

the nation's heart. In short, as has been elsewhere stated, "The idea of the expected Messiah grew and changed in each successive century; and in no other age, it is believed, was its expression so minute and circumstantial, as in the period extending from the close of the Old to the opening of the New Testament."*

THE IMPORT OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY.

In approaching this division of the subject, it is expedient, at the outset, to state the method of interpretation to be employed in ascertaining the true import of any prophetic passage. The only proper or approved method is the so-called grammatico-historical method, the fundamental canon of which is to obtain the meaning of sacred writings by the application of the same grammatical and historical principles that are applied to secular writings, always bearing in mind, of course, the religious character and the spiritual contents of the books of the Bible. In expounding the Scriptures, the moral and spiritual element must be neither disregarded nor ignored, as is too frequently the custom with interpreters of prophecy.

With a proper recognition and application of this latter element, one must interpret the Bible as one would interpret another book, with grammar and lexicon and complete critical apparatus. When it is stated that the Bible must be interpreted like another book, it is meant, of course, that we should apply to the literature of the Bible the same method of exposition, that is, the same use of reason and the same exercise of common sense, that we apply to any other kind of literature. The laws of the intellect are invariable, no matter to what subject, or to what class of subjects, they may be applied. We have but one process of reasoning; and the essence of that process does not change, whether we reason about nature or revelation, about fact or fiction, about poetry or prose.

In applying this method of interpretation to the Old Testament Scriptures, in order to obtain the import of any Messianic passage, we must first endeavor to ascertain the historical sense of the passage. That is, we must first consider the circumstances

* "The Text of Jeremiah," pp. 242, 243.