

deliverances and the sense in which the Deity intended them to be understood. Because of this custom, there has arisen the so-called doctrine of the "double sense" of Scripture, which has hitherto prevailed amongst Biblical interpreters, and which still obtains in many quarters. As Hengstenberg is especially responsible for the traditional method of applying the argument from prophecy, so both he and Principal Fairbairn have been especially responsible for the traditional method of interpreting the meaning of prophecy, in modern times.

The supposition that certain portions of Scripture have a hidden or secret meaning, which underlies the literal meaning, cannot be admitted for a moment. It is contrary to any rational principle of exposition, either in sacred or in secular literature. It not only violates the law of language, but also destroys the possibility of its interpretation. The doctrine of a double sense in prophecy, therefore, is irrational. Prophecy has but one sense, namely, its natural, literal sense. It may have manifold applications, but it can have only one meaning. To assume that it has more than one meaning is to imply that it has no meaning, that is, no certain meaning, because of the impossibility in that case of determining which sense to take. It also implies that a passage may have one meaning in one part of Scripture and another meaning in another part, which is absurd. All reverent, scientific students must hold with Ryle, that the words of Scripture were intended to have *one* definite sense, and that the main object of an interpreter should be to discover *that* sense, and then to adhere to it.*

It is often asserted that the prophets did not always understand their own prophetic utterances; and that, after uttering a prophecy, they occupied themselves in searching out the full significance of their own words. The well-known passage in 1 Peter i. 10, 11, is commonly quoted in support of this view. But a proper rendering of the passage indicates that the inquiry in the minds of the prophets pertained not to the true meaning of their own utterances, but to the precise time when the idea represented in the passage should be realized. The translation of the New Revision is in harmony with this statement.

* "Expository Thoughts on St. Luke," vol. i., p. 383.