

# Teacher Training.

TEXT-BOOK : HOLBORN'S "THE BIBLE, THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEXT- BOOK."

Analysis by REV. PROFESSOR CAMPBELL, LL. D., Presbyterian College, Montreal.

## CHAPTER III.

### ON THE LANGUAGE AND STYLE OF SCRIPTURE : THE BIBLE A UNIQUE BOOK.

I. LANGUAGE AND STYLE OF SCRIPTURE VARY IN THE DIFFERENT BOOKS. There are 66 books by about 40 authors, written within a period of over 1000 years. O. T. books are in Hebrew, except Ezra and part of Daniel in Chaldee : N. T. books in Greek. Contain history, biography, legal codes, chronicles, poetry, prophecy, letters, didactic treatises, proverbs, &c. The Spirit's guidance did not interfere with the writers' dialect and style, peculiar temperament and caste of thought. Mark is unlike John, Peter unlike Paul.

II. NEVERTHELESS THEY HAVE SOME COMMON CHARACTERISTICS. These constitute the language and style of Scripture which is easily recognized. Part of this unity is due to our English translation being made at one time, and finally revised by two scholars only. But there are peculiarities that distinguish the original from sacred books of other religions and all literature. These are—

A. *Dignity.* Their treatment is solemn, even majestic, never trivial nor flippant—Ruth's simple story is dignified. Paul's letter to Philemon over his runaway slave adds tenderness and is as devout as epistles to churches and pastorals. With these qualities the trivialities of the O. and N. T. Apocryphal books painfully contrast.

B. *Reference throughout to God and Righteousness.* Their dignity arises from the fact that they reveal God, and declare the righteousness which is His will. Story of creation is not for science, but to set forth the Author of all and the Father of man. History of Hebrews is not to exalt them, but to tell of God's special dealings with them to prepare for the coming of His Son and everlasting righteousness. In lives of individuals and nations, God and His law are most prominent. He is the Supreme Ruler. Even the function of the prophet is not so much to predict as to declare that God's righteous law must triumph : hence the difference between Scripture prophecies and individual pagan oracles. What is true of O. T. in this respect is more abundantly so of the New.

C. *Suppression of the personality of the Writers.* Dr. George Campbell says the authors of the Gospels sink themselves in the subject. This is also true of the writers of the historical books, of the Catholic epistles, and of most of the prophecies. They do not intrude their personality ; offer no comments nor opinions as in ordinary biographies and narratives. Hardly think of asking as we read, who wrote lives of David, Ruth, Christ, or the story of the Acts. As the book of Nehemiah is an autobiography, it is an exception. So are Paul's epistles to individuals and churches, yet even in them the personal human element is far out-weighted by the Divine.

D. *Impartiality and Candour.* Bible biographies and historians suppress themselves, but not facts. Other biographers and national historians are partial, hiding all that is discreditable in a friend and that is praiseworthy in a foe. Not so the Bible. It tells as frankly of vice and defeat, as of virtue and success. No excuse is made for the failings of Jacob, Samuel, David and Peter. The redeeming features in the characters of Esau, Saul, Achish of Gath are set forth even though Bible heroes suffer by contrast. In the gospels, the Samaritans, Syro-Phoenician, Greek and Roman are compared to their advantage with the Jew. Transparent truthfulness shows up the evil in good men and the good in evil men, as is done in no other book.

E. *Dramatic style.* The distinguishing feature of the drama is that it puts men and women on the stage, unintroduced, to tell their own story. So the Bible places them, with their words and deeds before us, without note or comment, panegyric or invective. No indignation is expressed even over those who conspired to crucify Christ. Character is prominent