

Jew, Acadia College was to D. M. Welton. The life of the boy was not different from the life of the man. This is the wreath I place upon this good man's grave.

Another associated scene is distinct in memory. It is of a ruddy faced young man of tender years sitting in revival meetings with the tea flowing down those red cheeks, indicative of the working of the Spirit in her young heart. That sweet faced little girl is now the chief mourner of the departed brother. The Lord was then preparing them for each other and both of them for himself. She and hers have the sympathy of many.

What is the Bible and How Should it be studied?

A Summary of a Two Month's Course in the Bible Class of the First Baptist Church, Halifax, N. S.

One of the greatest privileges I have ever enjoyed is that of leading this large and intelligent Bible Class in its quest "What is the Bible, and how should it be studied?" As this generally raises the question of inspiration, I have sought to help you to a good working definition of the inspiration of the Scriptures—one that would not be contrary to even the view that they are absolutely inerrant, and yet one that you could successfully maintain even where you might not be able to clear away the difficulties that at least to others, are in the way of believing in the Bible's inerrancy. The right way to make a definition of the Bible is to put it into its class, and then to distinguish it from every member of its class. Without question, it belongs to Literature. Our purpose then will be to distinguish it from all else in this class. We therefore ask:

1. Is the Bible Religious Literature?

While in some instances it may be difficult to tell whether or not a piece of literature is to be classed as religious, yet if we look upon religious literature as that which (whatever else it may contain) gives us in a marked degree written manifestation of religion, unquestionably the Bible is religious literature. Different religions and religious movements have had their different literatures. Some of these have been of great and some of little importance. We therefore ask next:

2. What are the most important Religious Literatures?

Naturally those of the most important religions. In modern times we have five: Brahmanism, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism and Mohammedanism. In each of a number of religious literatures there have been some writings which we will call "specially sacred," because by the adherents of its religion they have been commonly viewed (1) as having special influence with deity, or (2) as having in their production been specially influenced by deity, i. e., of having been inspired, or (3) in both these ways.

3. In the most important Religions of to-day, what writings have been claimed to be specially sacred?

In Brahmanism to S'urti (hearing or revelation) belong the Mantras (Vedic hymns), the Brahmanas and the Upanishads; Buddhism has its Tripitaka, or three baskets; Christianity its Bible; Mohammedanism its Koran. As these "specially sacred" writings may be a book, as in Mohammedanism or a collection of the writings of many in many different times, as in Brahmanism we ask:

4. To which division of these "Specially Sacred" writings does the Bible belong?

The Greek title, from which comes the very name "Bible," was used in the plural and meant books, but later, through a meaningful grammatical blunder in mistaking the plural ending of one declension for the singular of another, the Latin word for it was used in the singular. While we should gladly recognize the truth that is at least suggested by this mistake, namely, that there is a remarkable unity in the Bible, yet we need to strongly emphasize to-day what was implied by the early Greek title, namely, that the Bible should be viewed not simply as a book, but as a literature, because it contains writings that from many ages and from different places and circumstances come to us as the works of many minds. We naturally wonder how these writings were collected, and how they were selected as "specially sacred." The determining of the number and the extent of the "specially sacred" writings is what is called the making of the Canon. There have been different canons.

5. How and when were the most important canons of the Bible made?

Not through some miraculous revelation, nor as the result of the acts of infallible councils, but rather through a natural, general and more or less critical process, the results of which were discussed and some of them ratified by different councils. Noticeable among these were (a) The Council (or discussion) at Jamnia about 90, A. D., the deliberations of which went a long way at least towards finally settling the O. T. canon. (b) The third Council of Carthage, near the close of the fourth century, at which all the N. T. books were recognized. (c) The Council of Trent in which about the middle of the sixteenth century the books of the Apocrypha were formally included in the Canon of the Roman Catholic Church.

6. What conditions are necessary in order that there be a definitely determined Bible regarded as a Sacred Authority?—As Infallible?

(1) Writings regarded as specially sacred, and (2) an authority to determine their number and extent.

(1) Writings regarded not only as speedily sacred, but as inerrant, and (2) an authority regarded as infallible in defining their number and their extent. Roman Catholics believe that their Bible (determined and interpreted by the church) is infallible. Protestants believe that their Bible is at least authoritative. If they claim that it is all infallibly authoritative, they too must in believing that all its writings are inerrant, also believe that their number and their extent were infallibly determined. As a common thought in Protestantism is that the Bible is inerrant because it is inspired, we are led to ask:

7. On what condition (if any) may we assume that the Bible is inspired?

Only on condition that the word "inspired" be given a meaning acceptable to those directly concerned in the assumption. Otherwise the inspiration of the Bible is something to be proved, and the higher the meaning put into the word inspiration the more reasonable the demand for proof. A preacher for instance may assume that the Bible is inspired and in a way that means inerrancy, if he believes it himself and his congregations does; but, if he is in a religious discussion with one who does not hold to that view, he has no right to assume it, especially if he is seeking to prove that the Bible is inspired. If he defends the inerrancy of the Bible on the ground that it is inspired he has no right to assume the inerrancy of the Bible to prove its inspiration. If, taking refuge in the fact that we have only copies of the original writings, he asserts that if we could get back to the original writings themselves they would surely or probably be inerrant, he may be asked such questions as these: As in proportion to the extraordinariness of a claim we look for proof instead of mere assumption, in view of your extraordinary claim for all and only the Bible, what right have you to simply assume it? As a matter of fact, did not some of the copyists make changes that removed some difficulties? Is it not true that in a number of passages the nearer Christian scholars get back to the original writings the more the difficulties to be faced?

8. How should we seek to find out the truth concerning the inspiration of the Bible?

Inductively, i. e., instead of seeking to apply to the Bible, any particular theory of its inspiration, it is better to begin with the study of the Bible itself, and from the facts thus obtained (such as the claims it contains) to seek to work out a working definition of its inspiration. We should not endeavor to prove that the Bible is what we think it ought to be, but rather in the presence of the God of Truth, we should honestly seek to find out just what the Bible is.

9. Does the Bible claim to be inspired?

Though it never uses such terms as "the Word" and "the Word of God," of all and only itself, and though it nowhere claims inspiration for itself as a whole, yet the Bible contains, from many different people, for them selves and for others, many different claims of inspiration. As, at least in our discussions with those who honestly question the inerrancy of these claims, we have no right to simply assume they all are inerrant, we ask:

10. In what light should we consider these and other claims concerning the inspiration of the Bible?

(a) In the light of their times. (b) Of similar claims in other religions, including besides those of modern religions such claims as that on the famous Mo-bite stone and that upon the stone upon which Hammurabi's famous code of laws was written. (c) Of the character of the claimants. (d) Of the contents of the writings themselves, judged by their effects upon us—upon the world. (e) Of prayer. As inspiration and revelation are closely connected, we ask next:

11. Is there any sense in which all religious writings are revelations?

Yes, in the sense and to the extent that they reveal the religious concept ons, etc., of those by, for and of whom they were written.

12. How have these revelations in the "specially sacred writings" of the most important religions affected the world?

This is a question to be answered in volumes rather than in a few sentences. Rev. J. H. Barrows, D. D., Lecturer in Comparative Religion wrote: "As a matter of fact the faiths which dispute with Christianity the conquest of the globe are but two, the Mohammedan and the Buddhist." "Friendly students of the prophet of Islam affirm that Mohammed's God is savage, aggressive and almost cruel. Though the Koran speaks much of the Merciful One, the divine mercy is dimmed by other attributes and is not made real or credible. Islam is a crescent, a pale lunar sickle of gracious truth in the sky of religion." "It is said that Buddhism has made Asia midl." It has done more than that, but it can hardly be said that Buddhism has made Asia moral." Its founder, "driven into practical atheism, never uttered any messages of divine love, and so the Gospel of Buddha, which modern scholars are compiling and printing, is a misnomer." "Wherever the Christian Scriptures have entered into the thoughts of the nations men, though clinging to other bibles, have been awakened out of moral lethargy and have felt themselves both challenged and condemned, even though they hold in their possession many scattered gems of ethical truth." "In the Christian Scriptures we not only find the noblest precepts which have been uttered by the sages and saints of the non-Christian world, but confront a sacred literature

which, as it reflects the mind of Christ, is purified and transcendently glorious and life-giving. Instead of fragmentary and uncertain mutterings of the Spirit mixed with voices of baser tone, we have the full articulate utterance of the highest inspiration. As space does not permit the testimony of others qualified to speak with authority, we ask next:

13. How do the "Specially Sacred Writings" of the most important religions affect us?

To use Coleridge's expressive word, the Bible "finds" us as the others do not. While at least in the others there is much that we by no means look upon as God's word, i. e., God's communication or revelation, at least in the Bible there is much that comes to us morally and religiously so authoritative and inspiring that we are impressed that it was "given by inspiration." In spite of (or even because of) the most critical investigations into the religious conceptions, etc., revealed in the Bible as compared with those revealed in other "specially sacred" writings, the more we compare them the stronger and more intelligent becomes our belief that to Hebrews, Jews and early Christians was given a progressive revelation from God, appreciation of the progressiveness of which helps to a better understanding of both the difficulties and the truths in the Bible, and so of its inspiration.

14. What then is the inspiration of the Bible?

It is at the least that divine influencing of Hebrews, Jews and early Christians in virtue of which the Bible, as the "specially sacred" literature of Christianity, is morally and religiously so much superior to the "specially sacred" writings of any of the other most important religions.

The advantage of such a view as this is, that while it is not contrary to whatever narrower (though higher) views we may hold for ourselves, it gives us a vantage-ground that we may easily take and successfully maintain in our work with any who, while believing in divine influencing, may honestly doubt the truth of any less comprehensive view. Knowledge comes through comparison. While for the sake of the right method we should be willing, in our profound confidence in the result we may well be anxious, that the Bible be intelligently compared, for instance, with S'urti, Tripitaka or Zend-Avesta Koran. I believe that in its production the influence of the Holy Spirit was such that, when thus compared, the Bible—especially through its revelation of the son of God, His teaching, vicarious death, etc.—will be found (to use a paradox) to be beyond comparison.

15. What are its different kinds of literature?

Poetry (especially lyric), history, prophecy, apocalyptic writings, wisdom literature, gospels, and letters.

16. What were its original languages and what the Septuagint and Vulgate translations?

Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The Septuagint, the translation of which was begun less than three centuries B. C., was the Greek version of the Pentateuch and more or less of the O. T. and other Jewish writings. The Vulgate, translated by Jerome about four centuries A. D., became the "popular" Latin version of the Bible.

17. What are the most important English translations?

Wycliff's (1382), Tyndale's, Coverdale's Geneva, Bishop's Rheims and Douai, Authorized (1611), Revised (N. T., 1881; O. T., 1885) Twentieth Century New Testament, 1901.

18. What are the advantages of using different translations?

(a) Of counteracting the tendency to magnify the letter rather than the spirit. (b) Of getting a better appreciation of the thought itself, because it is thus seen in more than one way.

19. To what have the chief classes of misinterpretations been due, and what have been their effects?

(a) To the separation of the text from the context. (b) To the failure to consider the times and circumstances in which the writing originated. (c) To taking figurative language literally. (d) To taking literal language figuratively. (e) To inaccurate stress on separate words. The results have been the obscuring of the truth, the perpetuation of the evils of Bible times, the increase of "isms," the awakening of doubt, etc.

20. What are the important steps in true Bible study?

(a) Getting the meanings the authors intended to convey. (b) Getting and arranging historically the facts in and back of the author's thoughts. (c) Getting the truths in and back of these facts and thoughts. Though we state them briefly, let us not fail to get their great importance.

21. What are the prerequisites for taking these steps, and for rightly considering all religious questions?

Common sense, knowledge, and spiritual insight. A spiritually minded though ignorant old woman may obtain more helpful truths in her Bible reading than are obtained by an unspiritual German specialist in his Bible study. While thus we must insist most strongly on the importance of spiritual insight, yet it should be clearly understood that it does not take the place of scholarship. If, therefore on the strength of his spiritual insight as untrained man, or even one comparatively well trained, but not a specialist in the difficult and in the minute historical and literary questions makes dogmatic assertions concerning these, you may be pardoned if you mutely think that he is somewhat lacking in our first prerequisite in Bible study. If in support of his view he claims that the Spirit of God is infallible he may be asked if he himself is infallible in deciding the degree and extent to which the Holy Spirit has enlightened him. Whenever it is asserted that if we were all guided by the infallible Spirit we would not disagree, the truth in the assertion is that to the extent we are all guided by the Holy Spirit we would not disagree; but who of us is infallible in deciding the exact degree and extent of our guidance by the infallible Holy Spirit? As enough perhaps has been written to guard against the common error of thinking that wherever and to the extent others do not agree with us concerning the inspiration and the interpretation of the Bible, it is because they have not the insight of our spiritual minds, I bring this summary of our work to a close, with the prayer that there abide with us common sense, knowledge, spiritual insight, these three; and the greatest of these, spiritual insight through the personal guidance of the Holy Spirit, who gave us the Bible, and who is to lead us into all the truth.

I hope to follow this summary with an article on "Why we should study the Bible?" H. F. WARREN.
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