

attached to many a passage which the circumstances not merely do not fairly warrant but positively forbid.

From their relation to each other, there is a species of interdependence between the Old Testament and the New. This interdependence, however, is by no means mutual. Between the subject-matter of the one and the subject-matter of the other there is an historic interval of more than four hundred years. For the purposes of interpretation they are, to all intents and purposes, two separate books, the one being the Jewish Bible, the other being the Christian Bible. A scientific interpretation of the New Testament without some reference to the Old Testament is impossible, because the former is a development of the latter; but a scientific interpretation of the Old Testament without any reference whatever to the New Testament is possible, because, for centuries before the New existed, the Old had a unique history of its own. Hence it is a mistake to assume that the Old Testament cannot be interpreted except in the light of New Testament revelation.

When investigating the meaning of the Old Testament, therefore, we may keep the New Testament closed. For the time being, we are not supposed to know anything of its contents. We are now concerned simply with Old Testament prophecy; and, as reverent Old Testament students, we must honestly apply to every prophetic passage the true principles of historical interpretation. Consequently, our first effort must be to understand what the Old Testament writers meant themselves in the age in which they lived. We must consider every important passage in its relation to the speaker, to the hearers, and to the circumstances of their time. Thus prophecy and supposed fulfilment for the present must be kept entirely distinct. For, as Riehm observes, "What we do not learn until the period of fulfilment cannot be in the prophecy itself."

Having ascertained the historical sense of a passage, we must next endeavor to obtain its critical meaning by the use of grammatical and lexical appliances. This process is, of course, too evident to need discussion. It is customary, however, in ascertaining the prophetic meaning of a passage, to distinguish between the sense in which the prophets understood their own