir Wm. Hamilton: *Philosophy of the Conditioned*. Among a numerous collection of testimonies, he gives the following from Newton's *Principia*,

We do but contend that revealed things are not an exception to the universal law of all things. Archbishop Whately very justly complains that "philosophical divines are continually going *beyond* Scripture into those inquiries concerning the *absolute*, which are *confessedly*, and by their *own* account, beyond the reach of human faculties. What the Scriptures are concerned with, is not the philosophy of the human mind in itself, but (that which is properly *religion*) the *relation* and connection of the two Beings;—what God is *to us*—what he has *done* and will *do* for us—and what we are to be and to do in regard to Him."

It is only, then, when we go "beyond revelation" that we encounter what may properly be called *mysteries*. As long as we are content with the knowledge of phenomena—that is, in this case, of the words and sentences, interpreted as other words and sentences should be—so long will we stand upon tangible ground and deal with intelligible communications. In contending, therefore, that the Bible is not mysterious, I desire to be understood as meaning that it is not so phenomenally; for I would be far from intimating that there are no mysteries below, above, and around it—mysteries which are *suggested by it*, but which, nevertheless, are not *in* it—and hence, are not the subjects of interpretation. Of course, a Book which brings, as it were, eternity into time, and the kingdom of the heavens down to the earth, would, in being adjusted within its wonderful sphere, bear upon and suggest innumerable things *outside* of itself, which form no part of its subject, and of which nothing is revealed. It is these outside particulars that men have called the "mysteries of revelation;" whereas they are not *of* it at all.

Perhaps we may be borne with in illustrating a point so important, and which has been so often overlooked.

A stone let loose from the hand falls to the ground. Nothing is more simple—nothing better understood. But one can ask questions about it—questions which are immediately suggested by it—which no one can answer. *Why* does it fall? The earth attracts it

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(Schol. Ult.): "Quid sit rei alicujus substantia, minime cognoscimus. Videmus tantum corporum figuras et colores, audimus tantum sonos, tangimus tantum superficies externas, olfacimus odores solos, et gustamus saporos: intimas substantias nullo sensu, nulla actione reflexa, cognoscimus."

toward its center. So far all is clear. We have the phenomenon, with its proximate cause or explanation. But now if we attempt to go beyond this, we are lost. *How* does the earth attract it? What is the *essential nature* of that influence which it throws out beyond itself, which takes hold of the stone and draws it down with positive force? No man can tell. And yet the phenomenon is obvious to the meanest capacity; and the law which regulates it, an "object of precise and certain knowledge." So we reverently believe the facts in the history of the Son of God; and we can and do understand them *phenomenally*, *i.e.* in so far as they are *revealed*. But not satisfied with this, the world has for ages been seeking to penetrate into the essence of these phenomena—to go beyond the record, and learn something of "eternal generation"—of "God of God"—"eternally begotten"—to analyze the divine mind, and to comprehend the eternal purpose of the Creator, its cause and explanation, with all those deep-buried reasons which actuated him in producing the work of redemption—in short, to *define* the *Infinite*; stupendous folly; only equaled by its daring and impious presumption!

Again, the veriest rustic can understand the practical prerequisites necessary to the support of his animal life. He can plant, till, reap, grind, cook, eat, and thus continue to live. He seems to regard the whole process as a sort of matter of course, and by no means difficult of comprehension. Yet he would very soon perish if he never again performed these actions till the mysteries *connected* with them were solved; if he had to determine the essence of vegetable and animal life, with the secret processes and influences which convert the elements of matter into the one, and the defunct remains of that into the other. And so with the practical duties which underlie our spiritual life, as exhibited in the Bible—they are as obvious and plain as the others; but if we must wait, as so many seem to be doing, to understand every "why" and "wherefore" suggested by them, before we comply, then all must perish on account of disobedience.

Thus we might continue to illustrate, and show upon every page the clearest revelation suggesting inscrutable mysteries—secret things which belong to God and not to us or our children. What Paul saw and heard in the third heaven is a mystery—but why? The account given is plain enough, but the vision is not *told*,

and is a mystery because *it is not* in revelation. What the seven thunders uttered (Rev. 10: 4) is a mystery, not because the words are mysterious, but because the *words are not there!* John was required to "seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not." What Christ wrote with his finger on the ground (John 8: 6) is a mystery—a secret that no rules of exegesis could unfold, because it is not revealed to us what he wrote. *How* the angel strengthened him in the garden—what *was* that virtue that went out of him to heal the sick—at *what* season the angel went down into the pool of Bethesda and troubled the water, and a thousand such questions, are wholly unanswerable, because they are outside of revelation,—beyond the limits of possible knowledge.

We are now prepared to advance to the consideration of those Scriptures which are embraced under the second of the divisions we have temporarily formed.

## CHAPTER V:

### *Of The Figurative Parts Of Scripture.*

WHEN it is considered that so large a portion of Holy Writ is in typical, allegorical, parabolical, and metaphorical language, it will be perceived that, if the principles of the Mystic Method may be employed in the interpretation of such texts, we have effected very little comparatively, when we have rescued the remainder of revelation from such perversion. But we trust that we shall be able to show that these Scriptures are susceptible of an interpretation as perfectly accordant with the sober judgment of common sense, and as completely independent of the rhapsodies of self-styled "illumination," as the plain and unadorned declarations of the most literal texts.

We have sought to steer clear of the Scylla,—we must now be on our guard against the Charybdis of interpretation. For while to interpret a literal text upon Mystic principles is to destroy the force and meaning of that text, the opposite error, which interprets figurative language in its literal sense alone, gives the high sanction of the Bible to propositions at once the most absurd and monstrous. It hence becomes necessary, in the first place, to

determine with all possible accuracy what texts are figurative; afterwards we shall attempt to establish the principles of their interpretation. How, then, shall we know what language is figurative?

Perhaps the best general rule that could be given in answer to this question, is, *that this is to be determined just as we determine the same thing in any other book*. Whatever rules and guides we have in ascertaining this matter in Homer or Plato, in Cicero or Virgil, in the Spectator, the Novum Organum, or Paradise Lost,—the same will direct us in the Bible. In reading these works we have in our minds the definition of the various figures of speech employed in human language—(all of which are in the Bible)—and we observe the context, the subject-matter, the scope or design, and all the circumstances of a given passage, in the light of these definitions, and seldom find the least difficulty in determining when a passage is figurative, or what particular figure is employed—whether irony, simile, metaphor, synecdoche, or what. This rule we should think, therefore, would be altogether sufficient in the Bible; but in addition to it we will offer some specifications.

"The literal meaning of words is to be given up," says Horne, "if it be either improper, or involve an impossibility, or where words, properly taken, contain anything contrary to the doctrinal or moral precepts delivered in other parts of Scripture."<sup>1</sup> He also lays down the proposition, "That whatever is repugnant to natural reason cannot be the true meaning of the Scriptures; for God is the original of natural truth as well as of that which comes by particular revelation." To these specifications we may add the numerous Scriptures which are declared to be parables, types, or allegories, and the fact that all general laws are in plain and literal language—as the ten commandments, for example, or the new commandment—though directions to particular individuals, however general in their application, may be in figurative language, as, "Let your light shine." From all which we may deduce this brief, but plain and comprehensive rule:—

*That all Scriptures are to be regarded as figurative which are either declared to be such, or which, the various attending*

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<sup>1</sup> *Introduction*. Par. 2: book 2: chap. 1: sec. 1:

*circumstances show to be such, or which, when taken literally, contravene any general precept, or are contrary to evident reason and the nature of things.*

There is, we think, no instance of figurative language that does not come under some clause of this rule; and hence we can readily determine by it whether any given text is figurative or literal. We have but to consider, for example, whether anything in the context or elsewhere *declares* it to be figurative; if not, we may then inquire whether the literal meaning is absurd, or contrary to evident reason, when viewed in the light of its subject-matter and all the circumstances; and if this, too, be answered in the negative, we ask whether it contravenes any general precept; and finally, we consider whether all the circumstances require us to class it under some one of the various figures of speech defined in our grammars and other elementary works. In thousands of instances we shall be constrained to answer some one of these questions in the affirmative, and thus to pronounce the text figurative. In all other cases we shall conclude that it is literal, and, therefore, that its meaning is to be reached in the way already pointed out.

It now only remains, having settled the rule for determining what Scriptures are figurative, for us to answer the second demand in this investigation, viz.: How is the sense of such passages to be acquired? And we deem it particularly important to place this matter in the clearest possible light, from the fact that men are so prone to give play to their imaginations in expounding this class of Scriptures. The rule of Irenæus, for the interpretation of parables, may well be extended to all language in which the same principle is involved.

"Parables," he says, "cannot in any case be made the original or the exclusive foundations of any doctrine, but must be themselves interpreted according to the analogy of faith;<sup>1</sup> since, if every subtle solution of one of these might raise itself at once to the dignity and authority of a Christian doctrine, the rule of faith would be nowhere."<sup>2</sup> To the same effect speaks Tertullian: "We are kept within limits in the exposition of the parables, accepting as we do

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<sup>1</sup> For remarks on the "analogy of faith," see Campbell's Dissertations, Dis. 4: We would say, instead, *literal Scriptures*.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *Trench on the Parables*



*the other Scriptures as the rule to us of truth, as the rule, therefore, of their interpretation."*<sup>1</sup>

The correctness and necessity of this canon are evident the moment it is presented to the mind. For, if any doctrine be allowed to rest exclusively upon such "subtle solution," there is an end to all certainty, but no end to argument, and controversy, and false doctrines. But to say, as we must, that no doctrine is to be founded exclusively upon a solution of such Scriptures, is equivalent to saying that no such doctrine is true. For certainly it is our duty to receive and to inculcate all true doctrine; but as we cannot receive these subtle solutions for doctrines, we admit that they are not true, or, if true, that they cannot possibly be known to be so, and hence to believe them would be to have faith in the interpreter, and not in the word of God. All doctrinal truth,<sup>2</sup> therefore, is taught in literal and plain language. Every particular embraced in the faith that saves the soul, and every duty which our Heavenly Father enjoins in connection with that faith, while they may be exhibited in a variety of the most beautiful images, and clothed with all the exuberance of Oriental metaphor, are also taught in language clear and level to the meanest capacity. Now faith and obedience embrace in their ample significance the whole of religion. Our pardon, peace, enjoyment, and hope in this world—and our glory, honor, and immortality in the next, are, in one sense, dependent upon and secured by them. Surely, then, if we can be right in the particulars, all things else may well and safely be made matters of mutual forbearance. If so, we begin immediately to approach a point from which we can all see eye to eye.

From the premises before us it follows that *parables and figures do not, as such, teach new truth; they illustrate the truth elsewhere taught without a figure*—either in the immediate context, or in some other portion of the Bible. This being so, the rule for their interpretation follows clearly and necessarily, viz.: *Figurative language must always be interpreted by literal, or in harmony with the doctrine of non-figurative Scripture.*

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> In the New Testament use of the word, "doctrine" is something practical, not speculative.

Says Dean Trench: "From the literal to the figurative, from the clearer to the more obscure, *has ever been recognized as the law of Scripture interpretation.*" The "other Scriptures," says Tertullian, are "the rule to us of truth," and, therefore, the "rule for interpreting" parables and figures.

The rule we have laid down above, instead of erecting a standard outside of the Bible, as Origen and others did, to which the figurative language of Scripture was adjusted, *finds the standard in the Bible itself*—thus allowing the Holy Spirit to be his own interpreter. The literal Scriptures, therefore, are the touchstone of all sound interpretation.

We have thus brought out, one by one, principles of hermeneutics, which, unless we have greatly mistaken their force, it will be difficult to over-estimate; particularly if they are viewed in connection with the controversies which a disregard of them has perpetuated in the church. For, if literal Scriptures teach that and only that which their words fairly import or necessarily imply, when construed in the light of all the modifying circumstances, *they must teach the same thing to every man of common sense who thus construes them*; and if all other Scriptures are to be interpreted by these, they, of course, could never be the occasion of important disagreement; because, upon these principles, they can never be quoted or relied upon in controversy, except as confirmations or illustrations of literal truth. Hence, when these principles are generally allowed and practically observed by the intelligent of all parties, as sooner or later they must be, the first result will be to confine controversy to the ground covered by the literal texts; and, as the principles for their interpretation are so plain and simple, when viewed apart from the perverting influence of the "subtle solution" of figurative language, that it will be next to impossible to mistake their sense, a second result will ultimately follow, namely, agreement as to their meaning; and this, as we have seen, will lead directly to agreement as to the meaning of those other texts which are to be interpreted by these.

A beautiful passage is quoted from Anselm by Dean Trench, "on the futility of using as primary arguments what indeed can but serve as graceful confirmation of truths already on *other grounds* received and believed;" and he adds: "It is a recognized axiom, *Theologia parabolica non est argumentativa.* And again, *Ex solo*

*sensu litterali peti possunt argumenta efficacia.*" These principles are indeed founded upon the sure basis of reason and the nature of things, and were never denied in any age of the church, except by such as divorced themselves from reason that they might court to their embraces an infatuating mysticism. They are the legitimate offspring of a calm and enlightened common sense—the lawful spouse of the intellect; and no proposition can be more evident than that their recognition and hearty adoption by all, in lieu of those mystic principles which have supplanted them, must precede the general and accurate knowledge of the truth, and the settlement of points now in controversy. Well established as we must now consider them to be, by the concurrent testimony of common sense and recognized authorities,<sup>1</sup> they are the germs of an exegesis which we hope to be able to develop into something like scientific form and accuracy.

Before finally dismissing the subject, it may be well to dispose of the single objection which has been urged against the position we have taken with reference to the figurative Scriptures. It is contended that, upon our principle, those Scriptures are useless, inasmuch as we possess the whole truth without them. This will best be met by mentioning a few of the benefits derived from them notwithstanding the truth of our position.

1. Figurative language heightens the interest of the Bible. However grand and lofty the truths it reveals, they would be read with great comparative indifference if they were dryly stated, without metaphor, simile, or illustration of any sort. In fact, it is scarcely too much to believe that if such had been its character, it

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<sup>1</sup> "I hold it for a most *infallible rule* in expositions of sacred Scripture, that where a literal construction will stand, the farthest from the letter is commonly the worst. There is nothing *more dangerous* than the *licentious and deluding art* which changeth the meaning of words, as alchemy doth, or would do, the substance of metals, making of anything what it listeth, and bringeth in the end *all truth to nothing*."—Hooker's *Ec. Pol.*, b. 5: 100: 59. "It is contrary to the whole scope and purpose of revelation to explain it on some abstruse system of mythical interpretation."—Thompson's *Chr. Theism*, p. 324. See also Stewart's *Elements of Interpretation*; Trench on the *Parables*; Horne's *Introduction*; Campbell's *Dissertations*; Whately's *Preliminary Dissertation*, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (3:;) Macknight on the *Epistles*; besides fifteen or twenty works cited by Horne.

would, apart from some special interposition of Providence, long since have perished from the earth, and its saving light have been extinguished by the dullness and sterility of its forbidding style.

2. It serves as an illustration of the meaning of literal truth; it gives clearness to, and intensifies the meaning of, that which is taught without a figure. And this, notwithstanding it must itself be explained by the literal. If we desired to give an untaught savage a correct idea of a steam-engine, it would not be sufficient to *describe* it to him, even in the most plain and unadorned language we could command; nor should we succeed better by placing an exact picture of it before him, unaccompanied by such explanation. But if we place the picture before him, and at the same time explain it, he understands the picture *by means* of the literal description, while the description is itself made plain by means of the *picture*. Only *one engine* is described, but it is doubly described. So in the Bible, the literal and the figurative language do not communicate distinct and different truths, but they mutually aid in filling the mind with the same great truth. Hence, while the parables and metaphors are explained in accordance with the literal truth, they intensify and extend its meaning. If all the truth revealed had been thus illustrated, we should have had in one volume two copies, as it were, of divine truth—one literal, the other figurative; the latter understood in the light of the former, and that illustrated, beautified, and rendered comprehensive by the latter.

3. It keeps the great truths of the Bible ever before the mind. Infidels have contended that if God had given a revelation to men, he would have inscribed it upon the sun or the prominent objects of the material world. And this is just what is done. The law of gravitation is not more clearly written upon the face of a falling apple, than is the law of man's spiritual life on the clustering grapes and verdant leaves of the forest vine. The intelligent consideration of a *believer* sees the law in the one case as in the other. Spiritual truth, in the same way, is transferred to almost everything we behold. When our eyes take in the *light* of the morning, or when raised to view the stars of evening, the mind may be filled with a truth, may perceive a *Light* and a *Star* which shed their beams upon the heart. And when the majestic *sun* dispels the shadows of night, and throws his resplendent beams over *fields*, and *trees*, and

*streams*,—he himself, with all that he illuminates, gives a grand, a harmonious expression to heavenly, revealed, eternal truth. Thus, too, whatever we see transpiring around us, whether in the city or the country, or whatever we ourselves do from the morning till the night, almost every *action* is God's impressive *gesticulation* enforcing his word. He must be blind indeed who cannot recognize divine wisdom and benevolence in thus devising a scheme, simple as the Bible, by which the whole universe becomes vocal with eternal truth, and beaming with heavenly light!

Such are the uses and benefits of figurative language, when it occupies the place we have assigned it; but not one of these blessings can be claimed from it upon any other ground. Hence, he who opposes the principles we have laid down, does but tell us in effect, to sacrifice all these treasures to the Moloch of party, or immolate them to the demon of fanaticism.

If the reader has followed us through the several chapters of this second part, and carefully observed the different phases of the subject of mysticism, as we doubt not he has, he is prepared, before taking a final leave of it in order to enter upon the consideration of another and perhaps more formidable evil, to pronounce an intelligent judgment upon the premises already submitted. What that judgment will be, the author will not pretend to decide; but for himself, with all his responsibilities before him, he has no hesitation in recording his conviction, that mysticism, in whatever shape or form presented, differs the breadth of the heavens from the spiritual religion of Jesus; that it has been the fruitful parent of naught but falsehood and folly; that its delusive light is but an *ignis fatuus*, which “Leads to bewilder, and dazzles to blind;” and that its methods of interpretation, while presumptuously arrogating superior penetration into truth, and sublimer conceptions of the Spirit, do, in fact, eviscerate religion of its substance, and the Bible of its meaning.

## PART III: OF THE DOGMATIC METHOD.

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### CHAPTER I: *Of Scholasticism.*

HAVING shown the folly and danger of mysticism, and considered the means by which to determine whether or not any given passage is to be regarded as figurative, and having laid down the rules by which such Scriptures are to be interpreted, it remains to notice another instrument of error and perversion yet more potent. In point of dignity the Dogmatic Method should first have commanded our attention, it being not merely the superior, but the master of mysticism, whose pliable power it wields in subserviency to its own purposes. But as this course would have done violence to the historical and chronological aspects in which we deemed it proper to consider them, we have preferred to take them up in the order of their prominent development, as exhibited on the pages of the past.

We know of no better method of making the reader acquainted with this subtle and pernicious power, than to exhibit it as it sways over society at large its unrestrained and unquestioned influence. And it is believed that we shall be able to form a more accurate judgment concerning it by thus bringing it out in bold relief, than we should if we attempted to view it in the first place, as it now exists in connection with various modifying principles. Without pausing to define a term the meaning of which will be made evident as we proceed, the attention of the reader is invited at once to the Scholasticism of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, as a fair specimen of the Dogmatic Method of biblical interpretation. While a condensed account of this remarkable system will be in itself interesting, it will furnish the key to unlock much subsequent religious history.

Towards the close of the eleventh century many of the clergy began to study and profess the Dialectic Philosophy; "and in a few years they were able to introduce it into the schools, and have it

adopted as a branch of public instruction."<sup>1</sup> Calculated as it was to add luster to the names of those who excelled in it, it is not to be wondered at that by the beginning of the twelfth century it had taken the lead of every kind of learning. To be a skillful dialectician was of more worth than eminence in any other department. The greatest men of the times were so captivated by the power and renown which the exercise of this art gave them, that some of them, not satisfied with the honors conferred upon them by their own nation, left their country and traveled in foreign parts for the sole purpose of disputation; a sort of logical knights-errant strolling about in quest of adventure. Abelard—whose celebrity is not wholly philosophical—has left this exemplary account of himself: "Preferring the study of logic to all others, and the disputations of the schools to the trophies of war, I entirely devoted myself to this pursuit, and, like a Peripatetic philosopher, traveled through different countries, exercising myself wherever an opportunity offered."

Indeed, no other branch of study was considered worth attention, except in so far as it contributed to the perfection of this all-absorbing and all-important art. Those who were masters of it were regarded with the highest veneration; crowds of admirers flocked around them; multitudes of pupils attended their lectures; their greatness and glory was the exhaustless theme of conversation; and their skill and profundity the pride and admiration of their countrymen. Believing that they had found in this art the long-coveted key of biblical knowledge which was to unlock and disclose to view the mysteries of revelation, we cannot marvel at their extravagant appreciation of it. What a charm is therein secret wisdom! How eagerly do men seek for it, and how indifferent they often are to that which is evident to all.

Soon it came to pass that new and strange doctrines were propounded, and when propounded, argued and defended with a skill that none could gainsay or withstand. This aroused the watchful and jealous guardians of the church. It was necessary, they began to think, for something to be done; and as they could not answer the arguments of the dialecticians, they resorted to the more summary process of burning their writings, and censuring the

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<sup>1</sup> Enfield's Hist. of Phil., book 7: than, 3: sec. 1.

authors of them. The Synod of Paris, and the Council of Lateran, took the matter into their ecclesiastical hands, and as Aristotle was the Magnus Apollo in this heretical movement, his writings were prohibited from being read! This most sage proceeding had the effect it ever has, of increasing the desire to taste the forbidden fruit; and it was not long till the fondness for the subtleties of the Aristotelian logic and metaphysics had increased to such an extent that the clergy complained that "scholars spent their whole time in disputation."<sup>1</sup> This unlooked-for result seems to have suggested a new idea to the infallible guardians of truth: if this powerful influence cannot be destroyed, let us appropriate it to our own use; let us make it the handmaid of the church. A law is formed in accordance with this prudent suggestion, and the writings of Aristotle—physical, metaphysical, and dialectical—are admitted by express statute into the University of Paris. Being thus received into the bosom of the church, and his dialectic art made subservient to the maintenance of its dogmata, the Stagirite, by the end of the twelfth century, gained universal dominion. His philosophy became the main pillar of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and his logic the main instrument of its defense. Thus by slow and sometimes imperceptible degrees did the leaven of his influence extend itself, until his philosophy became indissolubly incorporated with the doctrines of the church, and "the philosopher who had lived and died without a line of inspiration, became the interpreter and the judge of the Apostles."

Says Dr. Hampden: "The maintenance of the Latin Theology became the immediate limited object to which the schools, now passed into the hands of the ecclesiastics, were directed. Men expert in fighting the battles of the Lord, skillful in defending each disputed point, and in parrying the assaults of the heretic, were the kind of persons which the method of teaching pursued in the schools would particularly contemplate. There was no desire on the part of the Latin churchmen to encourage a freedom of inquiry, or a wide range over the field of literature; the adventurer in such a track might be dangerous to the repose of the church; might break that chain of dependence which bound the subject—people to the chair of spiritual authority. Only such a discipline of the intellect

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<sup>1</sup> Enfield's Hist. of Phil., book 7: chap. 3: sec. 1



was provided as should sharpen and strengthen, without emboldening it; render it apt to object, to discuss, to infer, without tempting it to spread forth Dædalean wings, and soar above the labyrinth in which it was immured... Their philosophy, consequently, was an insincere, unreal system, a collection of principles, the data not of investigation and experience, but of a prescriptive authority; the results of the labor and ingenuity of others taken in their concrete form without analysis, and applied as oracular texts for the deduction of truths."<sup>1</sup>

From the twelfth century to the Reformation the whole world was disturbed by the idle disputes of this Scholastic Philosophy; "and so deeply did it take root," says an able writer, "that even to this day it has not been wholly extirpated." It is difficult for us to form an adequate conception of the refined folly and learned nonsense which characterized the mental labors of the greatest men of this period. The highest and proudest achievement of genius was to maintain a point by resorting to verbal quibbles and hair-splitting distinctions. The most abstruse, metaphysical, and incomprehensible subjects were gravely and earnestly discussed, as though the world's salvation had been suspended on their solution. Such subjects as identity, entity, hæcceity, formality, the first principle, etc. were voluminously treated, argued, defined, and illustrated, as not only worthy of consideration, but as being essential to the comprehension of the Christian religion.<sup>2</sup>

The Scholastic Philosophy, says Mr. Hallam, upon the authority of Tennemann, "gave rise to a great display of address, subtlety, and sagacity in the explanation and distinction of abstract ideas, but at the same time to many trifling and minute speculations, to a contempt of positive and particular knowledge, and to much unnecessary refinement; while the dry technical style of the Schoolmen, affecting a geometrical method and closeness,

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<sup>1</sup> Hampden on the Scho. Phil. of the Middle Ages; Encyclopedia Metropolitana.

<sup>2</sup> They, not only bestowed much attention upon Augustine's doctrine of absolute predestination, and of original sin, with their cognates, but also upon such questions as, whether in the love of God there can be any view to reward; whether, if God had commanded his creatures to hate himself, it would have been their duty, whether angels, in going from place to place, pass over the intervening space, etc. etc.!

was, in fact, more prolix and tedious than one more natural, from its formality in multiplying objections and answers. And, as their reasonings commonly rested on disputable postulates, the accuracy they affected was of no sort of value."<sup>1</sup>

When we reflect that this art was not the amusement of the few, but the business of the many; that it was not the appropriated luxury of worldly speculatists, but the daily staple of religious instruction, we may form some conception of its baneful influence. The clergy, practically leaving Christ out of Christianity, and no longer seeking to induce men to believe on and obey him, employed themselves in nothing else but the solution of abstruse and subtle questions, "which were always merely speculative, and often merely verbal." And this was the employment of them all. Education was narrowed down to a course of instruction in dialectics and metaphysics; and as the church was the great patron of the schools, and the Schoolmen the powerful supporters and defenders of the church, the whole Christian world became almost exclusively Scholastics. I cannot forbear inserting in this place the happily-expressed remarks of Sir James Mackintosh, in his Preliminary Dissertation in the Encyclopedia Britannica.<sup>2</sup>

The Schoolmen, he says, "were properly theologians who employed philosophy only to define and support that system of Christian belief which they and their cotemporaries had embraced. The founder of that theological system was Aurelius Augustinus, (called by us Augustin,) Bishop of Hippo, in the province of Africa; a man of great genius and ardent character, who adopted at different periods of his life the most various, but at all times the most decisive and systematic, as well as daring and extreme opinions. This extraordinary man became, after some struggles, the chief doctor, and for some ages almost the sole oracle of the Latin Church. It happened, by a singular accident, that the Schoolmen of the twelfth century, who adopted his theology, instead of borrowing their defensive weapons from Plato, the favorite of their master, had recourse for the exposition and maintenance of their doctrines to the writings of Aristotle, the least pious of philosophical theists. The scholastic system was a collection of

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<sup>1</sup> Hallam's Lit., vol. 1: p. 38

<sup>2</sup> Dis. 2

dialectical subtleties, contrived for the support of the corrupted Christianity of that age, by a succession of divines whose extraordinary powers of distinction and reasoning were morbidly enlarged in the long meditation of the cloister, by the exclusion of every other pursuit, and the consequent palsy of every other faculty; who were cut off from all the materials upon which the mind can operate, and *doomed forever to toil in defense of what they must never dare to examine.*"

One exception to the general and continued acceptance of this system we have seen in a previous chapter; but of this, unhappily, we are in doubt whether it was an exception for the better. It was the exchange of the emptiness and absurdities of abused reason, for the fantasies and dreams of abused imagination. To one who looks at them from the stand-point of the nineteenth century, it is difficult to determine whether anything was gained or lost by abandoning the intangible verbalisms of the Scholastics for the foolish extravagancies of the Platonized Cabalistics. There might have been grounds of preference between the two evils; but when each was alike destitute of truth, the exception can hardly be said to relieve, as a whole, the darkness of the picture.

Do we now ask what was the essential evil of Scholasticism? The answer is, it was the abuse of that which in itself is good—the art of reasoning. Its logic was refined until nothing was too ethereal for its grasp, and was employed not in the investigation of truth, but solely in support of the doctrines of the Romish Church. "It assumed axioms without examination; made distinctions where there was no real difference; used terms without any precise meaning; and engaged in controversies upon abstruse questions, which, after endless skirmishes, it was impossible to bring to way issue, and which, notwithstanding the violence of the contest, it was of no importance to determine."<sup>1</sup> Such an instrument is invaluable to the mere partisan. By its aid alone he can maintain dogmas however absurd, and give coloring to pretensions however extreme.

But the evil of Scholasticism did not consist alone in the abuse of the dialectic art, but also and chiefly, religiously considered, in the particular direction of that abuse—the employment of it to

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<sup>1</sup> Brucker's Hist. Crit. Phil., book 7: chap. 3: sec. 3.

force a coalition between the philosophy of Aristotle and the doctrine of revelation. We have seen a similar process pursued by the Alexandrian converts to Christianity with reference to the New Platonic Philosophy. Their work was effected by means of allegorized mysticism; this union was formed through the influence of logical subtlety. The same effect produced by each of two different instruments; not that allegory and mysticism were ignored by the Scholastics, nor that a kind of logic was wanting to the Alexandrians, but that the latter mainly succeeded by means of allegory, and the former by dialectic refinement and skill. The effect of this last marriage of religion to philosophy is not unlike that which resulted from the first. As when the antediluvian sons of God took wives from the daughters of men, the consequence was an unexpected corruption and an awful curse. Respecting the union of Aristotle with the New Testament, the author of the Critical History of Philosophy says:—

"Theology, already sufficiently clouded and corrupted by the speculations and disputes of former ages, by admitting into its service scholastic philosophy, involved itself in new obscurity; so that at length, instead of the plain and simple doctrine of religion, little else was to be found in the writings of theologians but vague notions and verbal distinctions. As an example of the mischief which arose to theology from this alliance, I may mention the doctrine of *transubstantiation*, which first sprung up at this period, giving birth to the most violent disputes, till at length the absurd dogma passed into an *article of faith*."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of transubstantiation originated with Paschasius Radbert, a Benedictine monk, in the ninth century; was at first opposed by the Church, but afterwards, at the Council of Placentia, sanctioned, and was finally confirmed and *named* by Innocent III., in 1215; and about the same time, as a consequence of the doctrine, the cup was withdrawn from the laity. (Waddington's Hist. Ch., *passim*.) Mosheim says, Ec. Hist. p. 321, "It was reserved for Innocent to put an end to the liberty, which every Christian had hitherto enjoyed, of interpreting this presence in the manner he thought most agreeable to the declarations of Scripture, and to decide in favor of the most absurd and monstrous doctrine that the phrensy of superstition was capable of inventing. This audacious pontiff pronounced the *opinion* which is embraced at this day in the Church of Rome with regard to that point, *to be the only true anti orthodox account* of the matter; and he *had the honor* of introducing and

It is thus when men set themselves to strive for victory instead of truth, and, to secure their end, resort to the help of confused notions, unmeaning distinctions, and barbarous terms, that they are finally rendered unable to distinguish truth from falsehood, or reason from absurdity, and are led to receive as evident truth dogmata not only preposterous, but inconceivable. To believe in transubstantiation, is to believe that Christ's body was broken and his blood shed many hours before his trial and crucifixion; that the disciples ate the one and drank the other while he was alive and unharmed before them; that in the different parts of the globe he is crucified a thousand times every Lord's day at the same hour; that Christ is perpetually *suffering*<sup>1</sup> the agonies of immolation; that the priests are innocent, while, by their own showing, guilty, of crucifying him afresh; and finally, that the senses of sight, touch, taste, and smell—senses upon the accuracy and *reliability* of whose judgments the very truth of Christianity is assured to us<sup>2</sup>—are not to be trusted! Yet such belief is produced and maintained by means of the Scholastic Method of searching the Scriptures; a method which jumps to a conclusion either without any shadow of Scripture warrant, or, what is even worse, because more delusive, from a hasty and incomplete collection of disjointed texts, raises this conclusion to the dignity of a positive and unquestionable dogma, and then ever after reads the Scriptures for the purpose of

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establishing the use of the term *transubstantiation*, which was hitherto absolutely unknown." The same is true of auricular confession.

<sup>1</sup> So contended Paschasius—*vide* Waddington, chap. 15

<sup>2</sup> PASCAL (Provincial Letters, Let. 18:) says: "As God has been pleased to employ the intervention of the senses to give entrance to faith, (for faith cometh by hearing,) it follows that so far from faith destroying the certainty of the senses; to *call in question* the faithful report of the senses would *lead to the destruction of faith*." And yet, strange to say, he continues: "It is on this principle that St. Thomas explicitly states that God has been pleased that the sensible *accidents* should subsist in the eucharist, in order that the senses, which judge only of these accidents, might not be deceived."

But if all that is judged of by the senses be but the *accidents* of bread, we should like to be informed what constitutes its *differentia*; or how St. Thomas "could ever have satisfied himself that he had at any time eaten a piece of bread. Upon this principle, for aught we know, our leavened bread may be boiled mutton, and our biscuit roast beef!

finding it taught in them. By this process almost any propositions connected with religion or morals may be established, however antagonistic and irreconcilable; and hence it becomes the prolific source of so large a number of disputed points—none of which may be true, while each is propped up by a formidable array of Scripture proof-texts. It is, too, the grand system of self-imposition, causing honest men to mistake a dialectic conclusion for an undoubted truth. Precisely to the extent of its employment may we expect to find absurd tenets, rancorous discussion, opposing sects, uncertain interpretation, and unhallowed liberties with the word of God. It speculates revelation into theories, changes theories into revelation, and converts the word of truth: into an apparatus for carrying on a war of words.

Though this brief chapter is but a meager outline of a system which flourished for many years over all the Christian world, and which, as we shall hereafter see, has transmitted much of its spirit and influence to our day, it would not contribute to our object to discuss the subject more thoroughly, or to examine its history more minutely. We have exhibited its grand characteristics as they are manifested, without relief, in the follies and delusions of the Schoolmen; and this will serve the purpose intended by it, of enabling us to recognize it when it shall subsequently present itself, notwithstanding it maybe mingled with, and modified by, other influences.

The sum of what we have learned of the Scholastics may be stated as follows:—

Their theology was the result of a *dominant ecclesiastical authority*, imposed without mercy and received without examination. "They were doomed," as says Mackintosh, "to toil forever in *defense* of what they must never *dare to examine*." "They held first," says Hampden, "that no authority sanctioned by the church should be questioned; secondly, that nothing should be *attempted to be established*, independently of those authorities, or which could not be reconciled with them." Again, "*Examination of principles* was forbidden ground to the religionist and the philosopher." "The object was not to rise from individuals to general principles, but to descend from the highest abstractions to individual beings." But further, as commentators and expositors, let us note the principles that guided them. "What may be called an

excess of legislation in matters of doctrine had taken place, through the mistaken notion on which divines had acted, that every variation of opinion required to be ruled by the coercive judgment of the ecclesiastical power. This state of things naturally led to the creation of a class of expositors and commentators who should *maintain the consistency of this vast accumulation of decisions*, bring to light what was obscure, and defend what was ambiguous from the perverse constructions of the heretic." "It had not for its object to win men to the truth; it sought only to justify and secure an obedience to which the unwilling intellect was constrained."<sup>1</sup>

As viewed, then, in the light of its hermeneutics, it was a system which exerted all the power and skill of the most refined dialectics to justify from the Scriptures the doctrines, decrees, and dogmata of the Roman Catholic Church. It had nothing to do with the discovery of truth—that was treasured up in the canons and decretals of the councils and the popes. To question these was heresy, to reject them damnation; while, by the aid of Aristotle, to force the Scriptures into their support was at once the duty and the glory of all the faithful sons of the Church.<sup>2</sup>

## CHAPTER II:

### *Of The Theory And The Practice Of Protestantism.*

WE have now reached the proper stand point from which to view the Reformation of the sixteenth century. And as this great movement has most weighty bearings upon the subject of hermeneutics, it will be well for us to pause here for a short time and note the precise condition of things immediately anterior to it, that we may be enabled to appreciate better the value of the

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<sup>1</sup> Hampden on the Schol. Phil. of the Middle Ages, *passim*; Encyclopedia Metropolitana.

<sup>2</sup> Those who may wish to pursue the subject further, may consult Hallam, Mosheim, Brucker, Mackintosh, and Hampden; or, if any, one can have the patience to wade through them, while he wonders at a fanaticism clothed in the sober garb of reason and sanctioned by the authority of the church, let him peruse the works of the "Universal and Angelic Doctor," Aquinas; the "Most Profound Doctor," Columba; the "Most Resolute Doctor," Durand; and the "Invincible Doctor," Ockham.

principles of Protestantism; afterwards we shall inquire whether these principles have been carried out.

When Martin Luther came upon the stage, the authority of Aristotle was equal or paramount to that of the Bible. Eugenius, Bishop of Ephesus, and after him Georgius Scholasticus, maintained, says Brucker, that the opinions of Aristotle "were consonant to the truest and best doctrines of the Christian religion, and were *even more true!*" And although we might not be justified in saying that this extreme ground was maintained by all, it is true that the spirit of the doctrine so recklessly expressed by Eugenius was cherished by all those who gave tone and direction to society, religious and philosophical. The Bible, the writings of the fathers, and the decrees of the Church, were therefore all explained by Aristotle, and forced by the alkahest of his dialectics to be dissolved and mingled into the mass of philosophical speculation. Hence the appositeness and wisdom of the remark made by Luther in his letter to Jodocus, that it would be "*impossible to reform the church without entirely abolishing the canons and decretals, and with them, the Scholastic theology, philosophy, and logic.*"

So utterly opposed was he to the Aristotelian Logic and Metaphysics that, not pausing here, "he inveighed," as Mr. Hallam says, "against those sciences themselves;" a course in which, in the beginning of his career, he was seconded by the powerful aid of the erudite Melanchthon. In time, however, the latter was induced to change his mind, and he who at one period denounced the philosophy of his day in language which would seem to indicate that it could not be made the source of valuable truth,<sup>1</sup> subsequently became a strenuous advocate of Aristotle, and introduced into the University of Wittenberg a scheme of dialectics and physics founded upon the peripatetic school. But though his influence with Luther was sufficient to induce him at length to retract some of the sweeping invectives which he had hurled against philosophy, it never caused him, during the contest waged

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<sup>1</sup> "Among the variety of opinions which prevail in the different Scholastic factions," such is the language at this time used by Melanchthon, "you will scarcely find one that is consistent with itself. Truth is everywhere confounded with error, and every doctor is more concerned to gather crowds by his noisy disputations than he is to establish sound philosophy."



with Rome, to resort to an alliance with Aristotle for an explanation of the Bible, or a defense of those capital principles since known as the fundamental and distinguishing principles of Protestantism. And so far as the example of this prince of reformers is worth anything, we may say, without qualification, that he began by throwing off the shackles of all human authority, religious and philosophical, and determined to exercise his own understanding and to follow his own judgment, instructed and guided by the word of God alone. He next set his face against the *cause* of corruption and ignorance, exposing and uprooting, as far as he was able, those *false methods of interpretation* which could never result in undoubted truth, and which gave birth to a thousand contests carried on in a spirit of rancor and selfishness utterly at war with the spirit of Christianity.

What is true of Luther is true also of his cotemporary coadjutors. Their movement, in its incipency, was a grand and determined effort to burst the bonds of ecclesiastical authority, to separate the Bible from its unholy and unnatural alliance with philosophy, to bring it to bear upon the minds and hearts of men responsible for the reception given to it, and to determine its meaning from its own words, without respect to recognized and consecrated dogmata. Their success is known and read of all. The reformation of religion they wrought out was only equaled by the reformation of science which was superinduced upon it. Their sturdy and manly blows battered down the walls which shut out the light of scientific truth, at the same time that they forced the corrupters of the faith to retire from the contest, and leave the Bible in the hands of responsible men in the exercise of common sense.

But although these benefactors of the world labored nobly and with surprising success, they did not and could not finish the work. Scholasticism was too strong to be so readily destroyed. Modes of thought which men had been accustomed to all their lives could not at once be laid aside, even by those who felt that others might be better. Besides, there were many friends of the old system left, many who thought that philosophy might aid a true as it had so long supported a false religion. Melanchthon introduced Aristotle into the leading university, prevailed on Luther to modify his opposition, and presently the authority of the Stagirite was again

fully established in a sway which he maintained without serious opposition till the writings of Lord Bacon curtailed his influence, and finally, in physical science, destroyed it altogether. It is true, then, as we shall presently show more fully, that in a very early period of the Reformation the reformers practically abandoned their own ground—a retrogression which, unfortunately, has not even yet been corrected.

To appreciate this, the most important phase in its history, it will be necessary for us to inquire into the specific principles of Protestantism, as theoretically propounded, and as practically carried out. And I have mistaken the subject wholly if we do not find in this inquiry principles of interpretation developed which will account for many if not all the discrepancies which have of late so disastrously affected the church. The fundamental and distinctive principles of Protestantism are numerically as follows:—

1. *The Bible is the only rule of religious faith and practice, to the exclusion of all canons, decretals, traditions, and philosophies.*
2. *Private judgment or interpretation is the right and duty of all.*

These constitute the very *core* of Protestantism. Its genius and spirit are expressed by them; its essential and distinctive features are portrayed by them; and they form the cord which binds all its votaries together. Here is the common ground upon which all sects and parties stand; the *punctum saliens* of every new movement; the cardinal and elementary principles which, without modification, have been cordially embraced by every man who has claimed to be a true Protestant, from Luther down. Equally true is it that the opposites of these principles constitute the foundation, and permeate the superstructure of the Papacy. What better definition, indeed, could be given of that system than to say that it imposes canons and decretals, bulls and philosophies, as of equal authority with the Bible, and that it denies the right of men to interpret the Bible for themselves? The above, then, not only are, but they *must be*, the principles of Protestantism. There can be no such thing conceived apart from them. Upon what other basis could we possibly rest any *protest* against any usurpation or corruption whatever? We could refuse nothing sanctioned by authority; we could declaim against nothing, if deprived of, or if renouncing, the

right of private judgment. Take away or nullify, then, these principles, and all the so-called Protestant sects would become, *eo instanti*, but parts and parcels of the Romish Church; because it is in these, and in these alone, that the two systems are radically distinguished, while all other peculiarities grow directly out of these roots.

There can be no doubt, therefore, that every man who claims to be a Protestant will instantly recognize, as all such have ever recognized, the above as the cardinal and *necessary* principles of his system. Thus they are, have been, and doubtless ever will be, *theoretically* embraced, adopted, and retained by all,—while *in practice* they are carried out by very few. This is evident with respect to each one of them.

I. *The Bible is not, and has not been, the only rule of faith and practice among Protestants.* Certainly, they do not notice the decrees of the Councils of Constantinople, of Lateran, or of Trent; they are free from those masters, and this is a great deal; but still the authority of other high ecclesiastical councils, and of other great names—*of their own liking*—is as binding upon them *practically*, as such authority is or ever was upon Papists. Some are bound by the acts done at Geneva, some by those at Westminster, others again by those at Augsburg. Some defer to the authority of Luther, some to that of Calvin, and others to that of Arminius and Wesley. Protestants listen to different men, and reverence different names, and bow to different councils from those recognized by the Papist,—and this is one distinction. Another is, that Papists *claim the right* to impose such authority, while Protestants *deny* the right, but still bow to the authority. They have reserved to themselves the nominal privilege of rejecting ecclesiastical decretals when they choose, while those that impose them take care to have them so commingled with something else that is desirable, that they always *choose* to yield. The Protestant system is in this respect more complicated,—less open and avowed, and less freely exercised,—and being generally accompanied by a courteous disclaimer of power, men are disposed to believe that it does not exist, and that their system does not constrain or bind them. They have yielded to the influences to which they are subjected, until they are no longer felt. But let them resist—let them commence to *exercise* the freedom which they imagine themselves to possess, if they would

learn the existence and the power of the authority which binds them.

The great struggle for human freedom in matters of religion has resulted, we contend, merely in a *change of masters*. This change, doubtless, was a great gain. Protestant rules and rulers are better and wiser than those we exchanged for them. But why should we be ruled at all except by the plain authority of the word of God? Why call, or receive any man for, our master, besides Him who is in heaven? This is our theory—the theory of Luther, and Calvin, and Zwingli, and of all Protestants; while if our church, or synod, or council ordain anything, however obnoxious to objections, or however grating to our sense of right and propriety, we yield implicit obedience to the mandate; not that we will submit to *human authority*—that is Romish—we do so for the peace of the church and the advancement of the cause!

But what is a man to do? In nine cases out of ten he must submit or be deprived of church privileges. The fact is, that in almost every Protestant sect there are *other rules besides the Bible* which are *binding upon the life and conscience*; rules the violation of which *excludes from communion*, and the rejection of which *debars from membership*! When we hear men speak of the "Constitution and Laws of our Church," we never think of the Bible, which is *theoretically* the only constitution and law; and when we hear them ask an applicant for membership if he will "consent to be governed by the rules of this church," we know the "only rule" is not what is meant.

But it is contended that there is no such thing as compulsion in all this; no authority is exercised; and if anyone do not believe these things, and be not willing to be governed by them, he is left perfectly free,—let him go somewhere else. But this, in the first place, leaves out of sight the numerous pains and penalties—not physical, not papistic, but mental—which are resorted to, to *make* men "willing" to submit; and, in the second place, it is delusive by speaking of a freedom which exists only in name, and not in fact. Suppose we ask where this "freeman" is to go? It is vastly easy to say, "let him go somewhere else," and thus throw off the responsibility of his case; but if all Protestant sects have human creeds or rules of one sort or another, and he have conscientious scruples about accepting any such, this "somewhere else" must be

by himself. And then, is not every man of learning and piety in Protestantdom engaged in warning him of his danger, and in assuring him of damnation for not belonging to "the church," for making no profession of religion, for renouncing its privileges and failing to perform its duties? Or if a number of such unite and form a church without a human creed or a human rule, and religiously devote themselves to the study and practice of the Bible, will not the dignified clergy pronounce them heterodox, and for the sole deficiency of a human creed declare them unsound, untrustworthy, and dangerous?<sup>1</sup> But further, unless the members of the various sects are hypocrites—which we cannot at all believe—they must regard their own peculiar doctrines and rules as being right, and consequently that those opposed to them are wrong. If wrong, then they ought not to prevail. Let us suppose that they did not; that this one only system, with its creeds, its articles, its rules, its constitution, and its discipline, were recognized as Protestantism or the Protestant Church. And let every reader suppose, if he please, that this is not his, but his neighbor's church. Now what follows? Evidently that every man's freedom from human authority—these constitutions and rules being confessedly human—must be exercised in every case at the expense of all church privileges. He must either be a hypocrite, and profess to believe what he does not, or he must give up his own judgment and take that of others upon trust, or he must be a freeman at the hazard of his soul—they being the judge.

But it may be urged in support of these rules, or articles of faith, that they are in *accordance* with the Bible, and therefore it is *divine* and *not human* authority which enforces them. But the very fact that this plea is put in by so many different parties, casts the strongest suspicion upon it. It is but a revival by each individual sect of the old papal claim to infallibility. According to *our interpretation*, or our "standards," the Bible must teach so and so; and as our interpretation cannot be wrong, no man is entitled to membership who rejects it. But to debar one from membership, or to exclude one from communion upon grounds of difference respecting these points, is *to inflict pains and penalties* for the purpose of *enforcing* acquiescence; in other words, an infliction of

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<sup>1</sup> See the Report of the Transylvania Presbytery of Kentucky

*punishment* on account of "heresy." I have said that the Papists, like the Protestants, claim that their canons and decretals are in accordance with the Bible; because, even in those cases where there is no shadow of express verbal warrant, they are still *made by the church*, and this, it is claimed, has *authority delegated by the Scriptures* to make and enforce them. Thus, by a *process of logic*, all of them are shown to be scriptural. Now with respect to Protestant articles of faith and rules of government, they must either be in the express language of the Bible—and then there will be no need of transcribing them—or else they must be supported by a *process of reasoning*—which yields the distinction between Protestants and Papists.

And the case is not relieved by prefixing (as is commonly done) to these articles one which must be incompatible with them; for, although it is customary to begin with the cherished *theory* that the "Bible is the only rule of faith and practice," everyone knows that it is anything but customary to stop there.

But we shall be told that any other than the course we are opposing will deprive those who *prefer* that course of the liberty of exercising such preference. Have we not the right and the liberty, say some, of making or adopting any creeds or canons we choose? Unquestionably. But that is a very different thing from claiming that these, when made or adopted, must be regarded as a fundamental or integral part of Christianity, and that they must be actually or virtually *enforced* upon others, upon peril of the loss of the divine blessings. It is the regarding of them as a part of the Christian religion, and, by all the powers that may be lawfully employed, compelling their adoption, that we oppose. Human creeds or canons, while their very existence is a standing departure from Protestant ground, become intolerable only when they would invade the liberty of men. Civilly speaking, everyone has the privilege of making, changing, enlarging, or curtailing his religion, or of having no religion at all,—but in *Christianity* there is but "one Lawgiver." So long, therefore, as anyone is willing that his enlarged system of articles and rules shall not be held or regarded as Christianity, either in whole or in part; so long as he recognizes the Bible as the only source of *that*, and gives to his deductions no force, and no place as forming a part of that system,—so long he

may claim respect, and to this extent he may exercise the most unlimited Christian freedom.

But, to disregard all other aspects of the case, we are here only concerned with it as it affects interpretation. Let it be observed, then, that in so far as the rules and articles of faith which we now have under review claim to have scriptural warrant, they rest not upon the *express words* of the Bible, taken in their connection, but upon *inferences* and *deductions* from them. From premises often hastily adopted, and from texts often disjointed and misplaced, certain logical conclusions are drawn, and *these conclusions* are made fundamental, and are built upon as *scriptural truth*. They become the constitutional and elementary principles of the system, and, as the system is supposed to be pure Christianity, they are regarded, as the cardinal principles of *that* system, and consequently the standards of all subsequent interpretation. All, now, who embrace these conclusions, read the Bible with both the expectation and the desire of finding them there; and experience but little difficulty in doing so. Every man must either interpret the Scriptures so as to make them support the doctrines of his church, or, unless he is a hypocrite, he must give up those doctrines and be without a church, or he must accept them, as he commonly does, upon the *authority of the church*, in opposition to the Bible—he himself being the judge.

If he take the former course, he perverts the Bible; for evidently no more than one of the many different and conflicting doctrines of the various churches can be sustained by the Bible without perverting it. If he take the next course, he cuts himself off from the privileges and enjoyments of the church. And if he take the last, he abandons a cardinal principle of Protestantism. Hence the failure by Protestants to carry out their fundamental principle of "the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible,"<sup>1</sup> must result, as it has hitherto resulted: 1. In perverting the great source and fountain of all truth, by the infusion of all manner of crude and pernicious deductions, which are virtually held as a part of the Bible itself. 2. In weakening their influence and limiting the good

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<sup>1</sup> "Here Luther, with a steady hand, establishes the fundamental principles of the Reformation: The word of God, the whole word of God, and nothing but the word of God."—*D'Aubigne's Hist. Ref.*, vol. 1: book 3

they might do, by deterring such multitudes of thinking and conscientious men from accepting the divine and good, as it can only be enjoyed by taking also so much that is human and bad. 3. In making the interpretation of the Bible, for all practical and plain men, utterly uncertain and dubious,—thus to a great extent paralyzing its authority over the conscientious, and exposing it to the contempt and ridicule of the skeptical.

II. It will require but few words to be said on the other great principle of Protestantism,—the right of private judgment. This springs from the previous one. The two are always present or absent at the same time. Hence the "Bible alone," being a mere theory, the right of private interpretation is also discouraged in practice; for it is evident that if all Protestant churches have rules and articles of faith which rest upon inferential and deductive conclusions, made by those who fill or have filled high stations in the church, and if the acceptance of these is necessary (as it often is) to membership, then the right of private judgment, so far as all those matters which are professedly fundamental are concerned, resolves itself into the dubious privilege of thinking for yourself, provided you take care to think as your leaders do. Certainly in these cases it hath this extent, no more.

It is presumed, indeed, that no one will question that the confessions of faith control the judgment. This is their nature, their design, their object. For if they do not, they are utterly worthless and useless, and not one argument can be introduced in their favor. They are but clumsy impediments to the mind, effecting neither good nor evil: passive, inert, powerless, they must speedily perish from their own impotency. But if they do control the judgment, then we have seen that they are pernicious, and destructive of the fundamental and necessary principles of Protestantism.

But am I occupying broad catholic ground in thus contending that Protestants have departed from their principles, or have I taken the position merely to serve a purpose? If motives so unworthy are attributed to me, let us see how the subject appears to others, who could have had no ulterior object in view.

Mr. Hallam, in his *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, vol. 1: chap. 6: sec. 33, says: "It is often said that the essential principle of Protestantism, that for which the struggle was made, was a perpetual freedom from all authority in religious belief, or what



goes by the name of the *right of private judgment*. But to look more nearly at what occurred, this permanent independence was not much asserted, and *still less acted upon*. The Reformation was a CHANGE OF MASTERS,—a voluntary one, no doubt, in those who had any choice; and in this sense, an exercise, for the time, of their personal judgment. But no one, having gone over to the confession of Augsburg or that of Zurich, was deemed *at liberty* to modify those creeds at his pleasure. He might, of course, become an Anabaptist or an Arian; but he was not the less a heretic in doing so than if he had continued in the Church of Rome.

"The adherents of the Church of Rome have never failed to cast two reproaches on those who left them: one, that the reform was brought about by intemperate and calumnious abuse, by outrages of an excited populace, or by the tyranny of princes; the other, that, after stimulating the most ignorant to reject the authority of their church, it *instantly withdrew this liberty of judgment*, and devoted all who presumed to swerve from the line drawn by law to virulent obloquy, or sometimes to bonds and death. These reproaches, it may be a shame for us to own, '*can be uttered and cannot be refuted*.'

"Protestantism—whatever, from the generality of the word, it may since be considered—was a *positive creed*; more distinctly so in the Lutheran than in the Helvetic churches, but in each, after no great length of time, assuming a determinate and *dogmatic* character. The pretensions of Catholic infallibility were replaced by a not less uncompromising and *intolerant dogmatism*, availing itself, like the other, of the secular power, and arrogating to itself, like the other, the assistance of the Spirit of God. The mischiefs that flowed from this early *abandonment of the right of free inquiry* are as evident as its *inconsistency with, the principles* upon which the reformers had acted for themselves."<sup>1</sup>

The above is clear, and directly to the point. And thus it appears that Luther and the other leaders of the reform movement contended with the Catholics for the great principle or right of private judgment, when they needed it to justify themselves in coming out of the Catholic Church; but no sooner had they become strong enough to feel perfectly independent of Rome, than they

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<sup>1</sup> The italics are ours

took away the right from others and reserved it as a special prerogative for themselves, perhaps claiming it now by right of conquest.

Another authority says: "Protestantism owns two fundamental principles—that the Bible contains the sole rule of faith, and that it is the right of every one, without respect of person, to judge of that rule with all the aids which divine grace, reason, and conscience can inspire. At the same time it may be noticed that, generally, *in practice*, each church possesses certain *standards of belief* to which it is expected its members will adhere."<sup>1</sup>

Here is the contrast: *theoretically*, "the Bible is the sole rule of faith," *practically*, "each church has certain standards" besides the Bible; *theoretically*, it is "the right of every one to judge of that rule," *practically*, every one "is expected to adhere" to some one of these "standards."

We will next hear from Madame de Staël: "The right of examining what we ought to believe is the foundation of Protestantism. The first reformers *did not think thus*; they thought themselves able to place the pillars of Hercules of the mind according to their own lights; but they were mistaken in hoping to make those who had rejected all authority of this kind in the Catholic religion submit to their decisions as infallible."<sup>2</sup> Hence the multiplicity of sects.

Perhaps the reader would like to contemplate the subject from a Papist's point of view. We therefore give an extract from Balmes:—

"If there be anything constant in Protestantism," says this learned Catholic, "it is undoubtedly the substitution of private judgment for public and lawful authority. This is always found in union with it, and is, properly speaking, its fundamental principle; it is the only point of contact among the various Protestant sects,—the basis of their mutual resemblance. It is very remarkable that this exists for the most part unintentionally, and sometimes against their express wishes. However lamentable and disastrous this principle may be, if the coryphaei of Protestantism had made it their rallying point, and had constantly acted up to it in theory and

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<sup>1</sup> Chambers's Popular Encyclopedia, vol. 2: p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> Germany, par. 4: chap. 2

practice, they would have been consistent in error. But if you examine the words and acts of the first reformers, you will find that they made use of this principle as a means of resisting the authority which controlled them, but they never dreamed of establishing it permanently; that if they labored to upset lawful authority, it was for the purpose of usurping the command themselves."

Again: "The only way that Protestantism has of preserving itself, is to violate as much as possible its own fundamental principle, by withdrawing the right of private judgment, inducing the people to remain faithful to the opinions in which they have been educated, and carefully concealing from them the inconsistency into which they fall when they submit to the authority of a private individual, after having rejected the authority of the Catholic Church."<sup>1</sup>

One more quotation must suffice upon this point. The *Edinburgh Review* for October, 1855, says:—

"It is, we believe, universally agreed among Protestants of all denominations, that the Bible is their one, great, paramount authority; and that they repudiate all traditionary lore or human teaching; and that every man, depending on his own judgment, and availing himself of his right to use it, looks to the sacred Scriptures, and to the sacred Scriptures alone, for the spiritual light which should both inform his faith and direct his conduct. Such is the theory, but it is little more than a theory. If Christians *acted* upon it honestly and more freely than they do, they would, in all probability, find their *differences diminish* and their charity increase. But the fact is, that the *right of private judgment*, in religion, is a *principle more vaunted than exercised*. And the experience of society would lead us to infer, that while we and the rest of our fellow-Protestants profess to follow the instructions of the Bible, we are far more generally led by the opinions of our respective ministers; and that our doctrinal views are never so much really derived from the letter of the sacred text as from the notes of some favorite expositor in the margin. But whatever influences may interfere to warp its operation, *all Protestants*,

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<sup>1</sup> Protestantism compared with Catholicity, chap. 1

whether Churchmen or Dissenters, *are agreed in the principle*, that our only authoritative religious teacher is the Bible."

From all that has gone before, we may conclude with McCrie that it is generally, nay universally, agreed, that "if there is one principle more essential than another to the Reformation, it is that of entire independence of all masters in the faith. *Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri*." <sup>1</sup> And although it has been departed from in practice, let us hope that the mischiefs which have thence resulted may yet be removed by a speedy return to principles so evidently right, and so imperiously necessary; especially let us remember that, while the power of the Romish hierarchy has been so long and so fearfully wielded in opposition to the right of private judgment, *her* principle, like So many of her doctrines, is derived from paganism. <sup>2</sup>

## CHAPTER III:

### *The Effects Of Protestant Inconsistency.*

It should not be supposed, from the facts that have been adduced, that Protestants have doubts as to the soundness of their principles, or that they have ceased to love and cherish those principles; for there can be little question that if the leaders of any party should distinctly announce, *ex cathedra*, that the theory of Protestantism is false, and that the Bible alone is not sufficient to inform the faith and direct the conduct, such a proposition would be promptly and indignantly rejected with hardly a dissenting voice; and this by men who have all their lives been acting under "Constitutions," "Disciplines," and "Articles," made in violation of this theory.

The influences which have led them into this inconsistency are partly as follows: 1. A persuasion that their articles and rules are but the embodiment of a learned, critical, and correct interpretation of the Scriptures; that they are, therefore, the very "juice and marrow of Scripture," and consequently to accept them is not to depart from their theory. 2. They distrust their own judgment,

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<sup>1</sup> Note in the Provincial Letters.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* Cic. de Leg., chap. 2: sec. 8; Livy, book 4: 100: 30.; and book 39: chap. 16:

especially when to follow it would bring them into antagonism with men so learned as those who have formed their articles; and hesitate to rely upon it in matters so momentous. Every point in their Confession of Faith is supported by an array of marginal references to the Scriptures; and though in many cases they are unable to see the applicability of these references to the points said to be proved by them, that is doubtless owing to their ignorance, and they could not have the presumption to place their judgment against that of men so venerable for their learning and piety. And this timidity, if it ever manifest symptoms of abatement, is immediately strengthened by their leaders repeating the spirit of the words used by Eckius against Luther: "I am astonished," said he, "at the humility and diffidence with which the reverend Doctor undertakes to stand alone against so many illustrious fathers, thus affirming that he knows more of these things than the sovereign pontiff, the councils, divines, and universities! . . . . It would no doubt be very wonderful if God had hidden the truth from so many saints and martyrs till the advent of the reverend Father."<sup>1</sup> 3. If in spite of these considerations they are brought into doubt, the doubt is speedily removed by the reflection that their fathers and grandfathers, to say nothing of a host of ministers and worthies long since gone to heaven, were saved in this church under these rules; and hence, if they be not scriptural, they cannot at least be essentially opposed to Scripture; salvation is the great matter, and as that is attainable with this Confession of Faith, it is the part of a meek and humble Christian to remain quiet for the good of the world and the peace of Zion; and besides the felicity of

—"traveling home to God

In the way their fathers trod,"—

they cannot forget a text so often heard, that "he that doubteth is damned,"—which means, of course, as they suppose, to doubt the Confession of Faith!

The gradations, in the declension from the original consistency and purity of Protestantism, may therefore easily be traced, without attributing to Protestants any settled conviction of the unsoundness of their distinguishing principles. Upon the promulgation of the Confession of Augsburg, in 1530, "the pretensions of Catholic

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<sup>1</sup> D'Aubigne's Hist. Ref., vol. 2: book 5:

infallibility," to recur to the extract from Mr. Hallam, "were replaced by a not less *uncompromising dogmatism*." This being the work of those who had fought for the right of private judgment, it was ever after looked upon as a precedent of the legitimate exercise of that right. Hence, while the Protestant *theory* has justified many independent men in thinking for themselves, Protestant *example* has warranted them in making their thoughts the standard of orthodoxy. The *theory* has had influence enough to multiply thought, while the *example* has multiplied, in the same ratio, "uncompromising dogmatism." Hence the number and variety of parties; each with its dogmatic creed.<sup>1</sup>

We need scarcely ask what the science of interpretation would become under such circumstances. Every man stands upon the little hillock which some polemic or mystic laborer has thrown up, and surveys the landscape of revelation from this point of observation. While every one sees, and talks of, and maps out the same things, every one makes a different map, because the *relative position* of objects varies with the stand-point from which they are viewed. They are all compelled, by the force of circumstances, to study the Bible through the medium of a vitiated dialectics; and thus studying it, they impose upon their judgments and bring themselves to see in it dogmas which a strictly inductive exegesis would never have disclosed, and can never be brought to sanction. Thus the dogmatic method of the Schoolmen is still pursued by those occupying influential positions in the church, and by the influence of circumstances almost unavoidably pursued, notwithstanding its necessary tendency to warp the judgment and vitiate its conclusions.

To make this matter perfectly evident—and its importance will justify us in dwelling upon it a moment longer—let us take a young man, and follow his history from the communion table to the pulpit, and from the pulpit to the chair of the commentator, and see if we cannot observe those influences which almost compel him to adopt the course we have mentioned. He is ecclesiastically connected with some one of the great Protestant denominations,—

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<sup>1</sup> The tendency of dogmatism is to endanger the interests of religious truth, by placing that which is divine and unquestionable in too close an alliance with that which is human and doubtful. *Mansel's Bampton Lectures*, legit. 1

say, for example, one of the Calvinistic family, or, if you please, an Arminian. His early education has all been in the hands of that denomination, and he has grown up with a strong and decided bias in its favor. Its doctrines have been carefully instilled into him; its polity and practice have been commended to him by learning, genius, eloquence, and the power, perchance, of a pious example. It is by no means strange that he comes to regard the church of his parents and minister, which has upon its record a host of names distinguished in history, and whose praises are upon every tongue, as *the church par excellence*. He is even surprised that there should or could be any other. In process of time he is promoted, first to the communion table, and finally to the theological seminary. Here he is trained and instructed in a course of theology based upon the peculiar system in which he was reared. He is familiarized with its doctrines; taught the methods of stating, proving, and defending them; learns by heart the numerous proof-texts relied upon, and fortifies himself with authorities for sustaining the turn he is to give them, and which his church has given them before him. His mind is thus completely filled with that system of doctrines. It embraces all he knows, all he believes. His thoughts all hang upon the pegs it furnishes, and his reading all flows into the channel it opens.

He is conscious that at home his relations and acquaintance are cherishing high expectations of him, and looking to him as the future champion of their tenets and defender of their faith.

At length he leaves the seminary and enters the pulpit; enters it with a burning desire to accomplish something toward the advancement of those doctrines which ten thousand considerations conspire to make him love; enters it with an unshaken faith in their correctness, and with not a fact or sentiment in his mind which does not seem to be completely in harmony with them. Of course he reads the Bible,—doubtless he loves it. But it would be almost a miracle if, when he opens its sacred pages, he did not *desire to find his doctrines there*. In the first place, he is assured of their truth, because his whole stock of knowledge has been turned by his education into the channel of their confirmation; and in the second place, his natural affections, his gratitude for past favors, his dependence for future support, and his desire to be useful, all combine to deter him from changing,—leaving out of the account

that partisan spirit which few men in such circumstances could be free from. Hence the system of doctrines in which he has been schooled, whether he is conscious of it or not, becomes the standard by which he interprets the Bible. And though the *standard* may be different, the *principle* does not at all differ from that of the Catholic Schoolmen of the thirteenth century.

Let him pass to the dignity of a commentator, and the case is not altered. He writes with the honest conviction that all the Bible must be so construed as to harmonize with what he is sure must be true—his early-embraced doctrines. And skilled as he is by this time, in the use of dialectics and rhetoric, he finds but little difficulty in showing that passages of Scripture seemingly the most opposite to his views, *can* be construed in such way as perfectly to accord with them. If they can, then he feels that they *should*, because his views must be correct. Hence it becomes evident that, however pious and gifted he may be, all his learning, genius, and tact are exerted with a hearty good will and an *honest purpose* to force the Bible into a *preconceived* and *preadopted interpretation*. Is he a Calvinist? The whole Bible teaches Calvinism. An Arminian? Nothing but Arminianism can be found in Scripture. A Universalist? Universalism is taught upon every page. A Unitarian? The Scriptures are full of Unitarianism!

Thus error has completed its great circuit, and we have got back to the point from which Origen started. With him, Neo-Platonism was true, and every interpretation false that did not agree with it; with the Scholastics, their peculiar system of Aristotelianism was the touchstone of sound interpretation; while with us—ever progressing with the march of time—there is any number of systems, each of which brings the Bible within its narrow compass. The fundamental error in all these cases is the same, however variously it may be developed,—the erection of a standard outside of the Bible, be that standard what it may, by which to test its meaning.

The lights now before us will enable everyone to answer for himself the question so often asked, Why do pious and learned men differ in the interpretation of a book confessedly simple in style and practical in matter? And we think it must also be evident that, so long as the above state of things continues, no mere *rules of interpretation* will avail for the correction of an evil which



springs not from the want of rules, but from a false method at the bottom of them.

## CHAPTER IV: *Of Protestant Creeds.*

### **SECTION I.**

FEW subjects perhaps have given birth to more grave and earnest discussion than that which is now to claim our attention. And so much extravagance has been indulged in by the respective advocates of the two extreme positions—the friends and the enemies of human creeds—that it is with reluctance I venture to record my judgment on the premises. But bearing so palpably as the question does upon the grand design of the present treatise, its consideration could not be wholly disregarded without exhibiting a manifest deficiency, while the work perhaps would fail thereby to accomplish its principal object. I shall, therefore, disregard the considerations which have tempted me to confine my remarks to the most general aspects of the subject, and endeavor to bring out somewhat prominently its specific characteristics, in so far as they are connected with exegetical science.

We have seen that the Augsburg Confession of Faith was a practical repudiation of the principles of Protestantism; that it introduced the most uncompromising and intolerant dogmatism; that it established a precedent which, with here and there an exception, has, been followed by the founders of all Protestant sects; and that it superinduced the dogmatic method of interpretation—the necessary result of dogmatic creeds.

It must now be determined, to the satisfaction of those interested, whether the principle that private judgment is the right of all, that upon which Luther and his compeers acted, was right or wrong; for if it was right then, it is right now; and if wrong now, it was always wrong. It must be either right or wrong;—let us try the creeds upon each of the suppositions:—

1. First, then, we take the ground that the principle is absolutely right; then it follows that all Protestants who have departed from it by making a "positive creed" which determines beforehand what the interpretation of a large part of revelation shall be, and which inflicts penalties and disabilities for departing from that interpretation, are standing out in opposition to the right; for if the principle be right, to make a creed which violates it must be wrong.

I am aware that when this point is pressed, the advocates of creeds reply that they are not authoritative, not positive and dogmatic, and do not control the judgment. But this is as much as to say that they are mere useless lumber. What *good* is there in a creed which is not enforced? What *benefit* in rules which do not bind? Why *retain* a confession which is but a dead letter? Such questions always bring out in one form or another the confession that creeds are "necessary as *standards of orthodoxy*;" that they are "indispensable to *keep out heresy*;" that they are "essential to *maintain uniformity*!" But if they do all this, then they have life, influence, power, authority; then they control the judgment; then they violate the principle of Protestantism; then they are wrong, if that principle is right!

2. They are forced, therefore, in consistency, to flee to the other hypothesis, and to take hold of the other horn, that the principle itself is wrong. Let us admit, then, for the sake of the argument, that it is wrong; that it is not adapted to the use of men in their present condition; that men have not the right to exercise private judgment, and to interpret Scripture for themselves. Then it follows that the whole Protestant movement was *wrong from its inception*; because neither Luther, nor Calvin, nor Melancthon, nor Zwingli, had the right to interpret Scripture contrary to the canons and decretals of the church. They based their right of forming an independent judgment upon the correctness of the *general principle*, and if that principle was wrong, then their action was wrong. But if the principle was right, then all the subsequent development of Protestantism was wrong in not carrying it out. Whether, therefore, the principle is right or wrong, Protestant creeds are left wholly without defense.

But the other distinguishing principle of Protestantism—the Bible alone—has been shown in a previous chapter to be also inconsistent with the various rules of faith and practice which are enforced along with it; hence, looking at the subject only in the light of these two principles, our course is plain: we must, to be consistent, either give up our creeds or our principles. If we give up the creeds, we shall retain all the wisdom and truth, all the precepts and promises, all the hopes and enjoyments, and all the instruction and consolation, which God has furnished us in his word. We lose nothing but our inconsistency, while we place

ourselves in the attitude most favorable to the reception of the communications of the Bible, in their true and consistent sense. Whereas, if we give up our principles, we prove our creeds to be wrong in the very making of them, while we perpetuate in society the false interpretations to which they have given birth. A revolution of some kind must sooner or later take place; for whether the fundamental principles of Protestantism be true or false, they imperatively demand a radical change in the constitution of Protestant society. If true, they must be carried out—if false, we must go back to Romanism.

## SECTION II.

Let us now look into the constitution of the creeds, and observe the materials of which they are made. In the first place, they give false views of the Christian faith, by exalting metaphysical speculations to an equality with the divine facts revealed and assured to our belief. Not content with the simple faith of the first Christians, they embody speculative views concerning the divine nature, the human mind, the origin of evil, the necessity and freedom of the will, the eternal decrees of God, etc. etc., as parts of the faith of the gospel; and then the acceptance of creeds thus formed is made a prerequisite to membership. Thus undue importance is given to matters which, if treated of at all in revelation, are always distinctly subordinate. Things are assigned to the first place in the creeds, which in the Bible have the second. Take, for example, the subject of Election. In those creeds which embrace it in any of its phases, it forms a prominent and essential part of *the faith*; and, as a matter of course, it must be looked into, weighed, and studied over by every one who desires and proposes to join the church,—and his mind must be satisfied upon it before he can, as an honest man, come forward and publicly profess to believe it as it is recorded in the confession before him. Whereas, Peter and Paul, on the contrary, said nothing whatever on that subject in preaching *to the world*. With them, it formed not a part—of *the faith*, but of the subsequent *instruction*. They also were primarily concerned in inducing men to *accept* the grace of God, rather than in perplexing their minds with the question, whether it were possible to fall from or lose that grace. This belonged to a subsequent period. And so of every speculation upon

every "doctrinal" subject in the various creeds of Christendom, whether true or false, in themselves considered, they are *false* in the *position* they are made to occupy. They were never presented to the world by the Apostles as primary objects of faith.

Indeed, no doctrine of the Bible is, independently, or in itself, an object of faith. It is embraced in the great fact that *Jesus is the Christ*. We are required to believe in him, and this involves the acceptance of all he teaches; while the doctrine is not commended to us by testimony concerning *itself*, but by testimony concerning *Him* who teaches it. In this appears the propriety of the order observed by the Apostles. They first presented Jesus and him alone, in all the glory of his Sonship and Messiahship—his person and offices, accompanied by testimonies calculated to make men "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Having produced this faith in him as Prophet, Priest, and King, they did not have to convey his doctrine "in the words which man's wisdom teacheth," but simply to propound and enforce it by his authority, in the words of his Spirit, as something which they were pledged by their faith to receive. All sound Christian doctrine, then, stands or falls with this faith. Take it away, and all the speculations of the creeds, allowing them every one to be true, will vanish "like the baseless fabric of a vision." Not being themselves fundamental, not being independent objects of belief, so soon as the faith from which they have sprung, and by which they are supported, is destroyed, they must fall with it. Hence, as all true doctrine upon all spiritual subjects flows directly and necessarily from the intelligent and implicit belief in Jesus, embracing the profound and ample significance contained in the proposition that he was and is *the Christ, the Son of God*, this is the only primary and fundamental object of the Christian faith,—the true center from which radiates all the light and truth of the Bible. Hence, too, all those systems which equalize this faith with metaphysical speculations, and doctrines not fundamental, whether those doctrines be true or false in themselves considered, destroy the symmetrical proportions of the Bible, and place men in false positions from which to study Christ's institutions.

Every creed, therefore, which contains more than is necessary to constitute a man a Christian, is unapostolic, pernicious, and schismatic; generating strife and division, and debarring worthy persons from the privileges of the church; while every one which

contains less, is worthless by falling short of saving faith, and delusive by keeping this deficiency out of sight. Now the only faith in Christendom which contains neither more nor less than what is essential to the constitution of a Christian, is that preached by the Apostles in the original propagation of the gospel.

To make this evident, we have only to place the respective advocates of the various creeds on the stand, and hear them testify to the non-essentiality of their most cherished points. We take a Calvinist, for example, and ask him, Can a man be a Christian who does not believe your doctrine of eternal, unconditional, and personal election? And notwithstanding he may be a most strenuous advocate of the dogma, he will solemnly respond in the affirmative. Then, we answer, that doctrine is not essential to the constitution of a Christian, and has been unduly and unwarrantably exalted in being placed among the necessary and fundamental articles of the Christian faith. We next take an Arminian and put the same question, Can a man be a Christian who rejects your peculiar views as distinguished from Calvinism? And dear as those views are to him, and zealously as he has advocated them, he is constrained by the force of truth and conscience to answer in the affirmative. Then we make the same charge against him—that he has corrupted the simple faith of the gospel, by introducing as articles of faith matters which belong to a different category. And so if we should go through the several articles in the various creeds and confessions of Protestant sects, we should find them filled—not only in the judgment of their opponents, but also in that of their advocates—with matter which, being extraneous and non-essential, must necessarily be schismatic and pernicious.

But suppose we apply this test to "the faith which was once delivered to the saints,"—that which is common to all, that which gives to all alike the title to be recognized as Christians even by their opponents,—and how different the response! Can a man be a Christian who does not believe that the Christ has come in the flesh, that Jesus of Nazareth was and is that Christ, that he is the Son of God? In short, can he be a Christian who does not believe the gospel? The answer is an emphatic *No!* without the least hesitation, from every shade and type of Protestantism. The reason is, that this faith is recognized and felt to be that which is essential to the constitution of a Christian. Nothing short of this is sufficient;

nothing more is necessary. But to believe this is to oblige one to obey all the commandments, to heed all the instructions, and to cherish all the promises of the Saviour, either oracularly delivered in person or by those to whom he delegated the authority. In fact, the whole Bible is but a radiation from this glorious personage; and all its facts, precepts, promises, hopes, fears, and enjoyments, are intimately and indissolubly connected with him. To believe in him, then, is to believe in and accept the whole Bible; and to have no other faith is to reject all but the Bible, which brings us, literally and *practically to the great cardinal principle of Protestantism*—THE BIBLE, THE WHOLE BIBLE, AND NOTHING BUT THE BIBLE.

And standing at this angle, all the doctrine of revelation, whether on the subject of election, predestination, sin, holiness, sacrifice, atonement, grace, faith, works, justification, redemption, glory, honor, immortality—in short, every divine communication, will be viewed not as revolving around the centers of Calvinism, or Arminianism; of Lutheranism, Universalism, Trinitarianism, or Unitarianism; but around Christ, the great central sun of the spiritual solar system. All the motives and temptations for distorting the Scriptures will be taken away, and the distortion itself must cease. Men having no system of their own to support, and being connected alone with the system of Christ, will be willing to let the Bible mean what it says; and ceasing to dogmatize as proficients, they will begin meekly to study as disciples.

### **SECTION III.**

Another serious objection to human creeds, and one which the above position alone will enable us to remove, is that they are mainly the offspring of extreme views. They are not generally the sober conclusions of a calm, cool, and dispassionate judgment, but the result of fiery contests and furious debates. The enemies of a supposed truth drove its friends to express it in stronger terms than the Bible will justify; to prevent it from being undervalued, they gave it too much prominence. The consequence has been, a destruction of the beautiful symmetry and just proportions possessed by the Christian system as it emanated from the hands of its Author. Thus all parties have usually taken extreme ground,—one going too far to the right, and another to the left; while truth

was passed over by all, and left, unappropriated, in the middle. An apt illustration of this, and one which has the advantage of being familiar, is found in the ground taken by the respective advocates of justification by faith, and justification by works. There can be no doubt that faith is a cardinal item in Christianity, one absolutely essential to a man's acceptability in the sight of God; equally clear is it that good works are authoritatively enjoined, and form an essential element in the Christian character. It would seem to be but the dictate of common sense, then, to blend the two together, insisting upon both, in the order in which the Scriptures present them, as equally divine. Instead of which the great labor of theologians seems to have been to separate them, and force the Scriptures to teach that here and hereafter a man is justified either by faith alone, or by works alone. Neither position is true; works without faith are utterly valueless, and faith without works is dead and powerless. The Scriptures quoted by each party are true, full of meaning, and immensely important; but they become false in their application of them to these extreme views.

I am persuaded, from a somewhat careful and impartial study of polemic theology, compared with the teachings of the holy Scriptures, that in a large majority of instances all parties are wrong. In seeking to separate their views entirely from those of their opponents, to give them a conspicuous distinctness, and to form them into an independent system, they have broken up the, *connections* and destroyed the *relations* in which the subjects are found in Holy Writ, and have given them a false coloring, a factitious value, and an unscriptural importance. Let anyone dispassionately read the Bible with reference, for instance, to the controversy between the Calvinists and Arminians, and I am persuaded, if he accept without reserve the teaching of that book, that he will reach a conclusion widely differing both from the one side and the other, and which yet partakes somewhat of the nature of each. The texts which have been held to teach the respective doctrines are commingled in Scripture, and reciprocally modify and limit each other's meaning. Schoolmen and controversialists separate them, tear them away with violent hands from the connections which serve to qualify and explain them, and the result is, if not falsehood, a gross perversion of truth. And now, as if to prevent mankind from ever looking at them with unbiased eye, as



they really exist in the Bible, these ultra-views are embodied in a platform or creed, and their respective advocates go forth to muster volunteers. The impression is unavoidably produced that one side or the other *must be right*; and no one seems to think that both may be right when modified, and both wrong as they are.

Now if men were left free, i.e. if they were not forced to give in their adhesion to one view or the other upon peril of being debarred the privileges of the church, or—for it amounts to this practically—upon the peril of losing their souls, these errors would be more easily and speedily corrected. But such is not the case. These ultra-notions are made the basis of a church, and every member pledges himself to their support. Having once taken the step, we all know the difficulty in the way of formal retraction. Men have an instinctive dread of being called inconsistent, and with most men consistency means never to change! To avoid this the Scriptures are interpreted according to those false methods we have endeavored to expose, and by means of allegory, mysticism, and dogmatism, the system can maintain its ground until it expires as if by its own limitation; for all human systems, in matters of religion, must inevitably be temporary. Called into being by the circumstances and prejudices of a particular age or nation, they can never be permanent or universal. Their importance is factitious, and their beauty of appearance results rather from the excited state of those who gaze upon them, than from any conformity of their nature to the true principles of moral and spiritual æsthetics. Hence, notwithstanding the difficulties in the way, they are perpetually changing, receiving modifications, additions, and special adaptations, to enable them to maintain their influence in society, and exhibit the phenomena of a vitality which is not inherent. While hundreds of human systems have flourished for a time and then passed forever from the history of the church, others have taken their place and are now undergoing those changes which are the stamp of their origin.<sup>1</sup> Calvinism is not what it was;

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<sup>1</sup> On the mutations of human creeds, the reader will allow us to quote some remarks from Isaac Taylor. "This same period," he says, "this sixty years—which has made us so much more liberal, and, in a sense, more serious too than were our fathers, and in which refinement and discretion have done so much for us—has touched, not our creeds indeed, so as to remove any one article from

Arminianism has changed its face; other isms have been forced to adapt themselves to the requirements of an increasing intelligence; and if the founders of existing sects could rise from the dead, they could with difficulty recognize their own churches. The men who to-day are prostituting their talents in the well-meant labor of fitting Scripture to their systems, will have their work remodeled by their successors, as they have undone that of their fathers. Gradually, mayhap imperceptibly, the change will take place, and thus the standard of orthodoxy which tests the meaning of the Bible will be perpetually different, while the Bible will be perpetually perverted to its support.

#### SECTION IV.

Before dismissing the subject, it is proper that we should give a respectful hearing to what may be urged in favor of that which we have felt called upon to oppose. We will therefore give a somewhat

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them, but it has touched the depths of our convictions as to the whole, and as to several points of our belief. There is little, perhaps, in the cycle of our predecessors' confession of faith which, if challenged to relinquish it, we should consent to see erased. But, whether we be distinctly conscious of the fact or not, there has come to stand over against each article of that belief a counterbalance—an influence of abatement, an unadjusted surmise, an adverse feeling, neither assented to nor dismissed, but which holds the mind in perpetual suspense. The creed of this time is—let us say—word for word the creed of sixty years ago; but, if such a simile might be allowed, these *items* of our 'Confession' *now* fill one side of a balance sheet, on the other side of which there stands a heavy charge which has not yet been ascertained or agreed to. If this alleged state of the case be resented—as it will, by some—it will be tacitly assented to by the more thoughtful and ingenuous reader." *Wesley and Methodism*, p. 19.

Again, page 17, he says: "The Methodism of the eighteenth century has, we say, ceased to have any extant representative among us." To this remark he refers on page 189: "METHODISM we have spoken of as that which has *long ago accomplished its purpose*, and has *passed away*; to other moods and modes of thinking it has given place; and with its *nominal* representative—the modern Wesleyan Methodism—we have no more to do, in these pages, than with any other existing religious body."

So with all other isms—that which they nominally represent has passed away, and that which they now are is passing away. Shall we continue to rest satisfied with any system whose very nature is transient and mutable, when we may, if we please, find that which is permanent and unchangeable?

lengthy extract from Archbishop Whately, an author distinguished alike for logical acumen and profound scholarship. And the reader will observe—unless we have entirely mistaken the meaning of the learned prelate—that while his *conclusion is against us, his premises and his arguments are all for us.*<sup>1</sup>

"We are inclined to think," says he, "that if Christians had studied the Scriptures carefully and honestly, and relied on these more than their philosophical systems of divinity, the *incarnation*, for instance, and the *Trinity*, would never have been doubted, nor *named*. And this at least is certain, that as scientific theories and technical phraseology gained ground, party animosity raged the more violently.

"The proper objection to the various philosophical systems of religion,—the different hypotheses and theories that have been introduced to *explain* the Christian Dispensation,—is not the difficulties that have been urged (often with good reason) against *each*, separately; but the fault that belongs to *all* of them equally. It is not that the Arian theory of the incarnation, for instance, is wrong for *this* reason, and the Nestorian for *that*, and the Eutychian for *another*, and so on; but they are *all wrong* alike, because they *are theories* relative to matters on which it is vain and absurd and irreverent to attempt forming *any* philosophical theories whatever. And the *same*, we think, may be said of the various schemes (devised either by those divines called the Schoolmen, or others,) on which it has been attempted from time to time to explain other religious mysteries also in the divine nature and dispensations. We would object, for instance, to the Pelagian theory, and to the Calvinistic theory, and the Armenian theory, and others, not for reasons *peculiar* to each one, but for such as apply in *common to all*.

"Philosophical divines are continually prone to forget that the subjects on which they speculate are, *confessedly*, and by their own account, beyond the reach of the human faculties. This is no reason, indeed, against our believing anything *revealed in Scripture*, but it is a reason against our going *beyond* Scripture with metaphysical speculations of our own. One of the many

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<sup>1</sup> 2 See Preliminary Dissertations; Encyc. Brit., Dis. 3

objections to this is, that they thus lay open Christianity to *infidel objections*, such as it would otherwise have been safe from.

"What the Scriptures are concerned with is, not the philosophy of the human mind in itself, but (that which is properly *religion*) the *relation* and connection of the two beings;—what God is *to us*, what he has *done* and will *do* for us, and what we are to be and to do in regard to him."

After illustrating this point, and showing that men *must, ex necessitate rei*, exercise the right of private judgment to a certain extent, he proceeds to speak of catechisms, creeds, and symbols more particularly, and says:—

"This would have seemed a most obvious and effectual mode of precluding all future disorders and disputes; as also the drawing up of a compendious statement of Christian doctrines would have seemed a safeguard against the still more important evil of heretical error. Yet if any such statements or formularies *had* been drawn up, with the sanction and under the revision of an Apostle, we may be sure they would have been preserved and transmitted to posterity with the most scrupulous and reverential care. The conclusion, therefore, seems inevitable, that either *no one* of the numerous elders or catechists *ever thought of doing this*, or else they were *forbidden by the Apostles* to execute any such design; and each of these alternatives seems alike inexplicable by natural causes. Since, then, no one of the first promulgators of Christianity did that which they must—some of them at least—have been *naturally* led to do, it follows that they must have been *supernaturally* withheld from it, how little soever we may be able even to conjecture the object of the prohibition. . . . That a number of *Jews*, accustomed from their infancy to so strict a ritual, should, in introducing Christianity, have abstained not only from accurately prescribing, for the use of all Christian churches forever, the mode of divine worship, but even from recording what was actually in use under their own directions, does seem utterly incredible, unless we suppose them to have been *restrained from doing this by a special admonition of the Divine Spirit*."

Such are the premises, and such the arguments and seasonings of the learned Archbishop. We thank him for them; for we think they are not only true and unanswerable, but that, being such, they triumphantly sustain the position we have feebly attempted to

occupy. But what is *his conclusion*? It is briefly this: That the Divine Spirit prohibited the making of creeds and symbols, "that all churches might be free to arrange these matters according to the circumstances or exigencies of each particular case!" And such is the conclusion of the author of the "Elements of Logic!" The Holy Spirit did not bind men to symbols of *divine*, that the church might be *free* to bind them to those of *human authority*! The Divine Spirit prohibited *competent* men making creeds, that *incompetent* men might be free to do so! The first Christians were "*supernaturally withheld*" from following the "*natural*" promptings of the human heart, as proof to all subsequent Christians that these "*natural*" promptings are right! The Spirit of God *forbade* the making of confessions of faith, therefore it is the privilege and duty of the church to make them! According, then, to the reasoning of our standard logician, murder, theft, robbery, drunkenness, and adultery, fall legitimately within the circle of Christian freedom. They are the "*natural*" promptings of the heart, "*forbidden*" by the holy Spirit, and are, *therefore*, right and proper!

But it is only when the distinguished Archbishop is fettered by his own inconsistency that he is forced to make such havoc of Scripture and logic. Give him but the smallest portion of freedom—or even the semblance of it—and his mind instantly manifests its accustomed clearness and strength. For instance, speaking of the effect of creeds, had they been formed by apostolic direction,—which, we remark, is equally true, in the different parties, of those formed upon the above logic,—he says:—

"In fact, all study, properly so called, of the rest of Scripture,—all lively interest in its perusal, —would have been nearly superseded by such an inspired compendium of doctrine; to which alone, as far the most convenient for that purpose, habitual reference would have been made in any questions that might arise. Both would have been regarded, indeed, as of divine authority; but the compendium, as the fused and purified metal—the other, as the mine containing the crude ore. . . . The orthodoxy of most persons would have been, as it were, petrified, like the bodies of those animals we read of incrustated in the ice of the polar regions; firm fixed, indeed, and preserved unchangeable, but cold, motionless, lifeless.

"It is only when our energies are roused, and our faculties exercised, and our attention kept awake, by an ardent pursuit of truth, and anxious watchfulness against error, when, in short, we feel ourselves to be doing something towards acquiring, or retaining, or improving our knowledge,—it is then only, that that knowledge makes the requisite practical impression on the heart and conduct."

Here, again, we admire the reasoning and embrace the truths of the able gentleman, but are forced to reject his conclusion. It is as follows: "To the church, then, has her all-wise Founder left the office of *teaching*, to the Scriptures that of *proving* the Christian doctrines."

This we must regard as most pernicious. It is the office of the church, we think, to *teach the Scriptures*,—TO PREACH THE WORD,—and not some symbols or creeds called "Christian doctrines," which every party thinks may be *proved* by the Scriptures. But the ground of the Archbishop is precisely that occupied by the religious world. The Scriptures are not consulted as the *teacher of Christ's religion*, but to find *proof* of every man's creed. And as, according to the methods hitherto pursued, almost *anything* can be *proved* by the Scriptures, they have come to mean anything, or everything, or nothing, "according to the circumstances or exigencies of each particular case."

We know of no abler or more respectable advocate of human creeds than the right reverend gentleman we have just quoted. And from what he advances, we see nothing to change, but everything to confirm us in the correctness of the position previously assumed: that a standard of orthodoxy can only be made among Protestants by the exercise of the right of private judgment, and then can only *be* a standard by taking away that right; that, hence, we must either give up our principles in order to retain our standards,—and thus go back to Rome,—and then, after all, we must give up our standards because they do not rest upon principle, and because, not being infallible, they do not meet the requirements of the case; and thus, by another road, we get back to Rome. All of which is avoided by giving up our standards and retaining our principles, thus being Protestants in fact as well as in theory.

Viewing the subject, therefore, in the light of its bearings upon the science of interpretation alone—for all we have said has had respect to this—we are constrained to believe that a consistent, satisfactory, and uniform interpretation of God's holy book—such as meets the just requirements of the case—is dependent primarily upon the sacrifice of all human standards and symbols of faith. By this I do not mean written creeds exclusively, but *all prejudice* of whatever kind, and I specify *written* speculations and theories more particularly, because they render prejudice more inflexible and difficult of removal, and because they seem to compel men, as if by the wand of authority, to resort to those logical abuses and self-impositions which we have seen culminating in the Scholastic dogmatism of the fourteenth century.

In advocating this course, which may seem harsh and radical to some, but which, nevertheless, is believed to be the true conservatism, I have the satisfaction to know that in an analogous case it resulted in that very certainty and agreement so much needed and desired in religion. So long as the Dogmatic Method was pursued in the study of nature, there was no unanimity among men and no satisfaction in their conclusions. Every man had his cherished theory, and the object of his study was to harmonize nature with it. Hypotheses and counter-hypotheses existed without number, while the volume of nature was not asked to *teach*, but to *confirm*, to *prove*. The more phenomena that could be explained upon any theory just as now the more Scripture that can be expounded in accordance with some dogma—the greater the triumph. There was, consequently, no well-defined natural science until Lord Bacon induced men to abandon their theories—to give up all their *idola*, false appearances, or prejudices—and consult nature for *truth*, and not for proof.

The result was an incalculable advancement in every department of science. The controversies about theories, hatched out in the study, were hushed; and men set to work to *learn* the laws of nature from nature itself, and not as formerly to *make* laws for it. As a part of the fruit of this change of method, we have the science of Astronomy in all its accuracy, wonder, and glory,—those of Chemistry, Mineralogy, Geology, Botany, and others, all resting, as far as they have been brought to perfection, upon bases of unquestionable facts, with not a voice in all the world raised in

controversy against them. Nor is it deemed necessary, in order to keep out scientific heresy, to weave the conclusions thus reached into a sort of authoritative creed; for it is found to conduce to the progress of truth, and not falsehood, to leave every mind perfectly free to question, controvert, oppose, reject, or adopt them, as his reason or folly may determine; but to command *respect and attention* his objections must be based, like the sciences themselves, upon facts. To cavil at, or oppose these, is simply to make one's self ridiculous and contemptible.

The ten thousand subjects of controversy, which men thought could never by any possibility be settled, have all been dissipated, and everything is reduced to one single point—*Are these the facts?* While speculative and metaphysical theories necessarily receive a particular type, color, and modification from every individual mind, and are, therefore, as infinitely various as are the mental capacities which embrace them, facts are the same to all.

We have said that by inaugurating the true method of consulting nature, Bacon destroyed the influence of dogmatism in scientific research; but he confined his labors almost exclusively to the volume of physical nature, while the old method maintained the ascendancy over the volume of revelation, as it did for a long while in metaphysics.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sir William Hamilton, speaking of this method, says: "Instead of humbly resorting to consciousness to draw from thence his doctrines and their proof, each dogmatic speculator looked only into consciousness, there to discover his pre-adopted opinions. In philosophy men have abused the code of natural, as is theology the code of positive revelation; and the epigraph of a great Protestant divine, on the book of Scripture, is certainly not less applicable to the book of consciousness:—

"Hic liber est in quo quaerit sua dogmata quisque  
Invenit, et pariter dogmata quisque sua.

"This is the book where each his dogma seeks;  
And this the book where each his dogma finds."



In the following book we shall make an attempt to show that in so far at least as they are the sources of our faith and practice, the Scriptures admit of being studied and expounded upon the principles of the inductive method; and that, when thus interpreted, they speak to us in a voice as certain and unmistakable as the language of nature heard in the experiments and observations of science.<sup>1</sup>

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This extract, from one of the ablest men of the present age, while it corroborates all we have said of the *presence* of dogmatism in the interpretation of Protestants, is not less pointed in its *condemnation* of it.

<sup>1</sup> We cannot refrain from requesting the reader to concentrate his attention upon the following profound and truly encouraging remarks of Isaac Taylor, to which we will add, in passing, such observations as may serve to show the connection in which they occur. This great thinker saw, as all unbiased minds must see, the necessary tendency of our imperfectly carried out Protestantism to Romanism; and he says, a time will come when "those who loathe these idolatries, and who resent this despotism, will find themselves driven in upon the only position where a stand may *by any means* be made, namely, the authority of Scripture; this being held as absolute, and not to be abated by admixture with any other pretended sources of belief . . . At such a time there will not remain an inch of space whereon the foot may rest between these two positions; that is to say, unless, in the most peremptory manner, and to the exclusion of all reserves or evasions, *the sense of Scripture, ascertained and interpreted on a true principle*, be resolutely adhered to, there is nothing gross or abominable in the superstitions of Southern Europe that must not be submitted to." He goes on to say, that this contest against "Romanism and Ritualism" will be carried on by "well-taught biblical scholars, who will feel, as we of this time do not feel, the necessity, *first*, of defining with unambiguous explicitness, what it is they mean when they speak of the apostolic writings as 'given by inspiration of God,' and then of laying down, and of invariably adhering to, certain principles of interpretation." After speaking of the *first* of these preliminary labors, he proceeds:—

"As to the *second*, it will flow out naturally from the first, *and it will bear an analogy to the revolution that was effected in physical science by the promulgation of the BACONIAN PHILOSOPHY, and in accordance with that analogy it will effect the final EXPULSION OF METAPHYSICAL SCHEMES OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE; in the room of which will come the fearless THEOLOGY OF INTERPRETATION*; offering to the eye, as it must, many of those breaks and 'faults'—those *inferences*—irreconcilable the one with the other—which are, and must ever be, the characteristics of a theology that is fragmentary and disjointed."

Again, speaking of the coming movement under the name of "Methodism," in

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contrast with the past Methodism, he says "The past Methodism took to itself the *belief which it found*; but the coming Methodism must derive its belief *anew* from Scripture, by bringing to bear upon this difficult subject a *reformed principle of biblical interpretation*." Finally, he says: "Those who, through a course of years, have been used to read the Scriptures unshackled by systems, and bound to no conventional modes of belief, such readers must have felt an impatience in waiting, not for the arrival of a new revelation from heaven, but of an *ample and unfettered interpretation* of that which has been so long in our hands."—*Wesley and Methodism*, pp. 286 to 290; Harper's edition, 1855.

BOOK SECOND:  
*THE ORGANON.*

# PART I: THE INDUCTIVE METHOD.

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## CHAPTER I: *Definition Of Terms.*

THE order we purpose to observe in the treatment of the subject of this book, is the following: We shall begin with the definition and general explanation of the Inductive Method; then, by the aid of the lights thus furnished, inquire whether this method may be followed in the interpretation of the holy Scriptures; having determined this affirmatively, we shall proceed to a particular analysis of the method, giving illustrations of the use and application of the several steps, drawn both from science and revelation. This will conclude the first part. The second will be devoted to the Axioms, Principles, and Rules involved in determining the exact signification of words, together with such kindred matter as may arise in the discussion of the main subject.

We shall now attempt to define in general terms, and to explain so clearly the meaning of the inductive method, that even those who are not familiar with philosophical and scientific terminology may have no difficulty in comprehending the scope and design of the ensuing part of the present work. And as all we have yet written has been but a preparation for what is still to come, it is hardly necessary for us to solicit from the reader his undivided attention.

We begin with the word Induction, and give its definition as contained in the highest lexicographical authority—Ogilvie's Webster's Imperial Dictionary. This defines it to be "a material illation of a universal from a singular, as warranted either by the general analogy of nature, or the special presumptions afforded by the object matter of any real science." The same work quotes a perspicuous explanation from Isaac Taylor. "Induction," says he, "is the drawing or leading off an inference or general fact from a number of instances, or it is the summing up of the result of observations and experiments. It was Lord Bacon who introduced

this term into philosophy; and who, moreover, taught the true method of acquiring a knowledge of the laws of nature, by attending to facts, and by carefully comparing a great number of instances; instead of the old method of philosophizing, which consisted in forming a theory, or supposition, independently of all facts, and then explaining the appearances of nature on the blind assumption that the theory was true. The old method was the shortest and the easiest; but it was utterly fallacious. The modern or Baconian method is laborious and difficult; but it is successful, and has proved in the highest degree beneficial."

Let us next hear from Lord Bacon himself. He says: "In forming axioms, we must invent a different form of induction 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 (*per 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."<sup>1</sup>

While, then, the word induction signifies the illation of a universal from a singular, the drawing or leading, off a general inference from a number of instances, the rising from particular facts to general laws,—this would very inadequately define that induction introduced and advocated by Lord Bacon; for in this there was nothing new and nothing valuable. And hence, some eminent authors, overlooking, it would seem, the peculiarity of the Baconian induction, have sought to detract from his fame as the father of experimental science. But the case assumes an entirely different aspect, when it is remembered that it was not simply induction, but a peculiar *method* of induction that he proposed. He did not originate, nor did he advocate the method of simple induction; on the contrary, he was sedulously careful to guard men against it, and to expose and oppose it with all the clearness and

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<sup>1</sup> Novum Organum, book 1: aph. 105

strength of his great mind. The induction which he advocated required the collection of *numerous* facts or particulars; that they should be *carefully studied and compared*; that whatever was special and exceptional, should be *excluded* or *rejected*; that contrary or *negative instances* should be duly weighed; and that there should be no ascent to the general conclusion, until after all this care, diligence, and circumspection.

But even this, though it may indicate the meaning of the word induction as used by Bacon, by no means furnishes a complete idea of the inductive method. That included, besides this careful induction, which was always the first step in the process, another element which was exactly the reverse of it, namely, *deduction*; which descends from the general to the particular; from the whole to the parts included in it; which arms that if a given general proposition be true, it follows of *necessity* that some other one embraced in it must also be true. It is true that this element of his method was not fully drawn out by Bacon himself, because he did not live to finish his Great Instauration. It is, nevertheless, an essential part of the magnificent scheme he projected, and has been ably unfolded and illustrated by successors of his, who are not unworthy to be ranked even with a name so illustrious and a genius so wonderful.

If asked to specify the precise province of deduction in this method, we reply that it is twofold: first, to *verify* the conclusions or generalizations of induction; and secondly, to *conduct to new truth* embraced in those conclusions. But, strictly speaking, it is not, perhaps, so accurate to say that deduction serves to verify, as that it starts us on the track that leads to verification. It says, if this conclusion be true, then this also must be true, and this, and this; and here it pauses. Having pointed out to us the direction that our conclusion *must* take, if it be true, and the goal to which it is *obliged* to conduct, it leaves us to watch the result; to determine *by observation* whether our induction holds good in its consequences; and to ascertain whether other particulars of the same class, not embraced in the original process, are explicable by the conclusion we have reached. Thus deduction points out the means of verification. It tells us where to look for our law if it be what it purports to be; and then, but not till then, after we have thus looked and discovered the fulfillment of the prediction, after we have put

our generalization to the proof, are we fully satisfied of its truth. It is verified; it is proved; it is scientific; it enables us to predict. Thus we go up and down the ladder; from particulars to generals, and from generals to particulars; from individuals to classes, and from these back to individuals. Everything has its place and its use, and unites with everything else in proclaiming that *truth must be consistent with fact*, upon which it depends.

Again, having risen to the general truth, and verified it, every legitimate conclusion from it is also true. Thus deduction multiplies the truths reached by the opposite process. In some instances in natural science, moreover, these conclusions have been deduced from *hypotheses*, and some of the greatest discoveries have been made in this way. Not that induction was set aside, for all such conclusions were verified by it before they were held as truth; but in cases where it was difficult or impossible to resort in the first instance to direct induction, philosophers commenced by saying, IF such an hypothesis be true, such and such results will follow. This, however, is very different from dogmatism; it is not a positive declaration that their guess is true, but a mere temporary assumption of its truth for the sake of the experiment. And now, if the predicted results follow, what are we authorized to conclude? That the guess is true? That the hypothesis is sound? No. These furnish only a strong probability in its favor. How do we know but that the same phenomena might be accounted for upon each of several other hypotheses? How do we know that it does not contravene some law written upon hundreds of other phenomena of the same class, and that these are but the negative or exceptional cases? The hypothesis, then, must be verified. We must go to work inductively to collect facts, to weigh and compare them, in order to see what they teach. The mere fact that an hypothesis will serve to explain many phenomena, is not proof positive of its correctness, because that explanation may not be the most natural one. The Ptolemaic system of the universe served to explain nearly if not quite all the phenomena. On Newton's hypothesis of light, all the phenomena were explained for many years, and it was not till quite recently that it was *proved*

to be incorrect.<sup>1</sup> And hence, though we may, and often do, perceive a scientific truth before we resort to the inductive method, we can never *know it to be* truth till afterwards.

This, then, is what we mean by the Inductive, or Baconian method,—not induction opposed to deduction, but both combined in opposition to dogmatism. It is the telescope by the aid of which we read the inscriptions upon facts, and perceive those general principles which presided when they were written. If these inscriptions can be made clearer by turning them for a moment to the light of an hypothesis, viewed *as* an hypothesis, it authorizes and even requires us to do so. But if, as is almost always the case, we prefer to hold the mind in abeyance, and compel it to wait, without even guessing the conclusion, till the testimony of all the facts, like so many individual witnesses, is heard, we shall in this way, too, be following the guiding direction of the *Novum Organum Scientiarum*. And when we are still in doubt, after hearing the evidence of all the witnesses, which of two possible conclusions is correct, the method requires us to settle the point by deduction. We are to assume first the one and then the other, and argue from them respectively to the facts, till we determine in which the logical consequences and the facts all agree. All this and more is clearly presented by Playfair, in the following quotation from his Preliminary Dissertation, in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*:—<sup>2</sup>

"Having collected the facts," he says, "the next object is to find out the cause of the phenomenon, its *form*, (in the language of Bacon,) or its essence. The *form* of any quality in a body is something convertible with that quality, i.e. where one is present, the other must be also. It differs nothing from *cause*, but we apply it when the result is not an event or change, but a permanent quality.

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<sup>1</sup> The reader may consult, on the subject introduced in the text, Whewell's *History of the Inductive Sciences*; in the additions to the second volume of which, page 605, he will find a description of the interesting experiment which resulted in the final disproof of the emission theory of light, by showing that its velocity was less in water than in air.

<sup>2</sup> Dissertation 4



"In order to inquire into the form, that is, the cause or essence of anything, we begin by inquiring what things are thereby excluded from the number of possible forms. This is the first part of the process of induction. It confines the field of hypothesis and brings the true explanation within narrower limits. Thus, if we were inquiring into the quality which is the cause of transparency in bodies, from the fact that the diamond is transparent we immediately exclude rarity or porosity as well as fluidity from those causes, the diamond being very solid and dense. Negative instances are those where the given *form* is wanting. Thus, in inquiring into the *form* of transparency, compounded glass, is a negative instance—being not transparent; so also are clouds and fogs.

"After a great number of exclusions have left but few principles common to every case, one of these is to be assumed as the cause; and by reasoning from it synthetically, we are to try if it will account for the phenomena."

Again: "All facts are not equally valuable in the discovery of truth. Some of them show the thing sought for in its highest degree, some in its lowest; some exhibit it simple and uncombined, in others it appears confused with a variety of circumstances. Some facts are easily interpreted, others are very obscure, and are understood only in consequence of the light thrown on them by the former. This led Bacon to consider what he calls the Prerogatives of Instances, the comparative value of facts as means of discovery or as instruments of investigation."

As an example of the pursuit of the inductive method, we may instance the process by which Sir Isaac Newton arrived at the theory of universal gravitation. From a large number of facts and experiments regarding the falling of bodies towards the earth's center, he reached the conclusion that *all bodies* gravitate towards the earth's center with forces proportioned to their masses, and inversely as the squares of their distance from the center. In other words, from the fact that stones, sticks, apples, snow, water, and all the various objects that could be observed, were seen to gravitate in this way, he "led or drew off" the general conclusion that this was true in all cases, or that such was the doctrine or rule of terrestrial gravitation. This being verified and established, he was enabled to carry the inductive process still higher. By examining

the motions of the heavenly bodies, and availing himself of the laws of terrestrial gravitation, previously established, he arrived at a still more general conclusion, namely, that every particle of matter in the universe attracts every other particle with a force proportional to the product of their masses directly, and the square of their mutual distance inversely, and is itself attracted with an equal force. This law has been verified a thousand times and in as many different ways, and it now stands out before us an eternal monument to the excellency of a method which could point out a principle so sublime and so important written upon the face of a falling apple.

But notwithstanding the certainty we feel of the correctness of scientific conclusions thus reached and verified, let us not suppose, even for a moment, that Science or Nature addresses a higher faculty of our being than does Revelation; for in all these conclusions there is, and there must be, one assumption at least—one thing which is not *known* but *believed*—and this the most fundamental of all. The entire superstructure of science, with all its facts, data, propositions, reasonings and conclusions, rests primarily, like religion, *upon faith*. It is impossible to demonstrate, impossible to know, the universal and eternal uniformity of nature. We *believe* it; we take it for granted; we set out with this assumption; and we have confidence that though it cannot be demonstrated absolutely, it will be impossible to disprove it, or to show that our faith in it, which rests upon evidences so numerous and overwhelming, has been misplaced. Here then, *in faith*, is the pedestal of all knowledge; here science and revelation start upon the same level; and while with the inductive method applied to the one, we rise to the highest generalizations in the physical universe, with the full, unquestioned and unquestionable assurance of their truth, let us see if the same method will not conduct us, with equal assurance, to the lofty heights of that revealed truth which is spiritual, living, and powerful.

## CHAPTER II:

### *Of The Practicability Of Inductive Exegesis.*

IN this chapter we shall present an *a priori* argument for the practicability of interpreting the holy Scriptures according to the principles of the inductive method. And it is hoped that this, while it relieves the mind of the suspense which it might otherwise feel, will dispose it also to a more careful examination and consideration of what follows. In other words, to use one of the beautiful figures of Bacon, we shall first "pay down the interest" on the sum of our obligations to the reader, as a means of obtaining further indulgence "until the principal shall be raised."

God has spread out before his children two great volumes—the Book of Nature, and the Book of Revelation. In these are treasured up all the stores of wisdom and knowledge which are accessible to us in our present state. It may be true, indeed, that they are but the indexes, as it were, to those vast libraries of eternity which are to interest and instruct us forever and ever, or merely the preface to the volumes which we shall hereafter study; but however this may be, they are the beginning and the end of our investigations and acquirements in this life—the primers of our childhood, and the text-books of our maturer years. We can, indeed, know nothing that is not taught either in one or in both of these wonderful productions; and hence, to these heaven-indited volumes we are to look for all truth, all wisdom, all eternal law and unchanging principle. And now the method of acquiring a knowledge of their contents is the subject of our investigations. Not that it is possible for us ever to know all the depths of the riches of the wisdom of God contained in these profound works, but that we can learn much—perhaps far more than men have hitherto acquired—even in the brief period of our earthly pilgrimage. And, surely, if anything can interest a rational man, that method which proposes to enable him to learn more, to give him a broader, deeper, juster conception of God's own truth, should command his most earnest and concentrated attention. Our proposition is, that the same method should be pursued in the interpretation of both volumes. And as we have already shown the inductive method to be that in the pursuit of which *nature* is correctly interpreted, if we succeed in establishing the above proposition it will be equivalent to the

establishment of this one, namely, that the *holy Scriptures* should be interpreted according to the inductive method.

This we argue, first, from the fact that both volumes are the production of the same mind, and are analogous in their character.

As all science rests upon the indisputable assumption that that mind is uniform in the principles of its operation, we do but contend that a particular proposition is embraced in its own universal, when we say that this uniformity extends to the Bible. At any rate, when it is admitted that the Bible is the work of the same Being that formed the universe, the presumption is in favor of our proposition, while, for the same reason, the *onus probandi* rests upon those who contend that this work is an anomaly in the universe. Proving this, they may, perhaps, disprove our proposition, but in doing so they will undermine all science, and leave us without a fulcrum upon which to rest any lever that could elevate us to truth. This would not, however, of itself show that both volumes should not be interpreted according to the *same* method, but only that the method hitherto pursued in the one depended upon a false postulate. We shall, therefore, take it for granted that the Author of the Bible was consistent with himself when he produced it; and that he acted in harmony with the uniform principles which are elsewhere and everywhere seen to have characterized his actions. But if it was *written* upon the same principles, it follows that it must also be *interpreted* upon the same. Or, if the two works are analogous in their nature, they must be also in the manner in which their truths impress themselves upon the mind.

Let us note, then, in what respects this likeness is apparent, in so far as the subject before us is affected by it. And first, they are both the record of the will and wisdom of God. In the Book of Nature, which is the first volume, written first, and always read and partially understood first,—this record is engraved upon material objects or physical facts. Looking upon these we discern the inscription, we read the law written upon each individual case; for example, that this stone which I cast into the air, falls to the ground according to a certain definite law. But whether this is the law of *all* stones, or whether it is a law *confined* to stones, we can ascertain alone by the inductive method; by observing other stones and other objects, and tracing the law upon each one of them,

variously modified, perhaps counteracted, but still plainly seen; and inferring from these numerous particulars the general law of the whole creation. If now we open volume second, the Book of Revelation, what do we see? Precisely what we saw before, the will and wisdom of God written upon facts. Of course the facts are different, and the record upon them peculiar, but *the method observed in their communication is precisely similar*. We are apt, it would seem, to imagine that the truths and laws of the Bible are abstract; that they have no necessary or real connection with the facts along with which they seem to be commingled; and that they may be acquired without that attention to the facts which, in scientific pursuits, is recognized as necessary. But nothing is farther from the truth. It cannot be too emphatically repeated, nor too deeply engraved upon the heart, that *the Bible is not an abstraction*, but that the comprehension of its revelation of law and truth is just as dependent upon the facts it contains as a knowledge of the laws of nature upon the facts of nature. We could just as easily rise to the highest generalizations of science without the phenomena of the physical creation, as we could attain to the knowledge of spiritual truth without the phenomena of a spiritual world; without beings, that is, contemplated in their moral and spiritual aspects and relations, as so many facts upon which, as it were, those laws and truths are written. And however that necessity may be accounted for, the church has ever recognized it as a necessity, to maintain the accuracy of the Scripture facts in order to give warrant and support to its claims as a teacher of truth. And however surprised we may be when the proposition is first submitted to us, it is a truth that *the whole Bible is founded upon facts*—historical events, persons, and things; and that even those portions which might seem to be less dependent upon history, as the poetry and epistles, have, nevertheless, their basis on history, and derive their significance and their claims from the facts with which they are connected. The whole Bible, then, is history, and allusion to history, past, present, or to come.

But whatever is, or has been, or shall be, is a fact; while that which conforms to, or accords with it, is truth. This being so, it follows that truth cannot be originated or formed, but, like Him whose being it describes, it is self-existent. The Bible is not the *creator*, but the *revealer* of truth. A fact is produced, and then truth

springs spontaneously and immediately into being. You may change the fact, but you cannot change the truth; that remains unalterable as the exponent of the fact which was, while a new truth springs into being to represent the new fact which is. Thus truth, from its very nature, must be everlasting and unchangeable: "The eternal years of God are hers."

But again, as everything which is, or has been, or shall be, except God alone, can be traced to a cause which brought it into being as the result of an act, a deed, a *factum*, He alone is truth absolute, as He alone is Jehovah, I Am, Self-existent. And hence, although He is truth, He is not fact; because his existence is not predicated by *Gignomai*, but by *Eimi*; because He is not I BECOME, but I AM. But as all things else are facts, and all truth else conformity to them, it follows that truth must have facts underlying it, and must conduct the mind immediately and directly to their consideration.

The study of spiritual truth is, therefore, the study of spiritual facts; and the word of God is their phenomena. Behold, then, how perfectly alike are the two volumes; they both exhibit—what? Facts themselves? No, but the phenomena of facts; the one, the phenomena of those which are material; the other, of those which are spiritual. In neither case are the things themselves the immediate objects of investigation, but in both we study them through the medium of the phenomena which they respectively exhibit. In both cases, these phenomena represent rules, laws, circumstances, influences, forces, connections, and dependences, which may be expressed *in words*; which science *does* so express; and which, in revelation, are *already* so expressed. In science, then, let it never be forgotten, the observed phenomena are written down *in words*, and become "recorded instances." And it is from these records, from these *words* which express the phenomena of individuals, that the induction rises to general law. A, after careful observation and experiment, records a number of phenomena with precision and accuracy. B, without having seen what A saw, but having faith in the reliability of his record, takes it, studies it, weighs and compares its several parts and circumstances, and draws from *it* a conclusion, which is afterwards verified and shown to be strictly correct and according to the facts. And here we have a record of spiritual phenomena, made by the unerring hand of God,

concerning facts the momentous importance of which should arouse every faculty into activity, and awaken every energy to diligence; a record in all respects analogous to that of a competent scientific observer; a record containing, like his, rules, laws, incidents, circumstances, influences, modifications, and everything necessary to enable us to rise to the clear, full, and joyful comprehension of the truth; and now does it not seem reasonable that we should—does it not seem marvelous if we should not—pursue the same method, and go up from these particular and recorded instances to general law and universal principle? True, if we thus act, we may, and in most instances we shall, find these general laws expressed for us and before us in the words of the Holy Spirit; but we shall then know that they *are* general; and in learning this, we shall learn what is special, what circumstantial, what limited in its application; we shall perceive the exact place and the precise force of every fact, incident, circumstance, precept, doctrine, and communication; and thus learning "rightly to divide the word of truth," we shall assign every sentence to its proper place, and give to every word its legitimate force.

To show that we are not singular in occupying the above position, it will be sufficient to quote from a few of the many distinguished authors who have also advocated it. Professor Nichol, of the Glasgow University, in the article "Bacon," in the *Cyclopedia of Biography*, says: "Although the advance of the *physical* sciences, caused by the impulse Lord Bacon communicated, has exacted for *them* processes more complete and perfect than his;<sup>1</sup> when, as to the *moral* sciences—as to inquiry, political, ethical, and RELIGIOUS—shall the time arrive in which inquirers shall *practically* recognize the validity even of the most general precepts in the *Organon*? The *ultimate* application of these precepts is *sure*; but humanity has not yet acquired the strength to accomplish it." All must agree with him that the ultimate application of this method is sure, for it is founded upon the eternal principles of common sense; and we venture to hope and believe that its consummation is not in the far distant future, but that the free-born sons of America and Great Britain, even in this

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<sup>1</sup> See this explained in the previous chapter.

nineteenth century, have the strength and the courage to accomplish it.

Says Mr. Mill, System of Logic, page 174: "The logic of science is the universal logic, applicable to all inquiries in which man can engage, and the test of all the conclusions at which he can arrive by inference." And again, page 187, speaking of induction *per enumerationem simplicem*, he says: "It was, above all, by pointing out the insufficiency of this rude and loose conception of induction, that Bacon merited the title so generally awarded to him, of Founder of the Inductive Philosophy. Although his writings contain, more or less fully developed, several of the most important principles of the inductive method, physical investigation has outgrown the Baconian conception of induction. *Moral* and political inquiries, indeed, are as yet far behind that conception. The *current and approved modes of reasoning* on these subjects are still of the *same vicious description* against which Bacon protested; the method almost exclusively employed by those professing to treat such matters inductively is the very *inductio per enumerationem simplicem* which he condemns; and the experience which we hear so confidently appealed to by all sects, parties, and interests is still, in his own emphatic words, *mera palpatio*."

Again, page 520, he says: "If there are some subjects on which the results obtained have finally received the unanimous assent of all who have attended to the proof, and others on which mankind have not yet been equally successful,—on which the most sagacious minds have occupied themselves from the earliest date, with every assistance *except that of a tried scientific method*, and have never succeeded in establishing any considerable body of truths, so as to be *beyond denial or doubt*,—it is by generalizing the methods *successfully* followed in the former inquiries, and *applying them to the latter*, that we may hope to remove this blot upon the face of science."

"It is not," says Sir John Herschel, Discourse on Natural Philosophy, page 86, "the introduction of inductive reasoning, as a new and hitherto untried process, which characterizes the Baconian philosophy, but his keen perception, and his broad and spirit-stirring, almost enthusiastic announcement of its paramount importance, as the alpha and omega of science, as the grand and



only chain for the linking together of physical truths, *and the eventual key to every discovery and every application.*"

But, not to multiply quotations, or to protract an argument which we think is already conclusive, we remark, that in many cases in which polemic theology has not interposed, with its warping influence, men have pursued the inductive method in their interpretations of Scripture; and in every such instance, where their investigations have been concluded, they are perfectly agreed. For, says Bacon, "if men would bind themselves to two things: 1. To lay aside received opinions and notions; 2. To restrain themselves, till the proper season, from generalization, they might, by the proper and genuine exertion of their minds, fall into our way of interpretation without the aid of any art." In many cases this has been done, and men have experienced that "interpretation," as Bacon immediately adds, "is the true and natural act of the mind, when all obstacles are removed."<sup>1</sup> Hence, although we can never embrace all the immensity of the comprehension of the volume of infinite wisdom, yet whereunto we have attained, in all the researches made strictly upon the inductive method, there is as perfect agreement and uniformity as can be found in any branch of physical science. The reciprocal duties of husbands and wives, for example, of parents and children, of masters and servants, though not more plainly taught than the duties we owe to God, are yet cordially received and diligently enforced, because there is no scholastic theory to metamorphose their meaning; while concerning those duties last mentioned there is perpetual controversy about the place of this, the force of that, the essentiality of one, and the non-essentiality of another. The reason is, that in the duties of man to God there is some connection with salvation, and as they are constantly making incursions into some one's theory of conversion, or of regeneration, or of justification, they must be ruled out, or explained away, or forced to harmonize with such theory.

In all cases where the inductive method has been strictly followed, men have arrived at conclusions, satisfactory, clear, and consistent, both in themselves and with the other Scriptures; and all are agreed and united. While, wherever any other method has

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<sup>1</sup> Novum Organum, book 2: aph. 130

been pursued, there is uncertainty, obscurity, inconsistency; and all are disagreed and disunited. Can those who love truth more than party hesitate to adopt a conclusion which is forced upon them by considerations so powerful?

But, someone will say, this would but lead to the establishment of one more system, and thus, instead of lessening, increase the evils now existing. To which it is replied, that so far from its being the means of resulting in any sectarian establishment, it is calculated solely to lead to those great catholic truths which are revealed for our learning and salvation. If properly used, it will make known the one only system of religion which Christ gave to the world, and will thus absorb whatever is true and reject whatever is false in all the systems and organizations in Christendom. We do not contend for the principles or the peculiarities of any existing or imaginary sect, but simply for the true method of acquiring truth, in its just proportions and proper relations.

Others again will contend that this method *has been* employed, in so far as it is available, by many or all the students of the Bible. Without pretending to meet such an assumption, which can hardly be urged seriously in this place by those who have perused with any care what we have written, we respectfully refer them to Professor Nichol, to Sir John Herschel, to John Stuart Mill, and to Sir William Hamilton; and when all these distinguished gentlemen and as many more have been silenced, we will point them to the divisions and strifes of Protestantism, and tell them to account for that dark spot upon the garment of religion, upon their assumption.

It is also to be anticipated that a few short-sighted partisans, like their illustrious prototype, will seek to cast ridicule upon our humble effort, by crying out, "How wonderful, that you should have discovered what so many wiser and older men have overlooked! How modest in you, to presume to correct the reverend dignitaries of the church!" To which we would deign but this reply, that our argument cannot be set aside by a sneer which originated in the heart of Eckius, nor our position shaken by a taunt that rises from the spirit of Romanism.

Upon the whole, then, we conclude that though in some instances, and perhaps in very many, due attention has been paid to the method by which truth is to be sought and found, in a very

large majority this has been disregarded, or but partially employed, and then often neutralized by the simultaneous presence and employment of improper and heterogeneous processes. We think, also, that it is not too much to conclude, from the arguments introduced in this chapter, that the inductive method *can* be employed in the interpretation of Scripture; that it *should* be; and that, *when* thus employed, the best and happiest results may be expected to follow. The remainder of this part of the work will, therefore, be devoted to a particular elucidation and exemplification of this process.

### CHAPTER III: *Of Bacon's Idola.*

THE good effects of Lord Bacon's writings were due, in a great measure, to the prominence in which he brought out, and the clearness with which he exposed, the sources of error. To accomplish this was his first object, as it has been that of all succeeding writers on method, whose learning and ability are such as to entitle them to be recognized as authorities. The author of the *Novum Organum* denominated the sources of error *idola*, a term which has given place in more modern productions to that of *prejudice*, which expresses substantially the same idea. We shall attempt a brief explanation of these terms, while we urge the acceptance of what is taught on the subject to which they relate as a necessary preparation for the pursuit of the inductive method. The sources of error are divided by Bacon into four classes, or four different kinds of *idola*, that is, "images," "false appearances," or prejudices, viz.:

<i>Idola</i>	Idols of the
<i>Tribûs . .</i>	.. Tribe.
<i>Idols</i>	Idols of the
<i>Specûs . .</i>	.. Den.
<i>Idola Fori</i>	Idols of the
<i>. . . .</i>	.. Forum.
<i>Idols</i>	Idols of the
<i>Theatri . .</i>	.. Theater.

Although the terms employed in the above classification are strange and unfamiliar, it is believed that they will present but little difficulty to even the most ordinary reader, if he will attend to the explanation of them furnished by their author.

1. By the Idols of the Tribe, he meant to point out those sources of error which are common to the whole human race, and which result from the nature and constitution of the mind. For example, under this head he says "The human understanding, from its peculiar nature, easily supposes a greater degree of order and equality in things than it really finds; and although many things in nature be *sui generis*, and most irregular, will yet *invent* parallels, and conjugates, and relatives, where no such thing is." Again: "The human understanding, when any proposition has been once laid down, (either from general admission and belief, or from the pleasure it affords,) *forces* everything else to add fresh support and confirmation,"—as in the case of dogmatic creeds in religion. "Man always believes more readily what he prefers;" "admits a tincture of the will and passions," to affect his conclusions. The understanding relies upon the senses, notwithstanding their "dullness and incompetency;" and finally, it is, "by its own nature, prone to abstraction, and supposes that which is fluctuating to be fixed."<sup>1</sup>

2. By Idols of the Den, or Cavern, he meant those sources of error which derive their origin from the peculiar nature of each individual's mind and body; and also from education, habit, and accident. For example: "Some men become attached to particular sciences or contemplations, either from supposing themselves the authors and inventors of them, or from having bestowed the greatest pains upon them." "Some are more vigorous and active in observing the differences of things, others in observing their resemblances. Each of them readily falls into excess, by catching either at nice distinctions or shadows of resemblance." "Some dispositions evince an unbounded admiration for antiquity, others eagerly embrace novelty; and but few can preserve the just medium, so as neither to tear up what the ancients have *correctly* laid down, nor to despise the just innovations of the moderns."

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<sup>1</sup> Novum Organum; book aph. 45 to 51

3. The Idols of the Forum, or Market-place, represent those false conclusions which arise from the popular and current use of words which represent things otherwise than as they really are. "For men imagine that their reason governs words, while, in fact, words react upon the understanding. The idols imposed upon the understanding by words are of two kinds: they are either the names of things which have no existence, or the names of actual objects, but confused, badly defined, and hastily and irregularly abstracted from things." Who can estimate the prejudicial influence of the words "Trinitarianism" and "Unitarianism;" of the "Christian Sabbath," "eternal generation," "transubstantiation," and others of the first class, which represent logical deductions, and not things? Or of the word "regeneration," of the second kind, which has given birth to an interminable warfare about "word regeneration," and "spirit regeneration," and "baptismal regeneration," when hardly one man in a thousand uses the term in its *scriptural* meaning?

4. Idols of the Theater represent the errors resulting from false systems of philosophy and incorrect reasoning. For an illustration of this class, we respectfully refer the reader to the first book of the present treatise, parts second and third, and to the *Novum Organum* of Bacon, book 1: p. 61-68.

If the sources of error are thus numerous and various, thus subtle and powerful, it seems to be but the dictate of common sense that we should make it our first and most earnest study to understand and to become free from them. And certain it is, that none but those who have the manliness to rise above these influences are capable of successfully pursuing the inductive method of biblical interpretation. As, therefore, it is all-important to the reader to have this matter presented in every light which can show it in its true character, we presume we need offer no apology for introducing the following admirable remarks of Sir John Herschel:—

"Experience, once recognized as the fountain of all our knowledge of nature, it follows that, in the study of nature and its laws, we ought to dismiss as idle prejudices, or at least suspend as premature, any preconceived notion of what might or what ought to be the order of nature in any proposed case, and content ourselves with observing, as a plain matter of fact, what *is*. To experience we refer as the only ground of all physical inquiry. But

before experience itself can be used with advantage, there is one preliminary step to make, which depends wholly on ourselves; it is the *absolute dismissal and clearing the mind of all prejudice*, from whatever source arising, and the determination to stand and fall by the result of a direct appeal to facts in the first instance, and of a strict logical deduction from them afterwards." It is scarcely necessary to remark that the author does not mean by "experience" that which certain fanatics understand by it. For, while with him it is, "1. A series of experiments, or the results of such experiments; 2. Observation of facts or events happening under like circumstances;"<sup>1</sup> with them it is the remembrance of the peculiar feelings or emotions of which they have been the subjects. And while for him to say that the laws of nature are to be learned from experience, is the same thing as to say that they are to be learned from a careful observation and comparison of phenomena, just as the laws of Scripture are to be learned by a comparison of *its* phenomena; *they* would teach that those laws *must* be so and so, because such is their "experience." And by this they mean that such is their observation upon *themselves*, not upon outward phenomena.

Our author proceeds to mention two kinds of prejudices:—

"1. Prejudices of opinion.

"2. Prejudices of sense.

"By prejudices of opinion, we mean opinions hastily taken up, either from the assertion of others, from our own superficial views, or from vulgar observation, and which, from being constantly admitted without dispute, have obtained the strong hold of habit on our minds. Such were the opinions once maintained that the earth is the greatest body in the universe, and placed immovable in its center, and all the rest of the universe created for its sole use; that it is the nature of fire and of sounds to ascend; that the moonlight is cold; that dews *fall* from the air," etc. And, we may add, such are the opinions even yet current in some sections, that repentance precedes belief; that faith comes without hearing; that the ordinary influences of the Spirit are the "baptism of the Holy Ghost;" that faith without obedience is sufficient for justification; and many others which have rested for years in the stronghold of prejudice,

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<sup>1</sup> Webster's Dictionary

and which nothing but a strictly inductive exegesis can dissipate. But our author continues:—

"Our resistance against the destruction of the other class of prejudices, those of sense, is commonly more violent at first, but less persistent than in the case of those of opinion. Not to trust the evidence of our senses seems indeed a hard condition, and one which, if proposed, none would comply with. But it is not the direct evidence of our senses that we are in any case called upon to reject; but only the erroneous judgments we unconsciously form from them, and this only when they can be shown to be so by counter evidence of the same sort." He instances the erroneous conclusions, that colors are inherent qualities, like weight or hardness; that the moon is larger at its rising or setting than in the zenith; ventriloquism, etc., and proceeds:—

"These, and innumerable instances we might cite, will convince us, that though we are never deceived in the *sensible impression* made by external objects on us, yet in forming our judgments of them we are greatly at the mercy of circumstances, which either modify the impressions actually received, or combine them with adjuncts which have become habitually associated with different judgments; and, therefore, that in estimating the degree of confidence we are to place in our conclusions, we must, of necessity, take into account these modifying or accompanying circumstances, whatever they maybe."<sup>1</sup>

Absolutely necessary as this is in the study of nature, it is no less so in that of revelation. A man reads a passage, for example, in the Psalms, or in the Epistle to the Romans, and says, with a triumphant air, Behold, how clearly my doctrine is taught! here is the proposition I contend for *in iisdem verbis!* And this is true. The *sensible impression* made upon his mind by the passage is correct, while the judgment he forms from that impression may be false; and for the very sufficient reason, that he may have culled the text from the body of an extended argument, addressed to people in peculiar circumstances, and designed to accomplish a particular end, while he has left out of the account all those circumstances which, when considered, greatly modify and limit its meaning. His proper course is, then, to correct this erroneous judgment, by

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<sup>1</sup> Discourse on Nat. Phil., par. 2: cap. 1

attending to the "counter evidence of the same sort,"—that is, he should hear all the witness has to say, and all that the other witnesses testify, before he makes up his decision.

We should disregard both the pleasure and the interest of the reader, were we to conclude this chapter without spreading before him one or two extracts from the work of a modern essayist, which, in clearness, in truth, and in point, will serve as a happy sequel to those above presented from the masterly hand of the distinguished natural philosopher:—

"The most favorable moral condition," says this writer, "in which the inquirer can be, is, unquestionably, when he is possessed with a simple and fervent desire to arrive at the truth without any predilection in behalf of any opinion whatever, and without any disturbing emotion of hope or fear, affection or dislike. 'To be indifferent,' says Locke, 'which of two opinions is true, is the right temper of mind that preserves it from being imposed on, and disposes it to examine with that indifferency, till it has done its best to find the truth—and this is the only direct and safe way to it. But to be indifferent whether we embrace falsehood or truth, is the great road to error.'

"If a man is possessed with a desire to find a given opinion true, or to confirm himself in a doctrine which he already entertains, he will, in all probability, bestow an undue attention on the arguments and evidence in its favor, to the partial or total neglect of opposite considerations; but if he is free from all wishes of this kind, if he has no predilection to gratify, if his desires are directed solely to the attainment of correct views, he will naturally search for information wherever it is likely to present itself; he will be without motive for partiality, and susceptible of the full force of evidence.

"However unaccountable it may at first sight appear, it is a fact, that few human beings, in their moral, religious, and political inquiries, are possessed with this simple desire of attaining truth; their strongest wishes are directed to the discovery of new grounds for adhering to opinions already formed; and they are as deaf to arguments on the opposite side, as they are alive to evidence in favor of their own views."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bailey's Essays, pp. 250, 251.



To these admirable remarks he adds, in the next section, the following:—

"Impartiality of examination is, if possible, of still higher value than care and diligence. It is of little importance what industry we exert on any subject, if we make all our exertions in one direction, if we sedulously close our minds against all considerations which we dislike, and seek with eagerness for any evidence or argument which will confirm our established or favorite views. A life-long investigation may, in this way, only carry us farther from the truth. What duty and common sense require of us is, that our attention be equally given to both sides of every question, that we make ourselves thoroughly acquainted with all the conflicting arguments, that we be severely impartial in weighing the evidence for each, and suffer no bias to seduce us into supine omission on the one hand, or inordinate rapacity for proof on the other.

"This, too, is anything but a light and easy task. It can be performed to a certain extent by every honest and sincere inquirer; but perhaps to achieve it in perfection, would require a mind at once enlarged, sagacious, candid, disinterested, and upright. A man who perfectly accomplishes it, however, cannot fail to command the esteem of his fellowmen by the worth and dignity of his conduct. It is painful to think that such an example is rare; that instead of it we usually find the mere partisan, one evidently engaged, not in the pursuit of truth, but in searching for every possible argument to support and confirm a conclusion predetermined by his interests, his prejudices, or his position in society.

"What a contrast do these two present!—one, candid, upright, fearless of the issue of the investigation because solely intent on truth, searching on all sides, refusing no evidence, anxious only that every circumstance should be brought out in its true colors and dimensions, and free from anger against opposition; the other, directing all his acuteness to one side, prying into those sources of information alone where he imagines he shall find what is agreeable to his wishes, stating everything both to himself and others with the art and exaggeration of a hired pleader, sounding forth the immaculate merits of his cause, and filled with rancor against all who do not range themselves under the same banners. Or, perhaps, instead of the angry partisan, we see (what is equally

a humiliating spectacle) the timid inquirer moving cautiously along, as if alarmed at the sound of his own footsteps, shunning every track not palpably well-trodden, and looking at any evidence that may chance to cross his path, foreign to his ordinary train of thought, with as much trepidation as he would experience were he to see an apparition rising out of the earth. The annals of the world abound with instances of the most determined obstinacy, in turning away from sources of information which it was apprehended might subvert established opinions."

Such, then, are the conditions upon which eternal truth is to be wooed and won. She requires evidences that she is loved,—deeply, devotedly, supremely loved; that she is loved for her own sake, and more than all the dogmas of the fathers, than all the doctrines of the most hoary antiquity, than all the brilliant innovations of the moderns; and she requires that her suitor shall manifest this love by taking every prejudice or former *inamorata*, whether of opinion or of sense, and every idol, whether of the tribe, the cavern, the forum, or the theater, and with a sublime and heroic devotion immolating them upon her altars as a willing sacrifice of propitiation. When this is done, she opens wide her doors and admits all to her eternal fellowship and communion.

But, reader, if upon examination you find your inmost heart and soul not thus imbued with the love of truth,—if you find yourself clinging still to your idols, and unwilling really to give up your prejudices, let me say to you in the language of Plato—"If ever you ought to pray you should do so now."

## CHAPTER IV:

### *Of The Collection Of Materials.*

WE have at length reached the point towards which, in the precious chapters, we have been slowly advancing. In them we promised to give an analysis of the inductive process, to point out its several steps, and to illustrate their use and application by examples drawn from both nature and revelation. And as the only originality to which we pretend in this part of the work is the peculiar *application*, and not the *discovery* or the *improvement*, of the method of induction, we can see no reason why we should not

transfer to our pages the lucid explanations of it which grace the works of the masters of science. And this will serve the double purpose of relieving us of the labor of trying to express in our own language that which has been already so well said,—thus enabling us to give our undivided attention to the single point which *we* seek to establish, while it will confirm the assurance given, that the method proposed for the interpretation of Scripture, is really the method of science, and is not changed or perverted to serve a purpose. To those already familiar with the processes of science, this assurance may seem to be superfluous, but the author seeks never to lose sight of that large class whose investigations have not hitherto been directed to the points involved in the present discussion; and he confesses to a peculiar anxiety that the masses of the people, and especially the young, should be enabled to understand a method which has hitherto been so prolific of good, and which promises even greater results in the future.

From among the authors who have subjected the method of science to a severe analysis, and who have sought to diffuse a knowledge of its principles and a sense of its importance, we have selected Sir John Herschel and John Stuart Mill as furnishing, the former in his "Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy," and the latter in his "System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive," the most complete, perspicuous, and reliable exhibition of that whose application we wish to extend. The former of these works, as being on the whole the plainest, we shall follow as a text, calling in the aid of the latter only when such aid may seem necessary to supply a deficiency or elucidate an obscurity. We begin, then, with the first step:—

"Whenever we would either analyze a phenomenon into simpler ones, or ascertain what is the course or law of nature under any proposed general contingency, the first step is to accumulate a sufficient quantity of well-ascertained facts, or recorded instances, bearing on the point in question. Common sense dictates this, as affording us the means of examining the same subject in several points of view; and it would also dictate, that the more different these collected facts are in all other circumstances but that which forms the subject of inquiry, the better; because they are then, in some sort, brought into contrast with one another in their points of

disagreement, and thus tend to render those in which they agree more prominent and striking."

Suppose, for example, we wished to ascertain what is the law of Scripture on the subject of conversion to Christ after dismissing all prejudice from our mind, the first thing to be done would be to collect the scriptural facts, or recorded instances, which bear upon the point. And in this case it would be as plainly the dictate of common sense as in any other. But we proceed:—

"The only facts which can ever become useful, as grounds of physical inquiry, are those which happen uniformly and invariably under the same circumstances. This is evident: for if they have not this character they cannot be included in laws; they want that universality which fits them to enter as elementary particles into the constitution of those universal axioms which we aim at discovering. If one and the same result does not happen under a given combination of circumstances, apparently the same, one of two things must be supposed,—caprice, (i.e. the arbitrary intervention of mental agency,) or differences in the circumstances themselves, really existing, but unobserved by us. In either case, though we may record such facts as curiosities, or as awaiting explanation when the difference of circumstances shall be understood, we can make no use of them in scientific inquiry. Hence, whenever we notice a remarkable effect of any kind, our first question ought to be, Can it be reproduced? What are the circumstances under which it has happened? And will it *always* happen again if those circumstances, so far as we have been able to collect them, coexist?"

If, now, we return to the subject above chosen for illustration, we may collect, among other recorded instances of conversion, that of the thief on the cross. We now ask, What are the circumstances of this case? Are they peculiar, or do they possess "that universality which fits them to enter as elementary particles into the constitution of a universal axiom" or law? If we decide that they are peculiar, and such that, from the nature of the case, they could not by any possibility arise again, then we must be careful not to make those of the circumstances which *are* thus peculiar the elements of a *general* conclusion:

"The circumstances, then," continues our author, "which accompany any observed fact are main features in its observation,

at least until it is ascertained by sufficient experience what circumstances have nothing to do with it, and might, therefore, have been left unobserved without sacrificing *the fact*. In observing and recording a fact, therefore, altogether new, we ought not to omit any circumstance capable of being noted, lest some one of the omitted circumstances should be essentially connected with the fact, and its omission should, therefore, reduce the implied statement of a *law of nature* to the mere record of an *historical event*."

Such, then, are the materials of the inductive method. Not parts of facts or instances; not a clause of a verse, or a single sentence; not a single case, even when taken in all its amplitude; but a large collection of cases, all observed in the light of every circumstance that can contribute in any degree to explain them. This subject, which has received the earnest attention of every writer on induction, will come up again, under a different aspect, when we get to the subject of classification. It will be sufficient to observe in this place, that the circumstances which, in the collection of materials for a biblical induction, must in all cases be observed, are such as these: The person speaking or writing; the persons addressed—their prejudices, difficulties, previous attainments, and general character, whether Jews or Gentiles, believers or unbelievers; their relation to him who addresses them, with the main design of his address, and the whole scope of the argument in which the given passage occurs. Equally important is it to eliminate those circumstances which do not properly belong to a given case, but which we are continually liable to attach to it,—as, for instance, the present state of knowledge, the opinions of modern times, the views and theories which have been based upon it, and all that mass of doctrinal or metaphysical speculation, which is now propounded in the language then used.

Having acted upon such principles, in the observation and collection of facts, we are prepared to take another step, and to proceed to the classification of the objects we have thus collected.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The whole of the second part of this book belongs logically to the above chapter. It was, however, reserved for separate treatment, for reasons which will be given in the proper place.

## CHAPTER V:

### *General Classification.*

WE divide the subject of Classification into two parts, denominated respectively General and Special Classification, The former, which is preliminary to the latter, will be considered in the present chapter. The nature and necessity of this division of the subject will appear from the following quotations from the authors we have previously named:—

"Before we can enter," says Sir John Herschel, "into anything which deserves to be called a general and systematic view of nature, it is necessary that we should possess an enumeration, if not complete, at least of considerable extent, of her materials and combinations; and that those which appear in any degree important should be distinguished by names which may not only tend to fix them in our recollection, but may constitute, as it were, nuclei or centers, about which information may collect into masses."

And Mr. Mill, (*System of Logic*, page 433,) speaking of classification as embracing *all* really existing objects, says: "We cannot constitute any one class properly, except in *reference* to a *general* division of the *whole of nature*; we cannot determine the group in which any one object can most conveniently be placed, without taking into consideration all the varieties of existing objects—all, at least, which have any degree of amity with it. No one family of plants or animals could have been rationally constituted, except as part of a systematic arrangement of all plants or animals; nor could such a general arrangement have been properly made, without first determining the exact place of plants and animals in a *general division of nature*."

It is evident, in other words, that, before a particular and correct classification can be made, we must ascertain the *grand divisions* which exist in nature, or form a general classification. Afterwards we can make as many subdivisions and classifications as are warranted by the facts in the several departments of each grand division. And as in nature, so in revelation; it is, first of all, necessary to possess a general knowledge of the entire book of Scripture,—an enumeration, more or less complete, of its

materials and combinations,"—its history and chronology, the great events which stand out prominently upon its surface, with the order of their succession, and their mutual dependence. For, as Mr. Mill elsewhere observes, "Of all truths relating to phenomena, the most valuable to us are those which relate to the order of their succession."<sup>1</sup>

This general information is possessed, to a greater or less extent, by most persons in the various communities of Christendom. Almost every one knows what is written of the creation; of the early forms of worship; the deluge; the calling of Abraham; the life of Joseph; the passage of the Israelites from Egypt; the giving of the law; the subsequent conduct of the Jews under their judges, kings, and prophets; the birth, life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and coronation of the Saviour; the descent of the Holy Spirit; the preaching of the apostles; the conversion of Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles; the organization of churches; the epistles directed to them; with various interesting and important matters which serve to fill up this rough outline of the book of Scripture. Now from the facts contained in this enumeration we are to form, or, more strictly speaking, to discover, those grand divisions into which the Bible is naturally divided.

Without this all is chaos. Without this, too, it is impossible correctly to make those special classifications which are indispensable to a critical or accurate knowledge of particular subjects. In other words, unless this be done, there can be no *science* of interpretation, however numerous the collection of biblical facts, or however honest and earnest the endeavors of scholars to understand them. But, fortunately, we are not left at this late day to penetrate a region hitherto unexplored; and it is with no ordinary pleasure that we record the fact, that the observation and research of enlightened Christians have led them, with singular unanimity, to look upon the Bible as being naturally separated into three grand divisions, respectively designated, in the order of their historical succession, as follows:—

1. The Patriarchal, or ante-Judaic Dispensation.
2. The Mosaic, or Jewish Dispensation.
3. The Christian Dispensation.

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<sup>1</sup> System of Logic, p. 195.

These names, which have been given to the several grand divisions of Scripture, serve as so many centers of attraction, drawing to them all those passages or recorded facts which the mind perceives naturally to belong to them. Or, to return to the language of Sir John Herschel, above quoted, "they constitute, as it were, nuclei or centers, about which information may collect into masses."

But from this it follows of necessity, that if there be diversity of opinion as to the boundary lines of these divisions,—the points in the Scripture history where one dispensation ends and another begins,—there must be a corresponding diversity in the treatment of so much of that history as covers the space in dispute. For if A maintain that the Jewish Dispensation ends at a certain point, and B that it ends at some subsequent point, A will of course refer the intermediate Scriptures to the Christian Dispensation, while B will refer the same Scriptures to the Jewish. It is, therefore, not only necessary to determine, as has been done, that such divisions do exist in the Bible, but it is equally, and for the same reason, necessary that we ascertain with all possible accuracy where the lines are placed that separate such divisions.

So far as known to me there is no disagreement respecting the termination of the first and the beginning of the second dispensation. All concur in fixing this point at the giving of the law from Mount Sinai. The reasons for this are so abundant, so palpable, and so conclusive, and withal so generally known and appreciated, that it were idle to occupy space in presenting them. Unhappily, however, the same unanimity of opinion does by no means obtain respecting the boundary between the Jewish and the Christian Dispensations. And indispensable to every biblical student as we deem the determination of this point, we might here safely leave it without discussion, and proceed at once to the elucidation of that method which would enable the reader to solve the problem for himself. But as we feel sure that he would prefer to see a matter so important settled in its appropriate place, as it will be so frequently involved in our subsequent progress, and as it will furnish a fair illustration of the application of the inductive method to the Scriptures, we have concluded—notwithstanding our development of the principles involved is still incomplete—to



attempt the solution of the problem by the aid of the general principles exhibited in the first chapter of the present book.

The point before us is to determine precisely, if possible, when the Christian Dispensation began; and as there is no text which tells us in so many words that it began at this or that point, it can be determined only by means of the inductive method. We begin, then, by observing and collecting the facts which relate to the subject; and while, for want of space, we shall do little more than allude to them, the reader will do well to examine them carefully in their original places and connections:—

*First fact.* Christ was a Jew; born of Jewish parents according to the flesh; made (or placed) under the (Mosaic) law; and lived and died under the Jewish Dispensation. We need not pause to prove a fact which none ever denied.

*Second fact.* During his life, the Christian Dispensation, or the kingdom of heaven, is spoken of, sometimes as future, and sometimes as present. For example: "The kingdom of heaven is *at hand*;" "On this rock I *will build* my church;" "Thy kingdom *come*;" "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, for you shut the kingdom of God against men, for you neither go in yourselves nor suffer those that are entering to enter;" "The law and the prophets were until John, since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it;" it "suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force;" "The kingdom of God is within you,—has come unto you."

*Third fact.* The limitations placed upon the disciples in their preaching, during this period, were those of Judaism, and not of Christianity: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of Samaria enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But in the Christian Dispensation there is "no difference," and they are to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

*Fourth fact.* It is a recognized principle that the law or dispensation is changed when the priesthood is changed, (Heb. 7: 11, 12;) while it is revealed that Christ was not a priest while on the earth, *because* the law of Moses was then of force, (Heb. 8: 4,) but that he was made a priest after, or "since the law," (Heb. 7: 28.) He was the end of the law—nailed it to his cross. He was afterwards made a priest after the order of Melchisedec, and then

there was "of necessity a change in the law," or a new dispensation, which brought men "under law to Christ."

*Fifth fact.* The Holy Spirit, by the mouth of the prophets, predicted that this law should go forth out of Zion: "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Is. 2: 2, 3; Mic. 4: 2.)

*Sixth fact.* The Apostles who were to open the kingdom—to proclaim this law and this word of the Lord, and to one of whom, Peter, were given the keys of the kingdom of heaven—were expressly required, in accordance with the above prophecy, to "tarry at Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from on high;" and then, when thus endued, they were to "begin" the proclamation of the word of the Lord, "at Jerusalem." They were also informed that they should "receive" this "power after that the Holy Spirit had come upon them."

*Seventh fact.* All this was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, (Acts, 2:) Christ was then priest; the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles; they were tarrying at Jerusalem; and Peter, with the eleven, proclaimed the word and the law of the Lord, "beginning at Jerusalem;" while the door was thus opened through which three thousand passed into the kingdom of heaven, freed or loosed from their sins.

Though the above are not all the facts which bear upon the case, they are the prerogative instances, and are abundantly sufficient to enable us to determine the point before us. These force us to exclude such hypotheses as that the Christian Dispensation began in eternity, or at the creation of man, or the calling of Abraham, or the giving of the law, or the birth of Christ, or the crucifixion; and compel us to adopt one of two conclusions,—either that it began with the preaching of John in the wilderness, or on the day of Pentecost. Now the inductive method requires that, "after a great number of exclusions have left but few principles common to every case," or but few conclusions possible in the light of all the facts, "one of these is to be *assumed* as the cause," i.e. the explanation or answer;" and by reasoning from it synthetically, we are to try if it will account for the phenomena."<sup>1</sup> We will assume, then, for the sake of testing its correctness, that

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<sup>1</sup> See Playfair, quoted in chap. 1.; *supra*.

the new dispensation began with the preaching of John the Baptist in the wilderness of Judea. Now if this be true, all the texts which bear upon the subject can be clearly explained by it without doing violence to them, and without disregarding, in their interpretation, the forms of expression which are common in the Bible. Let us apply it, then, to the various classes of facts we have before us:—

1. If it be true, then according to our first fact there were two dispensations in existence at the same time, for Christ, during his life, recognized the existence and authority of the Jewish Dispensation.

2. If it be true, then those Scriptures in our second class, which speak of the kingdom of heaven as having come, signify that it had *actually* and *formally* come; but this is incompatible with those other texts which represent it as future.

3. If it be true, then the direction to the disciples to confine their preaching to the Jews, is a *law of the Christian Dispensation*, and, of course, still obligatory; but this, too, is incompatible with the commission, unless the "all nations" and the "every creature" be taken in a limited sense, to mean only all the Jews in every nation, which is contrary to known facts.

4. If it be true, then Christ must have exercised the priestly office upon the earth—which is also contrary to fact.

5. If it be true, then the prophecies of Isaiah and Micah cannot refer to the going forth of the law of the last dispensation. But they expressly declare that the prediction is concerning what shall take place in "the last days" or dispensation, *when* the "mountain of the Lord's house" "the government or kingdom of Christ—"shall be *established* in the top of the mountains."

6. If it be true, the Apostles did not "*begin* at Jerusalem," but merely *carried on* there what had been *begun* some years before in the wilderness.

7. If it be true, Peter did not open the door of the kingdom on the day of Pentecost, nor upon any other occasion; but merely stood in the door, with his keys in his hand, which were altogether useless, as it had been opened by John, without keys.

This assumption, then, so far from being verified by the test, is shown to be wholly untrue, and incompetent to explain one single fact, without having its explanation proved false by the instant and irreconcilable opposition of numerous and various other facts. We

are left, therefore, to the single conclusion, that the new dispensation began on the day of Pentecost. Let us now see whether this can be verified.

It perfectly accords with the fact that Christ lived under the Jewish Dispensation; with the fact that the kingdom of heaven was future during his lifetime; with the fact that the gospel was to be preached to all the world; with the fact that Christ was to be priest before the law was changed; with the fact that the law was to go forth from Mount Zion; that the Apostles were to publish it, and begin at Jerusalem; and that they were to do so after they received the Holy Ghost; and so with every other fact and document on the subject. The only *apparent* exception<sup>1</sup> being those texts which speak of the kingdom of heaven as being in existence during his life—before the king was crowned.

If, now, the ordinary forms of speech used by the sacred writers will enable us to interpret those texts in harmony with this general conclusion, without doing violence to them or bringing them in opposition to other texts, the verification will be perfect and the induction complete.

To determine this we must take into account the peculiar circumstances of the case. We notice that John, Christ, the twelve, and the seventy, all proclaimed and inculcated the *principles* of the kingdom of heaven. The whole burden of their teaching was directed to the *preparation* of men for the coming kingdom. They told them what it was *like* in the material world; gave them correct ideas of its spiritual nature; and made known those exalted principles of self-denial, sincerity, love, and forgiveness, which were to distinguish its subjects, and which, therefore, were to be received and cherished as a preparation for that kingdom. Now those who embraced these instructions were spoken of as receiving the kingdom of God, or as having the kingdom of God within them, or as pressing into the kingdom of God, or as having the kingdom of heaven come unto them; and as these principles were greatly opposed, it was necessary for those who embraced them to break loose, as by an effort of violence; and press into the kingdom, in spite of those who by their hypocrisy and falsehood were shutting the kingdom of God against men. Thus, by

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<sup>1</sup> See Canon VI., chap. 7.; *infra*.

embracing those principles or truths which were certain to conduct them into the kingdom which was at hand and ready to be formally set up, they could, by *anticipation*, and in perfect accordance with the usages of Scripture, be said to enter or to have entered the kingdom.

But is it a usual or frequent form of expression in the Bible, to represent things as having *actually* occurred which are yet future, but which, from the certainty of their coming, are *virtually* the same as past?

In that beautiful prophecy concerning our Saviour, in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, we read: "He is despised and rejected of men. . . And we *hid* as it were our faces from him. . . Surely he *hath* borne our griefs, and *carried* our sorrows; yet we *did* esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." And so throughout. "He *was* wounded;" "he *was* bruised;" "the chastisement of our peace *was* laid upon him," etc. The Lamb of God *was virtually* slain in the days of Isaiah—nay, from the foundation of the world; and it could, therefore, be spoken of by *anticipation*, as having really occurred; and yet no one would presume to argue from this circumstance that, as a historical event, the *actual* occurrence took place one moment anterior to the time of Pontius Pilate, and the day and hour specified by the Apostles.

Our Saviour tells his disciples (Mark, 9: 31,) that "the Son of man *is delivered* into the hands of men;" while his actual delivery into their hands was long afterwards.

In the institution of the supper he tells them: "This is my body *broken* for you—and my blood *shed* for you;" while he was yet alive.

A case directly in point occurs in Philippians, 3:20: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ;" where the word "conversation" is, in the Greek (*politeuma*,) *citizenship*. We are, then, citizens or residents of heaven—not actually, but virtually, from having embraced the principles and adopted the course of life which will conduct us to heaven. And this agrees with what is said to the Hebrews, 12: 22: "But ye *are come* to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels," etc. This text is doubly useful in the establishment of the point in question, because, if taken literally, it

verifies the conclusion previously reached, that the law of the new dispensation went forth from Mount Zion in Jerusalem, inasmuch as this passage begins the contrast of the two dispensations, by identifying them with the two mountains whence they respectively started; and if the words are to be taken as Mr. Barnes and others suppose, then they are analogous to the class of Scriptures which it is incumbent upon us to explain in harmony with that conclusion. In whatever sense they are taken, therefore, they conclude the argument. But we will quote Barnes's note *in loco*:—

"It cannot be literally meant here that they had come to the Mount Zion in Jerusalem, for that was as tree of the whole Jewish people as of those whom the Apostle addressed, but it must mean that they had come to the Mount Zion of which the holy city was an emblem; to the glorious mount which is revealed as the dwelling-place of God., of angels, of saints. They were not, indeed, literally in heaven, nor was that glorious city literally on earth, but the dispensation to which they had been brought was that which conducted directly up to the city of the living God, and to the holy mount where he dwelt above. . . . It is true that Christians have not yet *seen* that city by the bodily eye, but they look to it with the eye of faith. *It is revealed* to them; they are permitted by *anticipation* to contemplate its glories, and to feel that it is to be their eternal home. They are permitted to live and act *as if* they saw the glorious God whose dwelling is there, and were already surrounded by the angels and the redeemed."

Inasmuch, therefore, as the conclusion or generalization from the facts is warranted, required, and supported by every fact involved in it—until it is shown to be erroneous by the counter testimony of facts equally veritable and plain—we can suffer no *consequences* of the conclusion, or no mere opposing theory to shake our conviction, that the Christian Dispensation did first actually, formally, and historically begin its existence on this earth, on the day of Pentecost. In this conclusion we are happy to have the concurrence, among others, of a not less discriminating mind than that of Archbishop Whately. He says:—

"That gospel which had been proclaimed by Christ and his disciples, during his personal ministry, was, that the 'kingdom of heaven was *at hand*.' That kingdom was *then* only in preparation. It was not completely begun, till the Apostles, after the outpouring on

them of the Holy Spirit, on the *day of Pentecost*, founded at Jerusalem the first Christian church, and baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus about three thousand persons, who were thus enrolled as subjects of that kingdom."<sup>1</sup>

We have thus settled, as we trust, the boundary lines of the three grand divisions of the Bible, viewed as a connected history. And on these premises we remark, that these dispensations, while clearly and perfectly *distinct*, are not *independent* of each other. Each one has its own appropriate facts, laws, promises, privileges; blessings, ordinances, and institutions, which are *sui generis* and distinctive; while many things in each are common to all, and many serve to explain and establish matters in the others. As God is unchangeable, the principles by which, if we may so speak, he is pleased to govern himself in his dealings with men, cannot change, and must be the same in every dispensation; while the *laws* and *institutions* which are adapted to *man* in the various stages of his career and his development must change *in order* to that adaptation. Hence it is, that we find God unchangeably requiring faith and obedience, while the propositions to *be believed* and the commandments to be *obeyed* vary, many of them, with the different dispensations. Hence if we would learn the peculiarities of either dispensation, that which *constitutes* it Patriarchal, Jewish, or Christian, in *distinction* from the others, we must go to those parts of Scripture which are professedly devoted to that dispensation. Whereas the *general principles* of all divine religion may be learned with more or less ease, and may be seen more or less fully developed in either department.

We may further remark that, as Christianity was always in contemplation during the continuance of the antecedent dispensations, a large number of its principles were anticipated and recorded with *reference* to it. Hence we can learn many of the *peculiarities* of the Christian Dispensation, particularly if read by its own effulgent light, from the types and shadows of the Mosaic, from the prophets, from the Baptist, and, above all, from Him the very burden of whose preaching and instructions was to illustrate and commend the truths and principles of the approaching dispensation. While, then, it is absolutely necessary to fix with the

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<sup>1</sup> Prelim. Dis., Encyc. Brit., Dis. 3:

utmost precision the lines of separation, in order to learn what is *distinctive* in each dispensation, we are not to suppose that these dispensations are respectively insulated from the rest of Scripture, and destitute of that mutual support, illustration, and confirmation which are apparent upon every page of the inspired record.

## CHAPTER VI: *Of Special Classification.*

IT will require but a brief space in which to lay down the principles of special classification. The only difficulty to be apprehended in this, lies in the fact that such classifications are characterized by an apparent want of fixedness, the precise nature of which should be clearly understood by every one who would employ with profit the method of induction.

There is no independent fact in the universe. Everything that exists, and everything that occurs, is connected with something else—nay, in some sense, with everything else, by ties more or less numerous, and in associations more or less immediate. And hence, begin where we may, we can trace those cords of connection up to something higher, and down to something lower, as well as to the objects immediately by the side of that we are examining. Suppose we begin at the highest point, and trace this connection downward. Here we regard the whole creation as one class, *nature*, bound into a unit by a great cable, as it were, held by the hand of Omnipotence: Tracing this down from its point of suspension, it is presently perceived to be divided into two strands—one of which runs through, and binds into one everything that is *organic*, and the other everything that is *inorganic*. These again are respectively subdivided. We will follow the strand that represents the organic division of nature. This is divided immediately into two smaller cords, one of which binds to itself all *vegetable* organization, and the other all *animal*. These now subdivide in order to bind into classes the various *kinds* of vegetables and of animals. And thus we descend from a single point to every individual in the universe, and see, to begin with the individuals, how each one is bound to, or classed with, first, others most like itself; next, others which are like it in a less number of respects; and then, others still less; and



finally with all things, in some of which the likeness is confined to a single aspect.

Or we might, in making our classifications, ascend the scale. Beginning with the individuals of the animal creation, we might form them into the various classes of animals, and then elevate all these into the one class, *animal*. In the same way we might bring up all the classes of vegetables to the one class, *vegetable*; and then uniting these two, we should have the one class, *organic nature*. Pausing here till we had brought up the various classes of the other department, to the most general class of that department, *inorganic nature*, we could unite these two into the great GENUS GENERALISSIMUM, or highest class, *nature*, or *creation*.

It will be perceived that every class except the highest and the lowest—which are called by logicians *genus generalissimum*, and *species specialissima*—is at the same time both a genus and a species; a genus with respect to classes below it, and a species with respect to that or those above it; and all of them together are called the *intermediate genera and species*, i.e. each one is a *genus generalius*, or a *species specialior*, according as we consider it in the ascending or descending series.

All this is strictly true of the facts of the Bible. In one point the Scriptures are a unit—the *word of God*. But they are divided, as we have seen, into three grand divisions, denominated dispensations; and now each of these is divided again into other classes, and these into others, and so on, till all the facts are arranged into a series of genera and species, from any single one of which we can ascend to a *genus generalius*, or higher class.

Upon what principle, now, are we authorized to make these classifications of Scripture texts or facts? We answer, upon that one precisely which prevails in natural classification—the principle of their constitutional agreement or natural likeness. We group into *families* things which are *akin* to each other. Here are half a dozen texts, for example, which agree perfectly in several essential particulars, while each has some peculiarity which distinguishes it from all the others. They are, for instance, on the same subject—addressed to men who are in substantially the same condition—for the purpose of inculcating the same truth and effecting the same object. With reference, then, to all the points of

natural likeness or agreement, we class them together, while the points of dissimilarity are left out or disregarded.

But we are not to suppose that the respective peculiarities, which find no place in this classification, are therefore redundant and useless; for there may exist numerous other facts which agree with those in the first class only in the points which are therein disregarded. And thus the same fact may enter into two or more classes, with reference now to one of its aspects, and now to another. All parables, for example, may be classed together in one family, because they are all naturally alike in one respect, namely, that they are parables. Again, the laws of language require that poetic compositions shall be construed in a manner differing in some important particulars from plain narrative. Now, for the purpose of eliminating the highly-colored imagery and bold hyperboles, with all that extravagance of diction which is proper to poetry, but which would mislead if taken as plain prose and used in our inductions; and for the purpose of ascertaining what would be the real facts and unadorned doctrine regaining as residual phenomena after those things are excluded,—we may class all such Scriptures together, as involving the laws applicable to poetry in their interpretation. But now, all those things which we have designated the residual phenomena of such Scriptures—what remains after the poetic element has been eliminated—must be classed again, upon the principle of the likeness of their subject matter. Thus, too, of all the forms of figurative expression—before they can enter into the process of legitimate induction, i.e. before they can be placed upon a par or in a class with *simple* facts, they must themselves be *rendered* simple, by being divested of those accidents which might otherwise be taken as essential phenomena, and thus vitiate the conclusion.

Enough has now been said on this subject, it is presumed, to make evident the following propositions: 1. That for any classification to be useful, it must be formed upon the basis of the real connection or homology which exists naturally between the objects classified, and not merely upon the fortuitous similarity of their accidents. 2. That the same fact may be connected in its different aspects with more classes than one, just as a man is related by consanguinity to more families than one. 3. And finally, that a generalization from any class of facts must be of the same

grade with that class. The violation of this last principle which is about equivalent to Bacon's *inductio per enumerationem simplicem*—has been the occasion of much mischief in those so-called inductions which have been made from revelation. It would seem to require no argument to prove that, before we can rise to an induction of a higher grade than the class of facts from which it is drawn, those facts themselves must be elevated to such grade; but in that case they will be united, of course, with other facts and classes, which will enter into the final generalization; and hence, if such generalization had been made previously, it would have sprung from a partial and insufficient number of facts, i.e. it would have been an induction by simple enumeration.

All this may be illustrated by an example. Let it be given to investigate the subject of conversion, taken in its most comprehensive sense, as embracing the whole change from the state of sin to that of justification.<sup>1</sup> We find, by observation and comparison, that there are various classes of texts bearing upon this subject, which, for the sake of convenience, we may number. Leaving out some classes concerning the predictions relating to conversion, the obligations to turn, and the blessings that will follow, it will be sufficient for our illustration to note the following:—

1. We may place in the first class all that God has already done for the world in respect to their conversion. And this, it will be perceived at once, will embrace a large number of texts, which, besides their bearings on the subject in question, teach also many things on other subjects, and would be included in other classes if those subjects were to be investigated.

2. In our second class we may place all those texts which teach what the Holy Spirit does in the conversion of men. In this class we should be careful to include only those texts which describe his work in *conversion*, while we exclude from it, as belonging to a different inquiry, such as tell what he does for Christians, or those who have already been converted. And this we do upon the principle we have been insisting upon, that there should be a

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<sup>1</sup> The reader may observe that the terms "convert" and its cognates are, in the Scriptures, commonly used in a more restricted sense—as applicable to the *act* of turning.

natural bond of connection to hold together the individuals of a class.

3. We may next place in a class those Scriptures which make known the office of the word of God in effecting conversion.

4. In a fourth class we may collect the general and specific laws of conversion, such, for example, as the commission given by the Saviour to the disciples when he sent them out to convert men.

5. And in a fifth class we may include all the cases of actual conversion recorded in the Scriptures. But it will be perceived that this class, from its very nature, embraces all the others. It stands upon a higher grade, including everything in each of the lower.

Leaving this last class, then, for our final generalization, we begin with the others, and from each of them make an induction appropriate to itself. Suppose we take class No. 2. Now, from a careful comparison of all its individuals, viewed in the light of their various circumstances, we are able to learn the general truth which they teach. But what is that truth? and what degree of generality are we to assign to it? It is not the final conclusion, for that belongs to a higher genus; but it is *one element* that enters into the constituency of the final generalization. That is all that this class teaches, all we expected it to teach, all that it is necessary for it to teach—the office or work of the Holy Spirit in conversion. But instead of assigning this truth to its proper place, men have frequently inferred that the *whole* of conversion was the work of the Spirit; and have thus, by a false induction, set aside the necessity and merit of Christ's death and blood, have made the word of God useless, and have divested the minds of men of the sense of individual responsibility. Such men, and they are consistent in doing so, preach the Spirit, instead of preaching Christ, his word, and his requirements, and leaving the Spirit to do his own work. All this evil results from making a generalization of a higher grade than the class of facts which is held to justify it. And a similar evil, equally destructive of the symmetry of Christianity, would result if either of the other classes were thus unwarrantably generalized. No man, therefore, can be said to declare the whole counsel of God, on the subject of conversion, who does not tell what Christ has done, what the Spirit is doing or seeking to do, what the province of the word of God is, and the effect of studying, listening to, and heeding it; what the laws or

requirements of Christ are, or, in other words, what men must themselves do before they are actually and fully converted. All these elements enter into that generalization which we name conversion; and all these will be found in our fifth class of facts—the cases of actual conversion, as recorded in the New Testament, and more particularly in the Acts of the Apostles. They may not all be specifically mentioned and developed in each case, but if we interpret then; inductively we will carefully compare all the cases. And it is our judgment that, if laying aside all philosophies and theories and prejudices, and studying those cases in the light of the principles herein taught, with a perfect willingness to receive what the Scriptures teach, every human being who has capacity to enable him to appreciate the force and meaning of ordinary language, *will reach precisely the same conclusion as to what is scriptural conversion*, in the general sense in which we are using that term.

If the reader desire a fuller examination of the principles of special classification, he will find the subject ably treated in the works from which we quoted so freely in the previous chapters, and to which we expect to be greatly indebted for much of what remains to be done. We trust that what we have said will serve at least to show the importance of carefully observing those principles in biblical classification, while we are not without hope that our familiar explanations and illustrations have contributed something to the elucidation of a subject not popularly understood, and which has not been hitherto sufficiently regarded. We are now prepared to pass to the consideration of the rules to be observed in making inductions from facts thus collected and classified.

## CHAPTER VII:

### *Canons Of The Inductive Method.*

IT may be supposed that in any collections of facts with reference to the determination of a general law, the manner in which they express or exhibit that law will vary. Some will seem to direct us immediately to its consideration, while others will lead us by a route more or less circuitous. This variety in the modes by which facts communicate their teaching, gives rise to a number of

precepts applicable to particular cases, which we call the Canons of the Inductive Method, or the rules to be observed in treating the various forms and conditions of the instances from which the induction is to be made. Of course, therefore,, it will not be expected that these canons will all be involved in every case, any more than all the rules of syntax in the analysis of every sentence. Their application is determined by the necessity that calls for them. In the prosecution of our plan, the reasons for which have already been given, we shall express and illustrate these canons in the language of Sir John Herschel, compared, as occasion may require, with Mr. Mill, while we seek to point out cases in biblical studies in which they will severally be applicable.

It is deemed proper to remark, in this place, that although the phraseology of some of the following canons may at first appear difficult of comprehension to those who have not been accustomed to the use of philosophical and scientific language, such difficulty will disappear, it is believed, after a little thought and patience, particularly if the main point in the rule be traced out in the illustrations which accompany it, and in others, parallel to those, which can hardly fail to suggest themselves. And it should be remembered that a little pains bestowed in mastering these canons, in connection with the principles already developed, will put the reader in possession of the key which not only unlocks the storehouses of natural and revealed truth, but which is able also to introduce him into every department of knowledge. While it is our special object to show that the method of science is also the method of revelation, it is equally true that the same principles are the *open sesame* to law, to medicine, to politics, and to " every inquiry in which man can engage."

### **CANON I.**

*"If in our group of facts there be one in which any assigned peculiarity, or attendant circumstance, is wanting or opposite, such peculiarity cannot be the cause (or explanation) we seek."*

This is equivalent to the axiom of Mr. Mill: "Whatever circumstance can be excluded, without prejudice to the phenomenon, or can be absent notwithstanding its presence, is not connected with it in the way of causation." In an inquiry into the

cause of dew, the fact that the *underside* of certain objects is, in some instances, bedewed, proves that dew does not *fall* from the sky. We may suppose that all the balance of the facts seem to point to this falling from the sky, as the explanation of the phenomenon of dew; but even in that case, the presence of this one fact in which the "assigned peculiarity" is "wanting or opposite," proves that such explanation cannot be correct. This canon, it will be perceived, is not so useful in conducting us to truth as in preserving us from error.

It applies particularly to those cases in which we have been accustomed, or are likely, to make a false and hasty induction. In biblical studies men frequently overlook the fact that words are sometimes used to comprehend or imply more than is contained in their strict definition; which enlargement of meaning must be ascertained by a comparison of Scripture with Scripture. The word *faith*, for example, besides its proper sense, sometimes comprehends also the whole gospel; sometimes more particularly what we understand by *repentance*; while repentance frequently implies faith. But if, overlooking this fact, we should take the word faith in passages where it is used in an enlarged sense, and predicate salvation of it in its *restricted and proper sense alone*, our first canon would enable us to perceive the mistake. To illustrate more particularly, let us suppose that from the words of the commission, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," and from kindred passages, we induce or lead off the conclusion that *simply* to believe, in the restricted and proper sense of that word, and to be baptized, are the *only* antecedents of salvation. Now, if there be "one case" in which this assigned effect, i.e. salvation, is "wanting," notwithstanding the presence of its assigned antecedents, namely, belief and baptism, it will follow that these are not alone the "cause or explanation" of the effect. Such a case we have in the history of Simon Magus, Acts, 8: He believed and was baptized, and yet, so far from being saved, he was "in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity." How shall we account for this? By saying his was not the *right kind* of faith? This is a mere assumption. The Scriptures know nothing of different kinds of faith. Besides, the Holy Spirit says that "then Simon himself believed *also*," which is a clear declaration that, so far as the mere act of believing was concerned, he believed just as

the others in Samaria did. If they had the right kind of faith, he had *also* the right kind of faith. What, then, was the deficiency? Evidently this: he was destitute of true *repentance*, which was embraced in the term "believe," as given in the commission,<sup>1</sup> but which was not embraced in the term, as applied to Simon. The words of the commission remain, therefore, as they forever will, true without exception, when taken in that comprehensive meaning *which a sound induction shows to have been intended*.

Again, many well-meaning persons have concluded, from the numerous Scriptures which commend sincerity and condemn hypocrisy, that sincerity alone will secure our acceptance with God. Hence the expression so constantly repeated, and which one is expected to look upon as an evidence of the most enlightened charity, that "it makes no difference what you believe if you are but sincere." To say nothing of the pernicious influence of a sentiment which equalizes falsehood with truth, let us, in obedience to canon first, take the single case of Saul of Tarsus, who, actuated by *religious sincerity*, became the "chief of sinners," to show that the conclusion is wholly erroneous.

## **CANON II.**

*"Any circumstance in which all the facts without exception agree, MAY be the cause in question, or, if not, at least a collateral effect of the same cause; if there be but one such point of agreement, this possibility becomes a certainty; and, on the other hand, if there be more than one, they may be concurrent causes."*

Or, in the language of Mr. Mill: "If two or more instances of the phenomenon under investigation have only one circumstance in common, the circumstance in which alone all the instances agree, is the cause (or effect) of the given phenomenon."

The illustration of the above canon is also drawn from investigations on the phenomenon of dew. "Now here," says our author, "we have analogous phenomena in the moisture which bedews a cold metal or stone when we breathe upon it; that which appears on a glass of water fresh from the well in hot weather; that which appears on the *inside* of windows when sudden rain or hail

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<sup>1</sup> Compare Mark, 16: 16, with Luke, 24: 47.



chills the external air; that which runs down our walls when, after a long frost, a warm moist thaw comes on,—all these instances *agree in one point*, the coldness of the object dewed, in comparison with the air in contact with it."

In the Scriptures we have numerous cases of conversion, all slightly varying in their attendant circumstances. Those converted on the day of Pentecost were Jews, charged with the guilt of betraying and murdering their Messiah; others were Samaritans, guilty, we may presume, of such sins as are common to men; others again were devout and pious proselytes, as the eunuch and Cornelius; others still were heathen idolators. Some of the converts were learned, noble, polite; while some were slaves, poor, despised, and ignorant; some of the cases are reported in connection with miracles, others with ordinary instrumentalities alone; but, notwithstanding the variety of circumstances, they all *agree in one point*—the exhibition of an *obedient faith*. If, now, we are seeking to learn what constitutes scriptural conversion, so far as the act of the persons converted is concerned, we are required, by the second canon, to determine, in the first place, that an obedient faith *MAY* be the constitution of such conversion; and if, upon farther inquiry, we find that there is no other circumstance in which all the facts without exception agree, then the *possibility* becomes a *certainty*; but if, upon this inquiry, we should find another point in which all the facts agreed, then we should unite that also to the obedient faith as a "concurrent cause," or as forming a part of the elements that entered into the constituency of conversion, regarded as the act of the creature.

The above illustration we look upon as being so apt and perspicuous, that we will not withdraw the attention from it by furnishing others.

### **CANON III.**

*"We are not to deny the existence of a cause in favor of which we have a unanimous agreement of strong analogies, though it may not be apparent how such a cause can produce the effect, or even though it may be difficult to conceive its existence under the circumstances; in such cases we should rather appeal to*

*experience when possible, than decide a priori against the cause, and try whether it cannot be made apparent."*

In illustration of the application of this canon, Sir John Herschel returns to the subject of dew: "Is it a fact that the object dewed is colder than the air? Certainly not, one would at first be inclined to say; for what is to *make* it so? But the analogies are cogent and unanimous; and, therefore, pursuant to Rule 3, we are not to discard their indications; and, besides, the experiment is easy; we have only to lay a thermometer in contact with the dewed substance, and hang one a little distance above it out of the reach of its influence. The experiment has been made; the question has been asked, and the answer has been invariably in the *affirmative*. Whenever an object collects dew, *it is* colder than the surrounding air."

From a large number of biblical questions to which this canon is applicable, we will select a single one, and leave the reader to apply it to others as occasion may require. The question selected is this: Is Christian baptism for the remission of sins? Certainly not, one would at first be inclined to say; for what could make it so? How is it possible that any connection can exist between an external act and the remission of sins? But the analogies are cogent and unanimous; and therefore, pursuant to canon third, we are not to discard their indications. We will mention some of these analogies:—

The eating of the forbidden fruit was an external act of very trifling moment, in itself considered; but, in consequence of the divine law which it violated, it was an act of incalculable importance.

Naaman the Syrian's dipping of himself in the Jordan for the cure of leprosy, would have excited the just ridicule of men, if it had been viewed as a simple external act, apart from the authority that enjoined it. How can the water which touches but the surface remove a disease? What virtue is there in it? The idea is preposterous, and the act absurd. But he was cured, notwithstanding!

An infidel or skeptic Jew, bitten by a fiery serpent, might have asked with the same shallow plausibility, How can my looking upon the brazen serpent remove the poison from my veins? The

cause is not adequate to the effect. But still, if he looked, he lived; and if he refused to look, he died!

Again, it may be asked, Why is faith held to be necessary to pardon? It is a mere act of the creature. God cannot exercise faith for any one. Besides, we are expressly taught that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin; and as this blood was shed for all, all will therefore be saved, whether they have or have not faith. But, notwithstanding this popular logic, he that believeth not shall be condemned!

By the same sort of transparent sophistry, we can set aside repentance, a change of heart, the love of God, the love of man, good works, and everything that God has required; and thus establish Universalism, upon the basis of infidelity!

The analogies, therefore, are cogent and *unanimous*, that whatever God appoints, with reference to a certain end, is effectual, when obeyed, and necessary *for* the attainment of that end. As, therefore, *in every single instance in the New Testament* where the design of Christian baptism is spoken of, it is declared to be "*for the remission of sins*," either in these identical words, or in others clearly equivalent in meaning, and as this is supported by the uniform analogy of all Scripture, we cannot feel at liberty to discard such testimony.

The author will take this occasion to say, that he looks upon baptism as being the smallest part of Christianity. Still it is a part, and, in its place, an essential part; and hence he cannot but regret that Protestants, in their anxiety to get as far as possible from *Rome* on this point, have nearly all, in his judgment, gone beyond *Jerusalem*. If the day has not passed when we might reasonably hope to see this much-controverted question settled upon the sure basis of Scripture, it might be interesting and profitable to point out some of the aberrations which have been made from the Bible. And if the reader will take this in the spirit in which it is offered, the author will just indicate, in a few sentences, some of the inconsistencies into which the different divisions have been betrayed.

1. First, then, they have all so heartily repudiated the doctrine of Rome, that the baptism of a subject without faith, repentance, or any preparation of mind or heart, secures salvation, that they have been led to reject the Scripture doctrine also, which is, that the

baptism of a *believer* who heartily *repents*, and who puts all his trust *in Christ*, is "for the remission of sins."

2. One large division of Protestants, while insisting upon the utter uselessness, and non-essentiality of the ordinance, feel aggrieved at those who would have them withhold it from their children; and contend earnestly for the right of dedicating their offspring to the Lord, and of securing for them his covenant blessings in baptism.

3. Another and opposite division, sensitive concerning their orthodoxy, are equally earnest in disclaiming any good that is to result from the institution, and especially the promised blessing of remission, while they contend, with a zeal that is at least worthy of a blessing and a reward, for the right "mode," and a "believing subject."

If inconsistencies so glaring can continue for scores of years in the midst of the most searching criticism and incessant debate, we confess that the prospect of a final agreement on the truth is by no means flattering. Still, if Protestants will only bring themselves to the determination *really to stand and fall by their own principles*, all these difficulties will seem speedily to evaporate like the dew of morning. For not one of them has sprung from the Bible; and when we go back *to that, and that alone*, the subject will stand out in its own clear light, with not a word said on the "modes" of baptism, or about "dedicating our children to the Lord by baptism." It will be, in fact, when stripped of its extraneous matter, a *new* subject. We shall then see a *word and circumstances* telling us, beyond doubt, that a certain *specific action* is baptism; while the "mode" in which *that action* is to be performed is left to the convenience or taste of every individual. Any *other* action, whatever it might in subsequent ages be *named*, we should not regard as a "mode" of Bible baptism, but a different *thing* altogether. And then, when that *specific action*, whatever we should discover it to be, was performed by those whom the Scriptures positively and directly require to perform it, we should assure them, in the language of Scripture, of "the remission of sins." We might or might not understand how or why the benefit of Christ's blood, which alone is efficacious for the cleansing of sin, should first be fully assured to the individual in that action; but still we could and should receive it as a matter of faith, even without its philosophy. And

thus it seems to us that this, the most difficult and involved of all the questions in controversy, might be put forever at rest, by returning practically to the true foundation of Protestantism, and then interpreting the Bible according to the principles of induction, or common sense.

#### **CANON IV.**

*"Contrary or opposing facts are equally instructive for the discovery of causes with favorable ones."*

An example of the above brief but valuable canon, in its application to natural inquiries, is also found by Sir John Herschel in the prolific investigation of the phenomenon of dew. "Among the negative instances," he says, "it is observed that dew is never copiously deposited in situations much screened from the open sky, and not at all *in a cloudy night*. A clear view of the cloudless sky, then, is an essential condition, or, what comes to the same thing, clouds or surrounding objects act as *opposing causes*."

One or two examples will show the application and importance of the above canon in biblical questions. In the inquiries which have been made into the causes, or the immediate and essential antecedents of human salvation, many have concluded that faith was a mere accidental concomitant, increasing perhaps the degree of enjoyment, but not an essential condition of salvation; and all those passages of Scripture which speak of the effect and importance of faith have been somehow explained in harmony with this supposition. To test the correctness of such a position as this, the negative instances are most valuable. "He that believeth *not* shall be condemned." "If ye believe *not* that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." "He that believeth not is condemned already, *because* he has not believed," etc. These instances, and others like them, show that faith is not merely a general accompaniment of salvation, but an essential condition precedent. As when the sky is not clear there is no dew, proves that a clear sky is *essential* to its formation; so these cases, where there is no faith there is no salvation, prove faith to be *essential* to salvation. But let us discriminate: a clear sky is not the *cause* of dew; it is but a *condition* necessary to the effectual operation of the cause. The real cause of dew is the cooling of the dewed surface by radiation

of heat faster than its heat can be restored to it by communication with the ground, or by counter-radiation, so as to become colder than the air, and thereby to cause a condensation of its moisture. Clouds, by this counter-radiation, replace the whole or a great part of the heat radiated away, and thus act as opposing causes. While their removal does not, then, furnish a cause of dew, it takes away the obstacle which neutralizes the cause. Precisely so it is with faith. It is not the cause of our salvation, but a condition necessary to the effectual operation of the cause, which is the love of God in Christ. Or—for it amounts to the same thing—infidelity is an obstacle which throws off the saving influences of the gospel, and prevents them from affecting the heart.

By the same canon we may be assured of the necessity of obedience conjoined with, or rather springing out of, faith. If, from the various texts which speak of the importance of faith as an essential condition of salvation, we should conclude that there was no other one, and that the cause of salvation could effectually operate without the concurrence of any other state of mind, disposition of heart, subordination of will, or consecration of life, than what is implied in the mere fact of believing, negative instances or opposing causes, if such exist, will at once settle the matter and close the argument.

We read, that "among the chief rulers, also, many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue, for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."—John, 12: 42. "Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?"—James, 2: 19. "God will render to every man according to *his deeds*: to them who by patient continuance in *well-doing* seek for glory, honor, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious and *do not obey the truth*, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish."—Romans, 2: 6. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on

them that know not God, and that *obey not the gospel* of our Lord Jesus Christ."—2 Thes. 1:7.

Such Scriptures as these make it evident that faith without obedience is not sufficient for salvation; and that hence, in those cases where faith is spoken of without mentioning obedience, it is nevertheless clearly and necessarily implied. For, if a man is justified by faith, and condemned for disobedience, it amounts to demonstration that justifying faith must include obedience; otherwise a man might be both in a state of justification and of condemnation at the same time, which is absurd.

It is much to be regretted that, in the reaction from the system of works alone, as the meritorious *cause* of salvation, Protestants should have run to the other extreme, and attached to the Bible doctrine of "justification by faith" the unscriptural addition of the word "alone," thus excluding as concurrent *conditions* the commandments of God. The intention in this was simply to exclude them as *causes*, with the implied idea of merit in those who obeyed them. But a moment's consideration would have shown, one would think, that, as the exercise of faith is itself an act of obedience, it falls necessarily into the same predicament with all other scriptural requirements; and, consequently, if they are to be excluded from the prerequisites of salvation, in order to avoid the idea of merit, *it*, as it belongs to the same category, must also be excluded with the others; and this forces us to predicate salvation without faith or obedience, which is Universalism—provided it be true that "God is no respecter of persons." But if we regard faith and obedience alike, not as *causes* of salvation, and, therefore, wanting the idea of merit, but as *conditions* necessarily precedent to the effectual operation of the true cause, the subject is instantly relieved of all difficulty; everything falls into its appropriate place; and all of practical Christianity is beautifully harmonized.

#### **CANON V.**

*"Causes will frequently become obvious, by a mere arrangement of our facts in the order of intensity in which some peculiar quality subsists; though not of necessity, because counteracting or modifying causes may be at the same time in action."*

"Sound consists in impulses communicated to our ears by the air. If a series of impulses of equal force be communicated to it at equal intervals of time, at first in slow succession, and by degrees more and more rapidly, we hear at first a rattling noise, then a low murmur, and then a hum, which, by degrees, acquires the character of a musical note, rising higher and higher in acuteness, till its pitch becomes too high for the ear to follow. And from this correspondence between the pitch of the note and the rapidity of succession of the impulse, we conclude that our sensation of the different pitches of musical notes originates in the different rapidities with which their impulses are communicated to our ears."

It is of very great practical importance in Christianity, to determine the proximate cause of faith. How is it produced? What influences or forces are necessary to generate it? The solution of this problem will furnish a beautiful example of the application of the above canon. We have a series of characters, beginning with those who have no faith, proceeding to those who have but little, then to those who have more, and to others who have still more, till finally we reach a class who have attained to the full assurance of faith. And now, in all this series, we notice one circumstance which varies precisely as the degree of faith varies. This circumstance we may consider in both its historical development and in its individual reception.

First, then, there are nations of the earth who have no testimony concerning Jesus; and these have no faith in him. Next, if we trace the history of the world, we discover that those who had a partial revelation of him, had a faith which was measured by the testimony communicated. As the testimonies were multiplied, or as the communications of truth were increased, the measure of faith was proportionally enlarged. Finally, we come down to the complete manifestation of the divine nature, and revelation of the divine will, when faith attains its utmost perfection, and the system of truth is designated by pre-eminence as *the faith*. This historical summary discloses to us the varying limits of *possible* faith—as measured by the amount of testimony. But in each of these historical periods, the amount or degree of faith *actually* exercised by individuals was proportional, not to the amount of testimony communicated, but to that personally and heartily *received*. Hence,



in the last dispensation, as in all others, there are degrees of faith. Some are strong and others weak in the faith, according to the testimony which each one appreciates; while in no single case is the faith greater than the testimony, as no Christian can believe more than he is required and authorized to believe by the word of God; or if he does, the excess is not Christian *faith*, but a profitless *opinion*. It is to be lamented that so few give that earnest and hearty attention to the word of God which would result in a proper measure of faith in Christ, in his infinite love, his tireless goodness, his tender compassion, his long-suffering patience and forbearance; and rest satisfied with the elements of the doctrine of Christ. And it is equally to be deplored that so many run wild with phrensy and fanaticism, presumptuously rushing where angels would fear to tread, and disturbing the peace and prosperity of the faithful by insisting upon the acceptance, as articles of faith, of matters clearly beyond the record.

The mere arrangement of the facts, therefore, "in the order of intensity in which some peculiar quality subsists," leads to the establishment of the conclusion, that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" or, that faith is produced by testimony.

Or course, no one will infer that this truth could only be established or reached by observing the above canon; for the same result will be obtained by applying the second canon to the facts involved. In that case we should take such recorded instances or declarations as the following: "These are written that ye might believe;" "in whom ye also trusted *after that ye heard the word of truth*;" "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" the Bereans "searched the Scriptures," and "many of them therefore believed;" with all the cases recorded in the Acts, where faith is produced; and as in all this array of facts there is *agreement in one point*—the circumstance of testimony preceding and causing faith—that circumstance clearly points to the conclusion reached above. And now, if we pleased, we might strengthen and verify this conclusion according to canon third, by showing the unanimous concurrence of analogies in its favor. It is thus when we get on the highway to truth, we see other roads coming in at different angles, but all finally becoming one; and any of these, if

we had found it necessary or convenient to have started in them, would have conducted us to the same goal.

#### CANON VI.

*"Counteracting or modifying causes may subsist unperceived, and annul the effects of the cause we seek, in instances which, but for their action, would have come into our class of favorable facts; hence, exceptions may often be made to disappear by removing or allowing for such counteracting causes."*

"Thus in chemistry, the *alkaline* quality of the alkaline and earthy bases is found to be due to the presence of oxygen combined with one or other of a peculiar set of metals. Ammonia is, however, a violent outstanding exception, such as has been alluded to, being a compound of azote and hydrogen; but there are almost certain indications that this exception is not a real one, but assumes that appearance in consequence of some modifying cause not understood."

Infidel objections, based on the seeming opposition of certain texts, have forced the church to employ the above canon more frequently, perhaps, than any other known to science. As its application is thus familiar to every one who has encountered an apparent discrepancy in revelation, and as we have already given an example of it in our previous induction concerning the establishment of the Christian kingdom, it is not deemed necessary to dwell upon it in this place. Numerous instances in the history of polemic theology will suggest themselves, in which it had been well if the cautions of this principle had been heeded. For want of it, Luther was led to reject the Epistle of James from the canon of Scripture. He saw that his doctrine—which he thought was also that of Paul—of "justification by faith alone," and that of James, that a man "is not justified by faith only," were, as they still are, irreconcilably opposed. If he had, in obedience to the above rule, held his mind in abeyance until he had weighed all the circumstances connected with the language of the two Apostles, he might have been led to modify his own doctrine to make it scriptural, but he would have seen, as we have elsewhere proved, that the Scriptures are perfectly consistent in *their* doctrine on the subject.

### **CANON VII.**

*"If we can, find two instances which agree exactly in all but one particular, and differ in that one, its influence in producing the phenomenon, if it have any, must thereby be rendered sensible."*

"Two pieces of iron exposed of an evening to a cloudless sky—the one rough and the other smooth—are found to contract unequal quantities of dew. Now, the two cases agree exactly in every respect except the quality of the exposed surface, and hereby its influence in the production of dew is determined."

Of the many examples which might be given of the application of this canon to the Scriptures, we will select but a single one. The conversions recorded in the Acts, of the jailer and his household, (chap. 16:.) and of "many of the Corinthians," (chap. 18:.) agree exactly in all but one particular—the earthquake and its attendant circumstances. Now, in deriving the *general law* of conversion, or the conditions which are essential in any given case, from these two instances, the influence of the earthquake, in so far as it was special, must be estimated by comparing it with one case where there was no earthquake. Whatever was specially the effect of the earthquake in that particular case, must be left out of a general law which does not expect that particular influence. We, therefore, compare the two cases, and find them agreeing exactly in the following particulars: 1. Hearing; 2. Faith; 3. Baptism. Here is the end of the particulars in which they agree; and from these compared, of course, with other cases—we must draw the general conclusion as to what elements enter necessarily into the constituency of conversion.

But, now, as the earthquake is left out of this induction, what shall we do with it? This is provided for by the next canon.

### **CANON VIII.**

*"Complicated phenomena, in which several causes concurring, opposing or quite independent of each other, operate at once, so as to produce a compound effect; may be simplified by subducting the effect of all the known causes, and thus leaving, as it were, a RESIDUAL PHENOMENON to be explained."*

When the law of universal gravitation "came to be verified by deducing from it the exact motions of the planets and satellites,

which ought to take place if it were true, there were found some small deviations in those of the planets, and some very considerable ones in that of the moon and other satellites, still unaccounted for; residual phenomena, which still remained to be traced up to causes."

We were careful in remarking, while on the subject of classification, that objects were grouped, preparatory to induction, not with reference to *all* their circumstances, but to those only in which they were alike; and that those circumstances which were unlike, would remain as residual phenomena after the induction; and that they must be re-classified with others like themselves.

Hence, the earthquake, in the illustration under the previous canon, being a residual phenomenon remaining after the induction from the points of agreement has been made, must be now classified with these providential or miraculous influences which concur in preparing the mind for the reception of the word which produces faith. And from this point of view, it will be seen to agree with the providential circumstances that surrounded Crispus and the Corinthians; and, if we pleased, we might take these and other facts and learn from them what may be known on that particular subject.

We have now completed the exhibition of the canons of induction, given in the language of Sir John Herschel,<sup>1</sup> with examples of their application to the facts of Scripture. And we think that the reader will agree that there is nothing stiff, or forced, or unnatural in this application; and that it seems to be just as appropriate, as necessary, and as conclusive in the Bible as in nature. With reference to the points we have chosen as examples, we have confined ourselves almost exclusively to the great subject of conversion in its different aspects; in this we have been influenced by what seemed to be weighty considerations 1. This subject is the most important to the world of all others, and, at the same time, the most interesting. 2. The facts involved in its discussion are better and more generally known than others. 3. There is more difference of opinion and practice on this subject than on most others. 4. It is believed that agreement on this subject would lead most speedily and directly to agreement on others.

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<sup>1</sup> Discourse on Nat. Phil., chap. 6:

As to the conclusions themselves which we have reached upon those points, though we are aware that they differ in some important particulars from those of others for whose discrimination and learning we have the very highest respect, still, as we do most religiously believe that they rest upon a basis of immovable principles, they are submitted in firm but humble confidence to the examination and judgment of our fellow-Christians. At the same time, we should be unfaithful to our own principles, if we did not avow our perfect readiness and willingness to abandon those conclusions the moment they are shown to be untenable.

## CHAPTER VIII:

### *The Inverse Or Deductive Process.*

IN the general outline with which we commenced the present book, it was attempted to be shown that the method of science was a union of two methods—the inductive and the deductive; that these two processes were mutual complements of each other. And we think it evident that neither can be relied on as a sufficient guide to truth, independently of the aid and support of the other. For, as Sir John Herschel remarks, "It is very important to observe that the *successful* process of scientific inquiry *demands continually* the alternate use of both the *inductive* and the *deductive* method. The path by which we rise to knowledge must be made smooth and beaten in its lower steps, and often *ascended* and *descended*, before we can scale our way to any eminence, much less climb to the summit. The achievement is too great for a single effort; stations must be established, and communications kept open with all below. To quit metaphor, there is nothing so instructive, or so likely to lead to the acquisition of general views, as this pursuit of the *consequences* of a law once arrived at, into every subject where it may seem likely to have an influence. . . . For it is hardly possible to arrive at the knowledge of a law of any degree of generality in any branch of science, but it immediately furnishes us with the means of extending our knowledge of innumerable others, the most remote from the point we set out from; so that, when once embarked in any physical research, it is impossible for any one to predict where it may ultimately lead him."

Mr. Mill, also, has clearly proved that the deductive sciences are, at the same time, altogether inductive; that their first principles, or axioms, are generalizations from experience; that they are the highest class of inductions the simplest and easiest cases of generalization from facts furnished by our senses or by our internal consciousness.<sup>1</sup> And he has shown that the deductive method consists of three operations: the first, one of *direct induction*; the second, of ratiocination; and the third, of verification.<sup>2</sup>

Although Bacon did not clearly develop the deductive process in his method, it is evident that it was contemplated; for he says, "The signs for the interpretation of nature comprehend two divisions: the first regards the eliciting or creating of axioms from experiment; the second, the *deducing* or deriving of new experiments from axioms," (*de ducendis out derivandis experimentis novis ab axiomatibus*.)<sup>3</sup>

It will appear from the above exhibition of the principles of legitimate deduction that it differs from the dogmatic method in this: that while deduction proper requires, as the first step, the pursuit of induction, with all its cautious observation and comparison, as the means of procuring the premises from which it proceeds, dogmatism generates these premises, either independently of all facts, or, what is perhaps worse, by means of that vicious induction which proceeds by simple enumeration.

While, then, deduction is constantly to be employed as a means of verification, even during the successive steps in the process of rising to an inductive law, we shall be understood as advocating its use in the discovery of new truth only in those cases where axioms or generalizations have been reached in the manner pointed out in the previous chapters of this book. By that method we elevate ourselves upon a platform which we are sure is sound and immovable; and then, by this, we stand and survey the new objects which such elevation has brought within the purview of our observations. Deduction proceeds upon the principle, *that the NECESSARY consequences of a truth must themselves be true*.

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<sup>1</sup> See System of Logic, book 2: chap. 6:

<sup>2</sup> See System of Logic, book 3: chap. 11:

<sup>3</sup> Novum Organum, book 2: aph. 10.

Guided by this index, let us inquire how this method facilitates the acquisition of Scripture truth; and in this inquiry we shall be brief, as we do not deem it necessary to dwell upon a principle the application of which is evident and universal.

If asked what use, apart from verification, we can have for deduction in a case where all the facts involved are spread out before us, we reply that its uses are twofold 1. To illuminate dark or obscure facts; 2. To conduct to the knowledge of truth which is not specifically expressed, but which is left to be learned by this method.

That there are obscurities in many parts of the Bible, is well known; passages which contain allusions difficult of comprehension; facts which, viewed by themselves, are dark and mysterious; but which, nevertheless, we can perceive to be in some way related to a class of facts which are well understood, and from which we have risen, or may rise, to an inductive generalization. We therefore "follow out," deductively, "into all its consequences, this inductive result, and apply it to all those cases which seem even remotely to bear upon the subject of inquiry; so that every new addition to our stock of causes becomes a means of fresh attack, with new vantage ground, upon all *those unexplained parts* of former phenomena which have resisted previous efforts."<sup>1</sup> In this way our generalizations become, as it were, lighted torches with which we go back to those objects which were previously enveloped in darkness, and view them in a clear light. And thus the meaning of many individual facts is disclosed, their relations and connections are perceived, and the bearing and influence of their attendant circumstances are ascertained with a clearness not otherwise possible. Thus, too, seeming exceptions are made to disappear; apparent contradictions are seen to harmonize; and difficulties, the most formidable and discouraging, are resolved with ease and satisfaction.

It requires no argument to show the propriety and necessity of availing ourselves of the light of the clear and well known, in seeking to understand the doubtful and obscure. No principle of exegesis is better established—no one more generally admitted and received. But, like most good things, it is liable to abuse and

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<sup>1</sup> Herschel.

misapplication. When we rush hastily to a conclusion, before collecting a sufficient number and variety of facts, and then make such conclusion the guide and standard of all subsequent interpretations of passages upon the same subject—passages which may not be obscure in themselves, but are only so in being compared with our imperfect and perhaps unsound generalizations—the process is grossly abused, and, instead of leading to truth, does but multiply obscurities, perversions, and falsehoods. It cannot, then, be too emphatically repeated, that before deduction can be relied on to direct us to truth, its premises must in all cases be reached by means of the most careful induction from the largest number of facts, the meaning of which, as individuals, can be certainly known. With such precautions, it is invaluable; without them, it is pernicious.

To us it has seemed to be of more importance to give emphasis to this point than to occupy space with illustrative examples; for everyone is familiar with the deductive process, which, as a process, is the same whether the premises be sound or unsound. It has ever been found necessary to read a large part of the Old Testament in the light of the New, in order to appreciate its full significance; and so familiar are we with the process, that we often fail to observe that it is pursued, or to note the source of the light which enables us to see things so clearly. The parables, also, and the various figures of speech, in so far as they are themselves obscure, are to be interpreted upon the same principle, as we attempted to show in a previous part. And whatever be the nature or the cause of any obscurity, there can be no better way of reaching its meaning, and of bringing it out into prominence, than that which is here indicated.

If, then, it be true, that no proposition or text in the Bible is so utterly destitute of light, when viewed in its connections and circumstances, but that we may determine from it what its subject really is, though that subject, as therein presented, may be altogether incomprehensible, there seems to be no barrier to the above process; for, when this is learned, we know immediately in the light of what generalization it is to be viewed, which light, when properly cast, will almost always elucidate its obscurities and unravel its perplexities.



2. But, in the second place, the process of deduction enables us, in a certain sense, to enlarge the borders of revealed truth—to perceive a thousand things to be true which are not expressly mentioned. Full and elaborate as are the Scriptures, they suggest much more than is verbally enunciated. All the logical consequences of their propositions are as true and obligatory as those propositions themselves. Every individual truth is a member of a system of truth. Nothing is isolated, nothing independent. The truth of one proposition necessitates the truth of another, and that of another, and so on ad infinitum. Now, while the Scriptures furnish the first, and it may be several of the succeeding links in this series, they do not and could not furnish them all. Many are left to be discovered by the human mind, guided by those logical rules which have been induced from its own nature, and the correctness of which is self-evident. In all cases, therefore, in which our premises are the result of a true and rigorous induction, and in which our conclusions from them are the result of the sound and legitimate process of ratiocination, we have the same assurance of the truth of such conclusions that we do of the truth of the premises which contain them.

Or, to look at the subject from a different angle, the Scriptures present us with a number of facts on a great variety of subjects; and on these facts, as we attempted to show in the early part of this book, the truth is virtually written. But besides the facts actually employed by the Holy Spirit in exhibiting the truths and requirements of Scripture, there are numerous others belonging to the same classes, to which the law or the truth adheres as naturally as to those recorded for the purpose of enabling us to learn that truth. Hence, it is our privilege and duty to deduce from the law of the facts given, the law of the facts not given. And this is what we mean commonly by the practical *application* of Scripture. The Bible does not say that A, B, or C, living in this nineteenth century, shall repent, but it gives a general law which includes A, B, and C. It does not tell us that horse-racing and faro are wrong, it does not express these sins *by name*, but it gives us a general law which includes these specialities. And so of the various specific vices of modern fashionable society; "they are evidently and clearly unscriptural and forbidden, not because they are expressly

mentioned, but because we light upon them when we descend from general and well-established principles.

Again, the Bible does not say that it is wrong for the church to make laws for its own government; but it tells us "there is one lawgiver;" that we are "under law to Christ;" that we are to "hear him;" that we belong to him; and from these it follows that no one else has the, right to be a lawgiver, or to make laws either for himself or others, in spiritual matters. While, therefore, the Scriptures declare that "there is one lawgiver," we must regard the Roman Catholic Church and her copyists as a living denial of its truth.

Enough has now been done, it is hoped, to indicate the sphere of the deductive process in the scientific method of interpretation; but before dismissing the subject, it may be important to remark, that the very fact that this process is so prolific of results, and can be employed with so much readiness and facility, renders it necessary to be doubly cautious in its use. For as from one truth we may by this process deduce a whole system of truth, so from one falsehood we may deduce a whole system of error. This false system, too, will be logical in form, and perfectly consistent in its several parts. There will be but one point open to attack—but one weak and unsupported part—the starting place. If this had been sound, the whole would have been sound; but this being false, diffuses its nature through every subsequent development. Whenever the head—the *fons et principium*—is corrupt, the whole stream will be of the same nature. Hence the importance of the remark made by the authors quoted above, that the *first step* in the deductive method must be a *direct induction*. This supplies us with *truth* to start with; gives us a solid foundation to stand upon; and then, if the deduction be properly made, the result of the second step, the ratiocination, will be truth. But lest we should by any means be mistaken in a matter so important, we have one concluding step left, the *verification*. We can test the correctness of our deductions by collating the conclusions of our ratiocinations with observed facts. And he who is really in search of truth will not be satisfied until this is done. For, "to warrant reliance upon the general conclusions arrived at by deduction, these conclusions

must be found, on a careful comparison, to accord with the results of direct observation wherever it can be had."<sup>1</sup>

The author has now completed the main part of his design,—that upon which the claims of this work to popular favor must chiefly rest,—the exhibition of the inductive or scientific method in its application to biblical exegesis. Of the many imperfections in what he has done, none can be more sensible than himself; and he would fain withdraw the attention of the reader from its logical and rhetorical blemishes, whatever they may be, and fix it wholly upon what he regards the all-absorbing importance of its subject matter. Though he does not affect to be altogether indifferent to the judgment which the public may pronounce upon the work as a literary production, this is by no means the, object of his chief solicitude. His constant aim has been to present great principles in a light so clear that none could fail to understand them; and he has written, from first to last, with the determination to sacrifice, if necessary, everything else to perspicuity. If he has succeeded in this object to the satisfaction of the reader, he would now solicit from him a candid and independent judgment upon the *principles* which have been elaborated.

Are they true or false? Are they good or bad? Do they seem to be valuable or worthless? What effects might be anticipated from their adoption? Is there any better method? Is this complete and sufficient? Would its general adoption heal the divisions in the body of Christ; divisions which have paralyzed its influence, and which have emasculated the inherent power of the word of God in its hands? If this method will not, what other one will? Mysticism? It *originated* the present state of things! Dogmatism? It carried on and perfected the unholy work! There is no hope from these methods. They have been weighed in the balances—fairly and impartially weighed—and found wanting. It does seem, therefore, that there is but one other refuge—a resort to that method which, in whatever department it has been tried, has proved itself to be perfectly reliable, and which has uniformly produced precisely those effects which are so desiderative in religion.

The history of science may be written in one sentence. She first repudiated those false methods we have imperfectly exposed, and,

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<sup>1</sup> Mill's Logic, p. 269.

by a sublime declaration of independence, threw off the shackles of party which they had forged; she then embraced that method which she now commends to us, which enabled her to look with a clear and unbiased eye upon the facts of the world, and to rise to the exalted dignity which she now maintains; sitting like a queen of nature upon a throne of eternal truth, while with the scepter of common sense she sways authority over creation, and compels the universe to support her dominion.

We have sought to inspire the votaries of *religious truth* with the resolution, while we pointed out to them their ability, to climb to at least an equal elevation. And now it is for the reader to say whether the recommendation is foolish or wise—whether the proposal is chimerical or practical. And when he shall have deliberately made up his judgment in the light of the whole argument, and under a sense of his own responsibilities, it will remain for him, if he agree with us, *to act for himself*. Parties, with all their power and patronage, will not suddenly change; it need not be expected that great bodies will speedily release themselves from the fetters of a cramped, a rigid, and an inflexible "orthodoxy." The work most be done by *individuals*. It is for them to lead the way. It is for isolated persons, like the reader, to resolve that the birthrights of Protestantism are too valuable to be bartered for a mess of pottage, and to rise in the strength of immovable *principle*, and with the bold avowal of inalienable *right*, and determine to learn the truth from its original sources, and to receive and obey it "at all hazards and to the last extremity."

Profoundly confident as we are of the ultimate triumph of all the essential principles herein advocated, we have had too much reason to know the strength and pertinacity of religious prejudice, to flatter ourselves that they will be accepted otherwise than through the gradually increasing pressure of outside influences. The incrustations which cover the existing bodies of Protestantism have become too hard and inflexible to be broken from within. The next reformation must commence from without. The intelligence of society at large must break the shell of partisan prejudice, before the inmates can see the light. Hence it is that we appeal to individuals,—whether connected with a church or not,—whosoever is outside of this indurated crust, to hammer it with all

the powers of reason and Scripture. This is the only hope, but in this we have an abiding confidence.

It now only remains for us to place the principles and laws which regulate the meaning of *words*, on a basis of certainty and simplicity equal to that which we have laid down for the passages which contain them. This undertaking, with our reasons for deferring it till the last, will occupy us in the subsequent and concluding part of this book.

## PART II: OF THE SIGNIFICATION OF WORDS

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### CHAPTER I: *Preliminary Observations.*

THE principles to be elaborated in this part might, with some propriety, have been introduced at an earlier stage of our progress. Logically and practically they belong to the fourth chapter of the preceding part, which treats of the observation and collection of materials preparatory to induction. But as we felt unwilling to discuss in that place the various minutiae which require consideration, and as the argument could be made equally plain and conclusive by employing only general terms, we determined to reserve for a separate part the specialities there embraced under more general expressions. Another and stronger reason we shall see as we advance.

The reader who is familiar with the elaborate treatises which have been published on the elements and laws of biblical interpretation, may be disposed to think that the very few principles and rules which we are about to submit are wholly insufficient. And it is not unlikely that, when he gets through the two or three brief chapters which we shall devote to the subject, he will look back, astonished and disappointed, and ask, "Where are the scores and even hundreds of rules that I have been accustomed to look upon as necessary in the expositions of Scripture?" We are

sure we cannot tell, unless they are lying buried in the volumes of their authors—embalmed as the mummies of a by-gone age. Where are the cycles, epicycles, and deferents of the Ptolemaic Astronomy—that cumbrous machinery by means of which men so long and so learnedly explained the movements of the heavenly bodies? Gone glimmering among the things that were supplanted by the clear and simple law of universal gravitation. The three great laws of Kepler,—“the legislator of the skies,” —may be expressed in as many lines; and even these were proved by Newton to be the necessary results of the law of universal gravitation. It is characteristic of scientific progress to generalize and simplify. And whether or not the principles and laws of this work be held to exhibit hermeneutics in the light of a science, we are satisfied that whenever it shall be done, its principles and laws will be few, general, and simple. We may recur to this subject again in the conclusion of this part, and examine a few of the rules which have hitherto been observed, for the purpose of pointing out their inefficiency and uselessness.

It may facilitate the accomplishment of our primary purpose, if we can, in the first instance, get a clear view of the object towards which we aim. And this, according to our whole argument, can best be done, we presume, by instituting a comparison.

Let us suppose, then, what is true in a large majority of cases, that the only information accessible to us on the science of astronomy, is that contained in books; and that we are furnished with a complete history of the various discoveries that have been made in this science from the earliest times to our own day. We read of it in its infancy, when none but its most obvious principles were recognized and recorded; and we trace it down through its subsequent and intermediate stages of development, till we come to the grand discoveries and marvelous achievements of the moderns. And now, as all these facts, circumstances, principles, and laws are in *words*—and most of them originally in the words of a foreign or dead language; some in Italian, French, and German; and some in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin—we ask ourselves how, from these records, are we to learn the science of astronomy? What course does common sense indicate? What principles does it lay down? What rules does it give? The answers to these questions will be, at the same time, the principles and rules

of biblical interpretation; because the two cases are precisely analogous.

All the knowledge of spiritual science which is accessible to us is contained in its records. These exhibit it in periods corresponding with those of astronomy. We see first its inchoate and imperfect dawnings,—a knowledge of some of its more obvious and general principles; next a fuller and clearer, but still intermediate and unfinished development; and, finally, the full exhibition of all its principles, in perfect simplicity, completeness, and harmony. And all this is in the *words* of languages now dead. How, then, are we to proceed in learning this higher science of the heavens? What does common sense point out as the first and indispensable consideration? Evidently, as in the former case, it is to learn the exact use and meaning of the *words* which are employed. And every other inquiry—whether it relate to the history of the people more immediately concerned, their manners, customs, habits, characters, or circumstances generally—will be auxiliary to, and have for its ultimate object to throw light upon, the *words of the records*.

This inquiry into the significance of words is, however, but the preparatory stage of the investigation. Its object is to supply the materials from which, by a subsequent and hither induction, we are to rise to those general laws which are the ultimate object of the whole proceeding. My purpose, therefore, in this part, is to lay down those principles and rules which will enable us to determine the use and meaning of the words employed in communicating the truths of Scripture, which, if we were correct in a position previously taken on the relation of truth to fact, will be equivalent to a knowledge of the individual facts of revelation. And as these facts are the elements of those higher generalizations which it is the object of biblical science to attain unto, it follows that the developments of this part belong logically to that chapter in the preceding which we have mentioned.

Why, then, it may be asked, was it not inserted in its appropriate place? Because the present investigation, like all others, involves the principles of the inductive method, which had not as yet been fully presented. We therefore deemed it compatible with the dialectical arrangement of our subject to postpone this inquiry until after we had exhibited the principles upon which it

was to be conducted. Now, with those principles clearly understood, and, we trust, implicitly relied upon, and with the advantage of turning back to the canons of induction, and adopting them in their appropriate place as a part of our present scheme, we can proceed in the work before us with ease and rapidity.

## CHAPTER II:

### *Of The General Meaning Of Words.*

THE whole superstructure of exegetical science rests upon two axioms. And as we have just shown that the object now to be accomplished is yet more elemental in its character than that already gained in the foregoing part, we shall begin with these nethermost stones of the foundation. We have seen that the lowest basis of natural science is the assumption that nature is uniform in the principles of its operation. This assumption rests upon the immutability of God, or, if you please, upon God himself; so that all scientific truth reposes securely upon Him who is truth absolute and essential. Thus, also, the axioms of the science of interpretation are not only self evident, but necessary truths springing from the character of Him who is the author of revelation; principles which the mind intuitively perceives could not have been disregarded by the author of a divine revelation, without defeating his own ends, and doing violence to his own character.

If, therefore, God has spoken to man in human language—a proposition which is assumed in this work, and if he thus spoke with the desire and intention of being understood, the affirmative of which results of necessity from his character—then he must have acted in harmony with two principles, which are the axioms that underlie the interpretation of his words.

#### **AXIOM I.**

*Every word in a given passage has, in that place, one fixed meaning, and no more.*

If the reader will, for a moment, suppose this axiom false, and will trace out the consequences of its falsity into all their issues, he



will be led to the strongest possible conviction of its necessary truth and fundamental importance. He will perceive that not only the rules which we are to lay down must rest upon it, but that, as Ernesti says, "there can be no certainty at all in respect to the interpretation of any passage, unless a kind of necessity compel us to affix a particular sense to a word, which sense, as I have said before, *must be* ONE; and unless there are special reasons for a tropical meaning, it must be the literal sense."<sup>1</sup>

The above axiom expresses the specialty of hermeneutics. There is nothing corresponding with it, as to its form, in the substructure of science, until after it is thrown into the *form* of revelation. But so soon as this is done, its basis becomes not only similar, but identical. For whenever scientific phenomena are thrown into the form of revealed phenomena, i.e. when they are expressed in words, they stand, like the Scriptures, upon axiom first; but when natural phenomena are contemplated directly without the aid and intervention of word, and when revealed words are viewed as being the phenomena of spiritual facts, and consequently analogous to the phenomena of nature, then, again, they both stand together upon another basis, which for each is identical in kind, but which, for the sake of perspicuity, may be differently expressed. In contemplation of the object now before us, we may express this basis in the form of the following axiom.

### **AXIOM II.**

*Whatever be the true sense of a word under any given set of circumstances, it will in all cases retain that sense under the same circumstances.*

This axiom is the foundation of all lexicography. The meaning of words must, in the first instance, be learned in every case, from the circumstances connected with their use. But if these do not always teach the same thing, or if a given word may have, under the same circumstances, now one meaning and now another, all knowledge of the sense of words is abandoned, as beyond the limits of possible attainment. Not only, therefore, must all rules of interpretation rest upon this axiom, but the reliability of the

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<sup>1</sup> Ernesti, p. 10.

definitions in the dictionaries must also depend upon its truth. It is fixed in the profound necessities of philology, and can only be given up when we are prepared to give up all hope of being instructed by words.

But what equivalent to this do we have in the interpretation of nature? We will answer in the language of Sir John. Herschel: "The only facts which can ever become useful as grounds of physical inquiry, are those which happen *uniformly and invariably under the SAME CIRCUMSTANCES*. This is evident; for if they have not this character they *cannot be included in laws*."<sup>1</sup>

Without further explanation or argument, we will leave the above two axioms with the reader, believing that if he be not already satisfied of their necessary truth, and of their fundamental position in the science of interpretation, his own reflections must surely lead him to this conclusion. We shall now place upon this foundation two general principles, or laws for the interpretation of words; which, it is believed, will cover the whole subject, or embrace the whole science of hermeneutics, so far as the primary inquiry into the meaning of words is concerned. These principles, for the sake of perspicuity and convenience, we shall afterwards resolve, severally, into the less general rules which are contained in them. But we desire to be distinctly understood as saying that the whole science of verbal interpretation, whether of the Scriptures or of any other book, is contained in the two general principles to be laid down, and that the subsequent development of those principles is not an addition to them.

### **FIRST GENERAL PRINCIPLE.**

*In ascertaining the meaning of any word in a given text, the first step is to generalize it.*

This means that we are, first of all, to determine by induction the primary or general signification of a word, before we pronounce upon its force in the passage given.

OBSERVATION.—*The primary is not necessarily the etymological meaning, but that which would be suggested to the mind of one well acquainted with the language if he heard the*

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<sup>1</sup> Dis. on Nat. Phil., p. 89.

*word pronounced alone, or saw it written upon a sheet of blank paper.*<sup>1</sup>

But let us suppose that we are wholly ignorant of the sense of this word, and that the whole force of the passage turns upon it; or, what is the same thing, let it be a word whose meaning is in controversy. Our first care should be to place ourselves in the condition of one familiar with the language; and this can only be done by learning first the general meaning of the word. If it have secondary senses, or if it have been turned out of its ordinary sphere to perform extra service, be it so; all this we shall attend to in its proper place; but these special uses and exceptional instances do not now concern us, and could not in the least contribute to our first object. Our only business is now to ascertain the primary, as a guide to the secondary senses; to determine the general and proper signification, as *a means* of reaching the special and tropical. To facilitate the conduct of this generalizing or inductive process, we submit, in the first place, the following rule.

#### **RULE I.**

*The primary meaning, as given in the dictionaries of the language to which the word whose definition is sought belongs, may be temporarily accepted as the basis of subsequent inquiries.*

The definitions contained in dictionaries are the results of inductions made by their authors. They commonly exhibit before us at once both the facts which are required in the investigation and the conclusions which have been reached from those facts. They, therefore, have an authority precisely analogous to that of standard works on natural science. We seldom deem it necessary to call in question the results of the investigations of physical philosophers, and commonly rest satisfied with what they propound as general laws—particularly if they give the facts upon which those conclusions depend—without ourselves actually testing their correctness. And hence, if the biblical student should do no more than consult the best dictionaries for the primary meaning of the words of Scripture, his knowledge would be as accurate and

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<sup>1</sup> The reader will notice that this is not exactly the definition of "primary" which is usually given in the dictionaries.

reliable as that possessed by the mass of well-informed men on physical science.

Still it is always our privilege, and in cases of doubt or uncertainty, our duty, to go behind the conclusions others have reached, and to determine for ourselves the point under investigation, by a direct appeal to the facts. In this case, the definition of the dictionaries may be either wholly disregarded,—and then the process will be an induction *de novo*,—or, what is better, it may be made, as contemplated by rule first, the basis of the investigation; and the process will partake more of the nature of verification. We will endeavor to frame a rule which will embrace both these characteristics.

## **RULE II.**

*After the dictionaries have been consulted, the next resort, in determining the general meaning of a word, is a direct appeal to the facts.*

It is evident that this rule calls up under it all those inductive canons which we attempted to explain and illustrate in the first part of this book, with all the principles connected with them, and preparatory to their employment. It requires, therefore, that we first collect and classify, in the manner already explained, the various facts involved in the explanation of the word of whose meaning we are in search. And now, having carefully performed this preparatory work, if we find cases clearly presented and obvious, in which "the assigned peculiarity"—*i. e.* in this case, the definition in the dictionary—"is wanting or opposite," we shall conclude, according to canon first,<sup>1</sup> that if such be its meaning in any case, it is destitute of that high degree of generality claimed for it, and of which we are in search, but if, in our large and varied collection of facts, there be *one point* in which "they *all without exception agree*,"—one well-defined sense that can be traced in every individual case,—then, according to canon second, we shall conclude *that* to be the general meaning we seek. There may, and doubtless there will be, various shades and differences of meaning besides this discernible in the same word as used in different

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<sup>1</sup> See Canons of Induction, in chap. 7: part 1.; *supra*.

individual passages, but these peculiarities of signification are not yet the objects of our investigation.

On the other hand, it may be that the definition of the lexicons will seem to be extremely difficult of detection in a given passage, or we may be unable to perceive how the text is to be understood and harmonized with others, if such meaning is to be taken as correct; while, nevertheless, the analogous passages may present no such difficulty, but be "cogent and unanimous" in favor of the assigned meaning. In this case canon third would become applicable, and prevent us from rejecting a strongly supported truth, merely because we are unable to understand all its applications.

Or, if we discover a case in which the absence of the meaning given in the dictionaries can be accounted for by considering the neutralizing influence of opposing causes, this too, as shown by canon fourth, will but establish its generality. But, not to multiply illustrations, it is enough if the reader perceive that the various canons of the inductive method which are applicable to natural science and to the doctrine of whole passages are equally applicable to the individual words which compose those passages.

This, then, is what we mean by saying that to ascertain the primary sense of words, the first step is to generalize them. As we have in the dictionaries generalizations to start with, we may, for ordinary purposes, content ourselves with these inductions made by others; but in cases of peculiar importance, we should either carefully verify the conclusions of lexicographers, or, disregarding them altogether, rise at once from the facts to an original induction, which induction, however, must itself be verified before it should be regarded as true in itself and in its consequences. It now only remains for us to indicate the sources of the facts which are to be collected in this inquiry.

1. THE BIBLE ITSELF. It is true that a few words are used but once in that book, and hence, could not be compared without going outside of it; but these cases are rare and exceptional. In a large majority of instances the same word is of frequent occurrence. We shall find it used in different connections by the same writer,—by different writers, in different dispensations, in stating different facts, in conducting different arguments,—occurring, in short, in a variety of circumstances, relations, and influences. We are then to

consider it in the light of these various circumstances,—the context, the subject-matter, the scope and design of each several passage in which it occurs,—in the light also of the definition given in the lexicons, the verification of which is the immediate object (in most cases) proposed. In this way we collect and arrange the materials for induction from the Bible itself.

2. COTEMPORARY LITERATURE. As the Holy Spirit did not make new words, but gave us a revelation of truth in the words then current among men, it is evident, as he intended his communications to be understood by those to whom they were addressed, that he used those words in their current and received acceptation. Hence it is perfectly legitimate, and often necessary, in determining the general meaning of a word, to compare it, as used in the Scriptures, with the use made of it by those authors whose works were well known and received at the time the Scriptures were written. And in this case, as a matter of course, the same observations apply as in the former.

3. INCIDENTAL EXEMPLIFICATION. The Scriptures often supply us with a commentary upon their own words. True, this might be considered as embraced under the first head above; it is intended to include those incidental allusions and historical exhibitions which often point out with great clearness the sense then attached to a word, but which vie feared might not be included in the inventory of our resources unless expressly mentioned. In the preceptive and statutory parts of Scripture, particularly, we can in many cases learn what the persons addressed understood by an important word, by observing what they actually *did*, when obeying, what they were *commanded* to do.

4. TRANSLATIONS, PARAPHRASES, SCHOLIA, AND COMMENTARIES. These, when made by those who lived at a period so near that in which the Scriptures were written as to furnish a strong presumption that the true sense was not yet lost, nor the original meaning changed, may sometimes be consulted with advantage. Such facts, however, we regard only as corroborative and secondary, and would never recommend a resort to them in the first instance, particularly upon any subject which appertained in any way to the doctrines and polity of the great apostasy, the elements of which were at work even in the times of the Apostles.

Still, if discreetly used as confirmatory evidence, they need not be wholly disregarded.

Such are the vast resources accessible to him who would inductively study the meaning of the words of Scripture. And we are persuaded that whoever will take the pains to engage in this pursuit will be led to conclusions as perfectly satisfactory and as strongly established as any that can be reached on any analogous subject of inquiry. And what though the method be, as Isaac Taylor says, "laborious and difficult," he will find that the labor will be sweet,—*labor ipse voluptas*,—for it will lead to conclusions which are "certain." And what though it be but a word that calls out this labor and pains,—it is A WORD OF ETERNAL LIFE! All the magnificent achievements of science, great and marvelous as they are, and productive of the ease, comfort, prosperity, and enlightenment of men as they have been, sink into worthlessness in comparison with the modest achievement of acquiring a knowledge of the words of God; FOR THEY ARE SPIRIT, AND THEY ARE LIFE.

### CHAPTER III:

#### *Of The Secondary Sense Of Words.*

THE principles and rules given above, with the inductive canons contained under them, will enable the biblical student to ascertain in every case what was the primary, proper, or general sense of any given word at the time it was used by the inspired penman. Every word has one such meaning, and but one. If, in the course of ages, what was originally this sense give place to what was once a secondary sense, let it be so. No confusion and no uncertainty can arise from it if we keep in mind that no word can have *at the same* time two or more proper or general significations. There must be a first, a primary meaning,—that which will *first* be suggested to the mind,—and there can be but one first; while every subordinate sense will be but a modification of that. Hence the necessity of commencing our investigations by acquiring this meaning.

To make this matter plain—for everything depends upon it—let us exemplify it by the word *cross*. Of the noun, Webster gives

fourteen definitions; of the adjective, eight; of the preposition, about five; of the transitive verb, nine; of the intransitive, three; of the adverb *crossly*, three; of the noun *crossette*, one; crossing, three; crossness, one; besides some forty-five words compounded with the word cross. Now here are nearly one hundred definitions, or senses in which the word *cross* is used. But has the word so many different meanings? Not at all. They are all merely *modifications* of the original and proper sense—which sense runs through every one of them. Now when we write down the word "cross," without any prefix or affix, or any sign to indicate any peculiar signification, there arises in the mind of every one image having the form of an X, a dagger (†), or the sign plus (+). This is *first* suggested to the mind of those acquainted with our language, and is, therefore, its *primary* sense. If, now, we say that one went "across the street," do we not say that he made the form of a cross, the direction of the street being one line, and his path another? And so of all the cases given in Webster.

Commentators have troubled themselves with a few words—one in particular—which have been held as an exception to the doctrine that we have advanced. The particular word we refer to is "*let*." Its primary or general meaning at the time King James's translation was made, as it still is, was to permit, to suffer, or to allow; but besides this, it is said, the word has, or at least then had, another sense which, so far from being a modification of the general meaning, was directly its opposite, namely, to hinder, to obstruct. How is this to be accounted for? Shall we call it an exception? What reason is there for it? We dislike to see rules, and especially good rules, burdened with exceptions which are unaccountable. We submit the following off-hand explanation, which we hope may be found worthy of consideration:—

*That there are two distinct words, each spelled and pronounced "LET."* Our reasons for this conclusion we will briefly give. Let us indicate a certain word without using its proper letters—the word *grone*, for example; and let the reader pronounce it as (for the sake of the illustration) we would do if he were present. What would we mean—a deep, mournful sound? or the perfect participle or adjective from the verb *to grow*? The hearer could not tell, because the *same sound* represents *two* distinct words, whose meaning, consequently, has no similarity. We can



represent to the eye the difference in these words by writing one of them *groan* and the other *grown*. But language existed before letters; it was spoken before it was written; and it is either a mere accident, or an artificial convenience, that the two words are spelled differently. Suppose they had not been, but that both, words had been represented by the letters *grone*, would that have made them *one* word with *two* entirely different meanings? By no means. They would still have been *two words*, identical in spelling as they were before in sound. The same is true of the words *air* and *heir*; *our* and *hour*; *ail* and *ale*; *feat* and *feet*; *no* and *know*; *new* and *knew*; *rain* and *reign*; with numerous others of the same class. But lest it should be objected that these words are not in point, because not of the same spelling—an objection which we think would be grounded upon the most superficial view of the subject—we will introduce others whose spelling and pronunciation are both alike; passing over that large class whose spelling is the same, but whose pronunciation—a very flitting matter—is different. Webster gives us no less than three distinct words, each written *gill*, and each pronounced *jill*—besides another word of the same form pronounced with *g* hard. One of these words means "the fourth of a pint;" another means "ground-ivy;" and another "a sportive or wanton girl." There is not the least shade of similarity in their meaning. They are all alike nouns, and in every sense different words. Again, we have two words written and pronounced *bowl*, each of which is a substantive with a different meaning. The same is true of *bower*; also of *brag*, a boast, or boasting; and *brag*, a game at cards. All the above examples, except *gill*, we find upon one opening of Webster's Dictionary. We opened at random, and have taken no pains to estimate how large this class of words may be. Nor is it necessary to look further. These are abundantly sufficient to show that where *definitions are entirely different*, our standard lexicographer regards the *words defined, as different*.<sup>1</sup> We conclude, therefore, that "Let, to hinder," is one word, and "Let, to permit," another. How much this conclusion may be strengthened,

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<sup>1</sup> Webster is evidently not uniform in his treatment of such words, seeming, in many cases, to act from mere caprice. This cannot, however, be said of Richardson, who will be referred to further on, and to whose remarks, as quoted in footnote 2, the attention of the reader is particularly directed.

if at all, by taking into account the difference in the spelling of the original Saxon, *lætan* and *letan*, we will not pause to inquire.

If the above reasoning be sound, the remark with which we set out, that every word has one proper meaning alone, while every other meaning is but a modification of that, is left true without qualification, abatement, or exception. Now, therefore, we are prepared to submit the principle upon which the secondary sense of words is to be determined.

### **SECOND GENERAL PRINCIPLE.**

*In determining the meaning of a word in any given case, the presumption is always in favor of its primary or general sense.*

The effect of this principle, as every rhetorician knows, is to throw the *burden of proof* upon the opposite side. In other words, it tells us that we are not called upon in any case to show that the ordinary meaning is the one most proper in that case, because this is to be taken for granted unless there exist positive *proof to the contrary*. Hence, when there is no such proof or evidence, the general meaning stands without the aid of special support. From this principle we draw the following rule.

### **RULE III.**

*No change or modification should be made in the primary sense in any given case, except what is PROVED to be NECESSARY by the CIRCUMSTANCES of that case.*

This rule cuts off all guess-work, and all arbitrary proceedings in settling the secondary sense of words. It teaches us that we are, in the first place, to insert, as it were, the primary sense, in order to ascertain whether all the facts and circumstances can be made, *without violence*, to *fit in* with it, so as to form a consistent whole; and that, where this is impossible, the general meaning is to be extended, restricted, or turned aside, *just enough* to make the fit, but no more.

Here we might with propriety pause, without the addition of a single rule more specific than has already been given, and leave the subject to the guidance of that common sense which has pointed out the above general directions. It may, however, be acceptable to

the reader, though it be not necessary to the completeness of the subject, for us to draw out in the form of rules a few at least of the special requirements embraced in the above general principle, besides the rule already given.

#### **RULE IV.**

*The general meaning of a word must be modified to the extent obviously required by the context.*

It cannot be important to dwell upon a rule the necessity of which springs from the nature of language in general, and which, therefore, must be observed no less in the interpretation of human compositions than of the Bible. If it be disregarded, no author's meaning can be gathered from his words.

That what precedes and succeeds any word in a given passage is to be taken into consideration in determining its exact sense, appears also from what we said above, that that sense must be such as would precisely fit or fill the place assigned it; which place can only be measured by observing the gap left between the preceding and succeeding parts of the whole passage. Across this gap we place temporarily the ordinary or primary sense of the word, as a sort of bridge over which we can pass back and forth, until we can ascertain what modification, if any, is required to enable it to meet perfectly the obvious necessities of the case. It may be too long, and we contract it; too short, and we extend it; too direct, and we deflect it but still it is the same bridge, only adjusted to the space it is to cover.

But suppose it be a case like those in which the word *let* occurs, as in the following passage: "Oftentimes I desired to come unto you, but was *let* hitherto." (Rom. 1:13.) Now, if we throw over the space occupied by this word the definition *permit*, instead of forming a bridge it forms an obstruction. The mind cannot pass over it; and by no possible change or modification can it be made passable. We are forced, therefore, to take out the *let* having this signification, and to put in its place the other which has the opposite sense, to *hinder*. And now the passage is perfect, and the mind glides along with ease from the foregoing to the succeeding context, while language is shown to be subject to rule and unchanging principle, and not the sport of caprice. So if we should

say that, "walking in the garden, we plucked a sprig of *mint* of a very green color," our young readers might open their Webster's Dictionary and read as the definition of *mint*, "the place where money is coined by public authority." They would instantly perceive the incongruity of the definition with the apace assigned it, and the impossibility of adapting that definition to that space. They would then open their dictionary again, and find that there was *another word* of the same orthography and pronunciation, which signified a peculiar aromatic plant—which signification would exactly meet the requirements of the context.

Or, to give an example of a *verb*, we read that "the Mount of Olives shall *cleave* in the midst thereof." (Zech. 14: 4.) And again, "my bones *cleave* to my skin." (Ps. 102: 5.) Here is a case directly in point; two words exactly alike in every respect save their significations, which are *directly opposite*; while the context decides which word was used. A case which, taken in connection with the others given, establishes the principle previously laid down, and which we deem of sufficient importance to give in the form of a

MAXIM.—*That incongruities, or oppositions of meaning, are never represented by the same word, though they may be by words having the same form.*

In obedience to this maxim our lexicographers give two or more *mints*, *gills*, and *cleaves*. Why not, for the same reason, have given two *lets*, and thus have been consistent throughout, while they left the most fundamental and important principle of philology without an exception?

We have dwelt longer upon this point than its intrinsic merits might seem to justify, from the fact that this apparent exception has been made the basis of the most unwarrantable exegetical licentiousness. We will now leave it to the reflections of the intelligent reader.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Since the completion of our manuscript, we have, through the kindness of the obliging librarian of the Philadelphia Library, gained access to authorities not previously within our reach; and are gratified to find that they distinctly affirm, and strongly insist upon, the important principle laid down in the text. Richardson's Dictionary—itself no mean authority—embodies what has for ages been taught on this subject by scholars of the first eminence; and it is on

## RULE V.

*The primary meaning of a word must yield to the natural demands of the subject matter.*

Among the numerous cases in which this rule applies, perhaps we could not do better than to particularize such passages as contain an allusion to scientific facts.

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this very principle that the learned author seems to justify himself in making a new dictionary. He says:—

"The great first principle upon which I have proceeded in the department of the dictionary which embraces the explanation, is that so clearly evolved and so *incontrovertibly demonstrated* in the 'Diversions of Purley,' namely, that a word has *one meaning and one only*; that from it all usages must *spring and be derived*; and that, in the etymology of each word must be found this single intrinsic meaning, and the cause of the application in those usages.

"That each word has one radical meaning, and one only, is not a dogma of which very modern writers have the sole right to boast. Scaliger *asserts* it in most explicit terms: 'Unius namque vocis *una* tantum sit *significatio* propria, ac princeps.' It is one of those many sound principles which have been met with in the writings of learned and sagacious scholars, and which have passed the not uncommon routine of being recognized and admired, neglected and forgotten. It is one of those which they themselves have employed to very little purpose, and of which we are not warranted in concluding that they saw the tendency with sufficient distinctness to appreciate justly the real value and importance.

"Tooke is most distinct in the assertion and maintenance of these principles, (the oneness or singleness, and the source, of the meaning of words;) he adopted them as the *sole sure foundation upon which philological inquiry could proceed*; he, and he alone, has adhered to them consistently, and he has raised upon them an edifice to which all must look as a model, when devising the ground-plot for a superstructure of their own.—"*Preface to Dictionary*, section 2:

Acting upon such principles it is no wonder that Richardson gives *two* distinct "*Lets*;" because it is evident that "*to permit*" cannot be the secondary sense of a word whose radical is "*to hinder*." His arrangement of them is as follows:—LET,—Goth. *Lat-yan*; A. S. *Lat-ian*, *lætan*; Ger. and Dut. *Letten*; tardare, morari, impeditare; to retard, to delay, to hinder, keep back or behind.

LET,—Goth. *Let-an*; A. S. *Lætan*; Dut. *Læten*; linquere, sinere, permittere, pati; to leave, to give leave, to permit or suffer.

With such authorities to support a principle, the obvious necessity and value of which would seem to establish it even *without* authorities, we must regard it as permanently settled.

It is conceded that the Bible was not intended to teach science, although in making its comprehensive revelations, and in detailing its historical facts, it was next to impossible to avoid making allusions to it. But in making such allusions, it had an ulterior and higher object in view, which could be subserved by adapting them to the then existing state of knowledge, as well as, and even better than, by turning aside from its lofty purpose to correct that knowledge. We should hence expect that such allusions would merely indicate, in the main, the then existing state of scientific knowledge, which was and is, therefore, the *subject matter* of the allusions. Such passages would be interpreted correctly when shown to harmonize with such subject matter. There may indeed be cases in which the beautiful but perhaps somewhat fanciful theory of our distinguished countryman, Lieutenant Marry seems to be justified by the facts.

"The Bible," he says,<sup>1</sup> "frequently makes allusion to the laws of nature, their operation and effects. But such allusions are often so wrapt in the folds of the peculiar and graceful drapery with which its language is occasionally clothed, that the meaning, though peeping out from its thin covering all the while, yet lies, in some sense, concealed, until the light and revelation of science are thrown upon it; then it bursts out, and strikes us with exquisite force and beauty." But such cases, if such there be—and we confess that some of his examples are not without force—only give us real science, instead of popular opinion, for the subject matter of such biblical language.

A case similar to, if not identical with the class he gives, is found in the geological question of the "six days;" in which, after we determine the sense in which the word "day" is used, we can see scientific truth "bursting out, and striking us with exquisite force and beauty." It may serve as an interesting example of our rule, if we pause for a little while upon this point.

According to the celebrated speculation of Laplace, which is now, we believe, generally received by astronomers, the earth, in common with the other planets, was formed from the condensed vapor of the sun's atmosphere, which originally extended to the limits of the present solar system. And when the ring of vaporous

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<sup>1</sup> Physical Geography of the Sea

matter which formed our planet was first abandoned by the sun, in consequence of the increased rapidity of its rotation caused by the process of cooling and consequent contraction, and while it was undergoing those changes of shape which ultimately resulted in its present form, it was in the state, we may suppose, in which it is first described in Genesis—"without form and void." After a portion of its vapors had condensed into water, there would still surround the heated mass such an immense thickness of impenetrable cloud and vapor as effectually to exclude every ray of light, so that total "darkness brooded over the face of the deep." In process of time, as condensation went on, the rays of light would begin to penetrate through the superincumbent vapors, giving the strange phenomenon of the succession of day and night, without any visible cause. This, in the Scriptures, is marked as the first period, or first "day" of creation.

The increased coolness of the surface of the earth would now begin to condense the vapors more rapidly near its surface, while the lighter vapors would be left at a great distance above, thus separating or "dividing the waters from the waters." This is marked as the second "day."

The earth would now radiate heat more and more rapidly, as the counter-radiation of the clouds became less and less, until the elements of those solids, which in the form of gases had been originally thrown off from the sun, would, through the action of the laws of chemical affinity and of gravitation, become solids, resulting in the formation of land and the consequent reflux of the water which would be collected into seas, while "the dry land would appear." This, by the fiat of God, was made to "bring forth grass, and herbs, and fruit-trees yielding fruit after their kind,"—which designates the third "day."

Under the perpetual influence of the same laws and agencies, those distant vapors which, up to this time, had never been wholly dissipated even for a short while, would now be removed from the face of heaven, and the sun, and moon, and stars, would, for the first time, become visible to the earth as the centers or "bearers" of that light which had previously served but to disclose its gloom and desolation. This ends the fourth "day."

The water would now have become sufficiently cool to be inhabited by living creatures, and such were created as were

adapted to its present state; together with such fowls as could live in the earth by flying over its interminable marshes and gloomy swamps. This marked the fifth "day".

Finally, when the earth had become prepared for them, and filled with food to sustain them, "cattle, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth," were formed, which prepared the way for the formation of man, the highest order of terrestrial existence, and lord of all preceding creations.

Such is a hasty sketch of the history of creation, as written upon the enduring rocks, and shells, and fossils of the earth, compared with the same account as written upon the page of revelation. The two records perfectly correspond and harmonize. Science requires revelation to make no change in its periods, or in the succession of its facts. On the contrary, every stratum of the earth's crust, with every bone and shell it contains, is a standing monument to the truth of the Bible. And when we reflect that one who lived three thousand years before the science of geology was in existence—a science so ample in its range and so startling in its revelations—should yet have described with the most marvelous accuracy what God had previously written on the deep-bedded strata of the earth, we are profoundly convinced of his inspiration, and ask for no higher evidence than the *testimony of the rocks*. All the demand made by science in this case, is to extend the meaning of the word "day," and make it the representative of an indefinite period—make it yield what is necessary to the known "demands of its subject matter."

Although this subject already occupies more space than perhaps it should, we cannot feel satisfied to dismiss it without calling attention to some remarks in the last work of the lamented Hugh Miller. He takes the position that God gave to Moses a *vision* of the successive scenes in the creation drama,<sup>1</sup> just as he afterwards gave to prophets visions of what was subsequently to take place. The one was, as it were, a prophecy of the past, the other of the future.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Each scene occupying one day.

<sup>2</sup> This, we are inclined to think, is the happiest solution of the difficult problem that has yet been offered. It is, at any rate, well worthy of serious consideration.



"From every view of the case,"—says this distinguished geologist, "a *prophetic* exhibition of the pre-Adamic scenes and events by vision seems to be the one best suited to the opening chapters of a revelation vouchsafed for the accomplishment of moral, not scientific purposes, and at once destined to be contemporary with every stage of civilization, and to address itself to minds of every various caliber, and every different degree of enlightenment." From this argument he advances to Dr. Kurtz's rule of interpretation—that the representations of pre-human events which rest upon revelation are to be handled from the same point of view, and expounded by the same laws, as the prophecies and representations of future times and events, which also rest upon revelation; and continues:—

"History is the surest interpreter of revealed prophecies which referred to events *posterior* to the times of the prophet,"—(because in that history we find the *subject matter* of the prediction,)—"in what shall we find the surest interpretation of the revealed *prophecies* that referred to events *anterior* to his time? In what light, or on what principle shall we most correctly read the prophetic drama of creation? In the light, I reply, of scientific discovery; on the principle that the clear and certain must be accepted, when attainable, as the proper exponents of the doubtful and obscure. What fully-developed history is to the prophecy which of old looked forward, fully developed science is to the prophecy which of old looked backward."<sup>1</sup>

The reader is not called upon to accept either of the above ways of reconciling the language of revelation with the facts of science; some other way not specified may be better. These are given in illustration of the position that whenever, and in whatever way, the subject matter of any communication is *clearly known*, the words of that communication must yield what is necessary to its natural requirements.

#### **RULE VI.**

*The general meaning of a word must be modified to the extent required by flee scope or design of the passage in which it occurs.*

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<sup>1</sup> Testimony of the Rocks, lec. 4:

The design may be known, says Horne, either from its being expressly mentioned; from the express conclusion added by the writer at the end of an argument; from a knowledge of the time, occasion, and circumstances of the writing; or from careful and repeated perusals of the whole book or epistle.

Whatever design the writer had in view in penning his composition, it is evident that he selected and arranged his words and arguments with reference to it. It hence becomes a matter of the first importance to ascertain in the outset the general scope or object of the whole book or epistle, and the special design of each several part, and then to cast the light of this knowledge upon the words employed in seeking to carry out that design. This brings the reader into sympathy with the writer, furnishes him with the thread upon which his materials are strong, and conducts him to the goal to which it was intended he should be brought.

As no rule is more capable, when conscientiously observed, of leading to the truth, so there is no one the violation of which has resulted in greater or more numerous perversions of Scripture. The various "doctrines"<sup>1</sup> which have sprung up in the church from age to age, have all drawn proof from the Scriptures by quoting them in utter disregard of this rule; quoting them to sustain propositions which had never entered into the mind of their writers, but whose words admit of being wrested into giving them a seeming support. This might be shown with fearful clearness by pointing to the marginal references of the various confessions, disciplines; and catechisms of our current Protestantism. But as we would not needlessly excite the opposition of their advocates, and as the claim to infallibility put forth by the Romish Church seems to invite scrutiny, we will exemplify our remark, and the importance of our rule, by exhibiting before the reader a few of her exegetical triumphs.

The direction given—James, 5: 14, 15—for the elders of the church to pray for one sick, and to anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord, *for his recovery*, is held to teach *extreme* unction, to be administered when, and only when, there is *no hope* of recovery! It is evident that the Apostle does not *design* to teach this extreme

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<sup>1</sup> In the Scriptures this word is never used in the plural, except in a bad sense—"false doctrines," "doctrines of devils," etc.

unction, and that his words do *not* teach it when interpreted in the *light* of his design. "If thy brother trespass against thee, tell it to the church," was one of the scriptural authorities for that stupendous and iniquitous *civil jurisdiction* towards which the church so long aimed, and which finally became so formidable! The right to ordain kings rested, according to Boniface VIII., upon Heb. 5: 4: "No man taketh this honor to himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron." Some Protestants have sought to rival the "Vicar of Christ," in the accuracy with which *they* apply the above text. "I am the good shepherd;" "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers;" "He that is spiritual judgeth all things;" such were the texts upon which the extravagant claims to *papal domination* rested. The power to "bind and loose," justified the inimitable Hildebrand in *loosing* the subjects of a foreign monarch from their allegiance! But enough. The mistake in all these cases is the same—a failure to observe the rule we have laid down concerning the design of a passage. Hundreds of other examples might be given under this rule, but let these suffice.

#### **RULE VII.**

*The various historical circumstances connected with the use of a given word must be allowed their just and natural influence in restricting or enlarging its meaning.*

This rule has a wide range, and is intended to include every necessary consideration not specified in those which have gone before. It requires—1. That due attention be given to the *Dispensation* in which the passage occurs, and to which it alludes. Of the importance of this we had occasion to speak in the previous part. 2. That the exact *date* of the writing, as nearly as it may be known, shall have necessary consideration. 3. The *author* of the book or epistle, with all that may be known of his peculiar style, modes of expression, and his location and circumstances at the time he wrote. 4. The *persons addressed*; their character, attainments, prejudices, wants, and difficulties. 5. Contemporary *profane history*; to which we may add an intimate acquaintance with the various religious and philosophical sects, the customs of idolators, the celebrated games and contests, the mode of warfare, with its implements of defense and attack, the recognized rites of

hospitality, the peculiar construction of habitations,—and, in a word, all that knowledge of antiquity which is necessary to enable us to place ourselves, as it were, back in the condition of those then living.

Such are the circumstances, to disregard which, and to read the Bible only in the light of those that surround ourselves, will almost inevitably lead us into error; but which, if duly weighed and faithfully heeded, will enable us to understand that book just as *they* understood it to whom its several parts were at first respectively addressed.

Having found it necessary frequently to illustrate the importance of attending to the circumstances, we need dwell no longer upon it in this place; and having been led in the first book—in order to dispose finally of the Mystic Method—to dissertate at some length on the rules which were deemed specially applicable to the figurative language of Scripture, we are now at the end of what remained to be accomplished.

But before dismissing the subject of this part we will devote a few paragraphs to a brief review of what we have attempted to accomplish in it; while we solicit a comparison of what it contains with the larger works on the same subject which have so long and so deservedly maintained their place as authorities.

And first, we would call attention to the form or construction of our imperfectly presented scheme. It all rests upon two axioms, which are at bottom substantially the same, and which we have shown to be, in their essential nature, identical with the axioms of science. The truth of these gives birth to the two leading or general principles, which, as has been said, contain within themselves the rules which are respectively found under them; rules which, while they add nothing new to the fundamental principles, serve to explain and develop them, and to point out and illustrate the mode of their application.

In the second place, we would invoke attention to the completeness of this scheme. Few as are the rules, and fewer still as are the principles—all of which may be committed to memory in a few minutes—they yet seem, to our mind, to cover the whole ground, and to exhaust the whole subject. The first principle, with its rules, will enable us to determine with the accuracy of science—provided the axioms be true—the *primary* sense of

words; while the second, with its rules, will enable us to determine with equal precision, their secondary senses, or their special meaning in any given case—and these are all. This is the whole extent of the inquiry. There seems to be nothing left to chance or caprice; nothing but what is thoroughly provided for; nothing in a state of uncertainty.

Again, the simplicity of these principles and rules may be worthy of attention. They are just such as the mind of every reader will recognize, the moment it understands them, as being what *anybody* would have thought of. And this very simplicity may have the effect of preventing superficial readers from perceiving their value, and the thick clouds of darkness they are calculated to dissipate. But if they are, indeed, as exhaustive and accurate as we have sought to make them, we trust that their being obvious to every man's common sense will not long prove an obstacle in the way of their adoption.

That they will, *prima facie*, appear to be but a partial and imperfect exhibition of their subject, need not be thought strange, when we reflect upon the multiplicity of the rules which have hitherto been in use. In such a conclusion, we should be ready ourselves most heartily to concur, if the rules we have laid down were destitute, like those of the eminent authors referred to, of the controlling influence and pervading spirit of a well-defined scientific and reliable method. They were forced to supply, as well as they were able, by a multiplication of particular directions applicable to every peculiarity in the Scriptures, the want of a method which could embrace those specialties in general laws. Hence their works partake largely of the character of commentaries. They had first to interpret difficult passages and peculiarities *without* rules, before they could *make* a rule for others; and when made, it rested, perhaps, not upon the essential nature of language, but upon their interpretation. Many of their rules are applicable to only the fewest number of cases, while there are many others which can only be necessary in the formative stage of hermeneutical science.

It has been thus, however, with almost every science. It has commenced with the collection and rude classification of large numbers of facts, and the determination of various special principles; and then, long afterwards in most cases, those materials

have been re-classified, and those specialties generalized into laws higher and more comprehensive; while its redundancies, which served the temporary purpose of patching its rents and covering its constitutional deficiencies, have been left out altogether as no longer necessary. In illustration of this point, take the following rule from Horne's Introduction: "An obscure, doubtful, ambiguous, or figurative text, must never be interpreted in such sense as to make it contradict a plain one." This rule is strictly correct, and, in the formative stage of biblical science, it was doubtless useful. But what service can it now render us? It does not tell us *how* to interpret obscure, or ambiguous language, but how it must *not* be interpreted. It was based upon the conviction of the author that the science was then so imperfect that it could not lead to *truth*, and, therefore, it was necessary for him to do what he could to prevent it from leading to *error*. But now, with the inductive method to guide us, it would seem to be the eeriest trifling to give a formal expression to a caution which is evidently embraced in its very nature.

Again, he says: "The literal meaning of words must be retained more in the historical books of Scripture than in those which are poetical." Very true; but *how much* more? And to *what extent* is it to be retained in the poetical Scriptures? These are the very things we wish to know—things immediately suggested to the mind by the rule—but which the rule does not tell us.

Once more: "In fixing the sense exhibited by a metaphor, the comparison ought never to be extended too far." We grant the truth of the remark, but where is the *rule* in it? It is absolutely impossible to tell from it *how far* he would have us extend the comparison. It is a measuring-stick of whose length we are wholly ignorant. Thus we might go on and mention rule after rule, every one of which is true, and many of which were more or less important in their day, but very few of which satisfy the requirements of what a rule should be. They are very much as if a natural philosopher should lay down as a rule, "that, in making a classification of animals, too much attention must not be paid to the differences in size." Or, "that, in determining the nature of plants, their varieties of color must not be insisted on;" "in comparing metals, the comparison must never be extended too

far;" "in estimating the mechanical force of a lever, the material must always be supposed to be sound."

All these are rules—rules, too, which are correct, and of the highest degree of generality; but we fancy that science would make but little progress if it had none better. And yet such as these have swelled the volumes of sacred hermeneutics; and they have been explained, applied, and illustrated, as though they really contributed to the science of interpretation. At the same time it affords us pleasure to say, that from nearly every work on the subject which has fallen into our hands, we have been able to draw out from this mass of redundant matter the true and natural principles of inductive exegesis: and it has been with regret and surprise that we have found these principles arranged according to no just *method*, and formed into no natural *system*.

We have made a feeble effort to supply this evident deficiency; and the result is before the reader. It is hoped that, however imperfectly the design has been carried out, the work will at least show the necessity and the practicability of interpreting the original Scriptures according to the only method which has ever been successfully pursued in any other department of study.<sup>1</sup>

But, alas! what are rules; what are scientific principles; what the clearest demonstration of the Holy Spirit himself, to those whose hearts are not imbued with the love of truth—whose delight is not in the law of the Lord—who do not wish to be taught his ways, nor to walk in his paths? How unspeakably important that every *student* of the Bible (for we have not sought to give a method that will supersede the necessity of *study*) should honestly

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<sup>1</sup> It is much to be regretted that, owing to the changes in our language and other causes, our received version is far from being, in all respects, a faithful representative of the original. The method and rules we have given, however, will enable the student of the English version to learn its meaning; while for its correction he must avail himself of the aids which are furnished in commentaries and other sources, until the enlightened piety and wisdom of Christendom shall supply him with a version more exactly in agreement with the mind of God as originally communicated. And from the movements now making, and from the evident interest that has been engendered on the subject both in this country and Great Britain, we have reason to hope that this desideratum will very soon be supplied—than which nothing could contribute more to the awakening of a general interest in the study of the living oracles.

examine his own heart, and strive earnestly to eradicate every vestige of prejudice, until he become perfectly willing to

Seize upon truth, where'er 'tis found,

or whatever it be, or wheresoever it lead, while he should ever remember, as he learns, that unless he be a *doer* of the word, and not a hearer only, he is but deceiving himself!

And if the devout Christian shall be led, in the providence of God, to accept the method and rules herein laid down, as the means best calculated to facilitate his efforts to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," we are sure that his heart will respond to what we would recommend as their crowning excellence, namely: *That this method should be pursued, and these rules observed, in the exercise of continual prayer to Him who is the source of all wisdom and understanding.*

And the author would himself be recreant to his profoundest sense of obligation, if he did not here record, that whatever is good or useful in the work which he now brings to a close, is owing to the blessing of his Heavenly Father, bestowed in answer to earnest and importunate supplication.