

WESTERN WISDOM BIBLE STUDY

The Origin of the Scriptures

References: Genesis, chapters 16, 17, 18, 21; I Corinthians 3:13; Galatians 4:22-26.

There was a time, even as late as Greece, when Religion, Art, and Science were taught unitedly in the Mystery Temples. But it was necessary to the better development of each that they should separate for a time.

Religion held sole sway in the so-called "dark ages." During that time it bound both Science and Art hand and foot. Then came the period of the Renaissance and Art came to the fore in all its branches. Religion was strong as yet, however, and Art was only too often confined solely to the service of Religion. Last came the wave of modern Science, and with iron hand it subjugated Religion.

It was a detriment to the world when Religion shackled Science. Ignorance and superstition caused untold woe; nevertheless, man then cherished a lofty spiritual ideal. He hoped for a higher and better life. It would be infinitely more disastrous should Science kill Religion. Therefore a state of agnosticism and materialism cannot continue. Reaction must set in. If it should not, anarchy would rend the Cosmos. To avert such a calamity, Religion, Science, and Art must reunite in a higher expression of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful than obtained before the separation.

A spiritual religion, however, cannot blend with a materialistic science any more than oil can mix with water. Therefore, Science must be spiritualized and Religion made scientific.

In order to study the Bible intelligently, it is essential that one approach

it with an open mind. Fixed, preconceived views of the Scriptures in their generally accepted *versions* as being the only true and inspired Word of God, infallible, etc., are clouds which at the outset blind one to the real illumination that may come from careful, unprejudiced study. There are, however, hidden beneath the interpolations, mistranslations, etc., pearls of truth for which it behooves every earnest student of life and being to seek, and if certain important facts are kept in mind as one studies, new light and understanding will be the reward.

In the first place, let us remember that the words of the Hebrew language, particularly the old style, run into one another and are not divided as are those of our language. Add to this that there is a custom of leaving out vowels from the writing, so that in reading much depends upon where and how they are inserted, and it will be seen how great are the difficulties to be surmounted in ascertaining the original meaning. A slight change may entirely alter the significance of almost any sentence.

In addition to these great difficulties we must also bear in mind that of the forty-seven translators of the King James version (that most commonly used in England and America), only three were Hebrew scholars, and of those three, two died before the Psalms had been translated! We must still further take into consideration that the Act which authorized the translation prohibited the translators from any rendition that would greatly deviate from or tend to disturb the already existing belief. It is evident, therefore, that the chances of getting a correct translation were very **small indeed**,

Nor were conditions much more favorable in Germany, for there Martin Luther was the chief translator and even he did not translate from the original Hebrew, but mainly from a Latin text. Most of the versions used in Continental Protestant countries today are simply translations, into different languages, of Luther's translation.

True, there have been revisions, but they have not greatly improved matters. Moreover, there are a large number of people in this country who insist that the *English* text of the King James version is absolutely correct from cover to cover, as though the Bible had been originally written in English, and the King James version were a certified copy of the original manuscript. So the old mistakes are still there, in spite of the efforts which have been made to eradicate them.

It must also be noted that those who originally wrote the Bible did not intend to give out the truth in such plain form that he who ran might read. Nothing was farther from their thoughts than to write an "open Book of God." The great seers who wrote the *Zohar** are very emphatic upon this point. The secrets of the Thorah were not to be understood by all, as the following quotation will show:

"Woe to the man who sees in the Thorah (the law) only simple recitals and ordinary words! Because, if in truth it contained only these, we would even today be able to compose a Thorah much more worthy of admiration. But it is not so. Each word of the Thorah contains an elevated meaning and a sublime mystery. . . . The recitals of the

Thorah are the vestments of the Thorah. Woe to him who takes this vestment of the Thorah for the Thorah itself! . . . The simple take notice of the garments and recitals of the Thorah alone. They know no other thing. They see not that which is concealed under the vestment. *The more instructed men do not pay attention to the vestment, but to the body which it envelops.*"

In the preceding words the allegorical meanings are plainly implied. Paul also unequivocally says that the story of Abraham and the two sons whom he had by Sarah and Hagar is purely allegorical. (Gal. 4:22-26.) Many passages are veiled; others are to be taken verbatim.



As in a field sown with potatoes there are not only these *vegetables*, but also *the soil* in which they are hidden, so *in the Bible the pearls of occult truth are hidden in what are often hideous garments*. The occultist who has fitted himself to possess these pearls has received the key, and sees them plainly. To others they remain obscure until they also have worked for that key. Thus, while the story of the wanderings of the children of Israel and the dealings of a certain God with them is partially true, there is also a spiritual significance that is far more important than that material history. Even though the Gospels contain the great outlines of the life of

* *Zohar*: A Jewish cabalistic book introduced into Spain in the 13th century by the cabalistic writer, Moses de Leon, who attributed it to Simeon ben Yohai, a second century Jewish teacher. Under the form of a commentary on the Pentateuch, it contains a complete cabalistic theosophy, treating of God, the cosmogony and cosmology of the universe, the soul, sin, redemption, etc. Its contents indicate that it is the work of many authors, periods, and civilizations.

an individual called Jesus, they are formulae of initiation showing the experiences which everyone must eventually pass through on the way to the truth and the life.

The secrecy regarding these deep matters and the inevitable use of allegories where the mass of the people were permitted to come in contact with occult truths will also be apparent from the practice of Christ, who always spoke to the multitude in parables, afterward privately explaining to His disciples the deeper meaning contained therein. On several occasions He imposed secrecy upon them in regard to such private teachings.

Paul's methods are also in harmony with this, for he gives "milk" or the more elementary teachings to the "babes" in the faith, reserving the "meat" or deeper teachings for the "strong" — those who had qualified themselves to understand and receive them. (I Cor. 3:1-3.)

The Jewish Bible was originally written in Hebrew, but we do not possess one single line of the original writings. As early as 280 B.C. the Septuagint, a translation into Greek, was brought forth. Even in the time of Christ there was already the utmost confusion and diversity of opinion regarding what was to be admitted as original, and what had been interpolated.

It was not until the return from the Babylonian exile that the scribes began to piece together the different writings and not until about 500 A.D. did the Talmud appear, giving the first text resembling the present one, which, in view of the foregoing facts, cannot be perfect.

The Talmud was then taken in hand by the Masoretic School, which from 590 to about 800 A.D. was principally in Tiberias. With great and painstaking labor, a Hebrew Old Testament was produced which is the nearest to the original we have at the present time.

Thus, we may not contend for the

divinity of the Bible or hold that it is the Word of God from cover to cover, though we recognize the fact that it is a poor translation of the originals and that there are many interpolations which have been inserted at different times to support various ideas; nevertheless, the very fact that so much truth has been massed into such a small compass is a source of constant wonder to the occultist, who knows what the Book really is and has the key to its meaning. Let us then remember that *truth is many sided* and eternal; the quest for truth must also be all-embracing and never-ending.

We may liken truth to a mountain, and the various interpretations of that truth to different paths leading up to the summit. Many people are traveling along all of these paths and everyone



while he is at the bottom thinks his path is the only one; he sees only a small part of the mountain, and may therefore be justified in crying to his brothers, "You are wrong! Come over to my path; this is the only one that leads to the top." But as all these people progress upward, they will see that the paths converge at the top and that they are all one in the ultimate.

It may be said most emphatically that no system of thought which has ever been able to attract and hold the attention of a large number of people for a considerable time has been without its truth; and whether we perceive it or not, there is in every sect the kernel of divine teachings which is gradually bringing them upward toward the top of the mountain. Therefore we should practice the utmost tolerance for every belief.