

# THE WESLEYAN.

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"WISDOM IS THE PRINCIPAL THING; THEREFORE GET WISDOM."

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## Theology.

### IMPORTANCE OF IMMEDIATE SUBMISSION TO GOD.

How powerful is the inducement, and how plain the directory, to seek for ourselves an interest in the blessings of the great salvation! If it be the promotion of infinite wisdom and power, our hope can never be disappointed, our dependence can never deceive us, when it is upon this we rely; nor is it conceivable, that a deliverance, wrought out and presented thus freely to our acceptance, will be denied to any who truly desire, and resolutely seek it. Is there any amongst us, then, that may have failed hitherto to secure it, through mere indifference? Let him arise, and cast away his slumber. Is there any that has deferred his application, through fear of rejection or of difficulty? Let him direct his eye to Calvary, and hesitate no longer.

Oh! is it possible that, with such views of its grandeur, and such convictions of its all-sufficiency, any in this assembly should still neglect to make that salvation their own? In what colours shall we portray their infatuation, or what delineation shall do justice to their unspeakable and awful criminality? How will the creation of every sanctuary, the return of every Sabbath, and the institution of every sacred ordinance, rise up and witness against them! They will have placed themselves beyond the mercy, through whichsoever of its avenues it might have sought their restoration;—whether by the might of Omnipotent power, or the contrivances of unlimited wisdom! And what remains but that they miserably perish!

Compared with such conduct, it would be safe to sport with the most deadly of all physical agencies,—to play with the winged lightning,—to inhale the breath of pestilence,—to suck the blood of scorpions,—to embrace the putrifying carcase,—or to defy, amidst solitude and darkness, the madness of the tempest, when the pillars of heaven tremble, and the earth is moved from her place. It is to anticipate the terrors of judgment, and make sure the decree of perdition,—to chide its lingering solemnities and outrun the speed of time; as if it brought too slowly the morning of destiny, and the day of vengeance. Alas! they need not hasten it, when "damnation's sun-bereft not," and the Judge is already at the door.—*Dr. R. S. McAll.*

For the Wesleyan.

### COVETOUSNESS AND CHRISTIAN LIBERALITY.

The love of money is the root of all evil.—1 Tim. vi. 10.

Take heed and beware of covetousness.—Luke xii. 15.

Gold many hunted, sweat and blood for gold. A shining thing that fools admire, and called A god; and in devout and humble night Before it kneel'd, the greater to the less.

With respect to all evils springing from the love of money, and the love of money producing certain specified evils, we cannot perhaps give the *rationalis*, or the mode of operation, in all instances. But we may see many things concurring with the occasions of revelation.

1. Covetousness is the antagonist of every virtue. Dr. Whistler remarks,—the ancients thought covetousness to comprehend all vices, and that Cicero notes,—"There is no duty so holy or solemn, which covetousness is not wont to impair and violate." Inspiration informs us, "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." Corrupt affection is the fruitful source of evil actions—"When lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin." Whereas, on the other hand, the love of God is the great principle of all obedience—"Love is the fulfilling of the law." Love propels our willing feet in the path of obedience. As, then, every virtue is promoted by the love of God, why may not (although we cannot discern the proofs) every vice spring from, and be promoted by, the love of money, or

covetousness, which is the principle, in Scripture, set in opposition to the love of God.

2. Covetousness is idolatry; John v. 20.—Col. iii. 5. Idolatry is setting the affections upon the creature, instead of the Creator. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Covetousness, inasmuch as it is honoured with softer names, as economy, and prudence; but it is, in fact, idolatry—the abominable thing that God hates. It robs God of his love, and of that glory which is due to his name. The covetous man trusts to his wealth, instead of depending upon God.

3. It is practical Infidelity. It disputes every thing God has said. It contradicts all his arrangements. It draws us from leaning upon Omnipotence for support, and leads us to lean upon an arm of flesh. The promises are promised to those who seek the things eternal, and the fearful loss threatened to those who neglect them, in principle, denied. The doctrine of a covetous man is, money is your treasure, your happiness,—pursue it with all your heart. It is true that, sometimes, the fear of eternal consequences prompts them to attend so far to religion as, in their estimation, will secure their safety in another world. But often, while endeavouring nicely to adjust these matters, they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which draw a man to destruction and perdition."

4. It is associated with the most enormous evils. The Apostles, when enumerating the most filthy and abominable sins, have always put covetousness among them. See Eph. v. 3.—1 Cor. v. 11.—2 Tim. iii. 2.—Rom. i. 29, 30.

There are many benevolent enterprises and fields of usefulness presented before us, all claiming our attention and exertions. There are numerous societies, having for their object the amelioration of the temporal condition of mankind. Donations to these are demanded. They will wipe away the tears from the eyes of widows and orphans; smooth the care-turrowed brow of the distressed; and pour consolation into the disconsolate heart. There are also numerous societies which regard the spiritual destitution of millions of our race. Your contributions to them will diffuse light, and snatch immortal souls from eternal death. Openings of providence and new doors of usefulness, men to supply them and means to support them ought to be abundant. God, by his providence, has opened many spheres of labour that, on account of pecuniary deficiencies, cannot be entered upon; and by his grace has prepared many labourers who, on account of the scantiness of the means for their support, cannot be employed, and he has always shown his gracious readiness to accompany benevolent exertions by the influences of his Holy Spirit. He has done his part, and he requires us to perform ours. He has designed that the world should be converted by means of the benevolent, christian exertions of his people. Otherwise he could easily open mines of gold and silver and rich treasures, to be employed for these objects. The means, then, must, somewhere, be at the disposal of his people. If not, we should have to inquire, does God, by his providence, open more fields for our labour than he intends us to occupy? and does he provide more labourers than he intends to be employed? If we dare not charge him with folly, by answering affirmatively, the deficiency rests with his church. At least, the charge of guilt rests upon his church until every member of it can lay his hand upon his heart, and say—"I have done what I could." It is well known that the principal Missionary Societies are involved in great pecuniary embarrassments, simply because their Directors have suffered the various urgent appeals to operate upon their benevolent hearts, and have attempted

to supply those wants further than they have been sustained by the subscriptions of the benevolent. Shall they boat a retreat, shall they even make a halt; or shall they go forward to fresh encounters and new victories? It remains for Christians to return an answer. Who will come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty!

It is the notion of many to give a small portion of what they can easily spare; when every demand made, not only for necessities but also for pleasure, is satisfied, then they afford a small portion of the remainder to supply the wants of the spiritually destitute world. But we ought to *genu ourselves* for the purpose of giving; and we ought to remember that subjects of charity have a divinely-authorized demand upon us. When the whole teaching of Scripture on this subject is duly developed and becomes adequately influential, there will be an enlarged spirit of liberality and the conversion of the world will be greatly accelerated.

Three Rivers, 1842.

B. S.

## Biblical Literature.

### OF THE MEANING OF WORDS.

1. Design of this chapter. The design of the following remarks upon the meaning of words, is to exhibit the ground or principles, whence all certainty in the interpretation of language arises. If from the nature and use of language, certain principles may be clearly deduced, which will serve as a guide to explain it, then, it is evident, the essential part of the theory of Hermeneutics consists of these principles.

2. Every word must have some meaning. To every word there ought to be assigned, and in the Scriptures there is unquestionably assigned, some idea or notion of a thing; which we call the meaning or signification of the word. (a)

(a) Otherwise words are useless, and have no more signification than the inarticulate sounds of animals.

3. Definitions. The literal sense of words, is the sense which is so connected with them, that it is first in order, and is spontaneously presented to the mind, as soon as the sound of the word is heard. (a) The literal sense does not differ, among the older and valuable writers, from the sense of the letter; although some ignorant persons, in later times, have very erroneously made a distinction. Erasmus and his contemporaries use both phrases promiscuously. Literal means the same as the Greek *logos*, or the Latin *scriptum*; whence the phrases *scriptum sequi*, and *scriptum interpretari*.

(a) The literal sense is the same as the primitive or original sense, or, at least, it is equivalent to that sense which has usurped the place of the original one, e. g. the original sense of the word *tragedy* has long ceased to be current, and the literal sense of this word, now, is that which has taken the place of the original one.

4. The meaning of words conventional. Words considered simply as sounds, have no meaning; for they are not natural and necessary signs of things, but conventional ones. (a) Usage or custom has constituted a connexion between words and ideas.

(a) Interjections or exclamations may, perhaps, be considered as a kind of exception to this remark. Words also which the Greeks call *onomatopoeiæ*, i. e. words the sounds of which imitate the sense, are also considered by many as an exception. But there is so much of fancy in the construction of these words, and they are so differently formed in different languages, that no solid proof of their being an exception can fairly be made out.

5. The connexion between words and ideas now rendered necessary by usage. Such is the fact, whatever may have been the case at first. This does not mean, however, that a word is susceptible of only one meaning; for usage contradicts this. But

from this principle, we learn (1) That neither in using nor interpreting a word, are we at liberty to affix to it an arbitrary sense. (2) That the sense of a word cannot be diverse or multifarious, at the same time, and in the same passage or expression. (3)

(a) The fact that usage has attached any particular meaning to a word, like any other historical fact, is to be proved by adequate testimony. This testimony may be drawn from books in which the word is employed, or from daily use in conversation. But the fact of a particular meaning being attached to a word, when once established, can no more be changed or denied than any historical event whatever. Of course an arbitrary sense can never, with propriety, be substituted for a real one.

(b) All uses, in their daily conversation and writings, attach but one sense to a word, at the same time and in the same passage; unless they design to speak in enigmas. Of course, it would be in opposition to the universal custom of language, if more than one meaning should be attached to any word of Scripture, in such a case. Yet many have done so. See §§ 9, 10.

6. Signification of words multiplied in process of time. Although a word can have but one meaning at the same time and in the same place, usage has gradually assigned many meanings to the same word. (a) Lost words should be indefinitely multiplied, and the difficulty of learning a language become too great.

(a) The question then for an interpreter is simply this; which one of the significations that a word has, is connected with its use in any particular instance?

7. How can the meaning in each case be found?—(1) From the general manner of speaking, i. e. common usage. (2) From the proximate words or context.

That is, the usual and obvious meaning is attached to the word; or else one which the context renders necessary. In addition to the aid drawn from these sources, an interpreter may sometimes obtain assistance from the scope or design of the writer, or from history, antiquities, the nature of the subject, &c. (Meruz, p. 42. iii. iv.)

8. Ambiguity of words arising from various causes. (1) From the fault of writers.

(a) (2) From neglect in the construction and necessary connexions of words and sentences; proper care not having been taken to guard the reader against uncertainty, and to afford him the best means for finding the true sense. (b) (3) From the manner in which common usage often forms language; which, not being guided by philosophy or refined knowledge, is frequently deficient in respect to accuracy. (c)

(a) When they are ignorant of the rules for writing with accuracy and perspicuity.

(b) E. g. the answer of the Daphnic orator, *As is Romanus vincere poterit*, which may be rendered, with equal probability, that the Romans would conquer Pyrrhus, or Pyrrhus the Romans.

(c) No other proof of this is needed, than what the perusal of a composition by an illiterate person will afford.

Besides the causes of ambiguity above enumerated, we may reckon, ignorance of the *usus loquendi*. If the interpreter is not acquainted with this, (and in respect to words which are *hæcæ legomena* he must of course be ignorant of it in many cases,) he is left in doubt, unless the context decides for him. As this is not always the case, there is room here for ambiguity.

9. Conclusion from what has been said. From what has already been said, in this chapter, about the use of words, we may discover the ground of all the certainty which attends the interpretation of languages.

(a) For 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. (b)