

# BULLETIN

## SEMINARY EXTENSION

### DEPARTMENT

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Jackson, Mississippi

VOLUME II

September, 1953

NUMBER 9

#### Meet the Professor

Henry E. Turlington, B.A., Th.M., Th.D. Dr. Turlington was born in Gainesville, Florida. He received his A.B. from the University of Florida, and Th.M. and Th.D. degrees from the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville.

From 1944 to 1947 he was an Instructor in the Department of New Testament at Southern Baptist Seminary. In 1946 he was appointed for work in the University of Shanghai, Department of Philosophy and Religion. He taught there one year and was studying at the language school in Peiping, China when they were forced evacuate. He spent about six months in the Philippines after which he returned to Southern Seminary in June, 1949. He is Professor of New Testament Interpretation. The special emphasis of his work is in Paul and the Pauline Epistles and in the Beginnings of Christianity.

Much of the teaching material that he uses in his classes has been incorporated in the study guide he has written for the Extension Department, New Testament 122.

#### Information is Safer

What the honest preacher of the Gospel should seek to do is to discover the meaning of passages, books, or letters in the light of what the author intended the first readers to understand. While it may at first

appear that finding secret or deep meanings for simple statements require more depth of spiritual insight, the reverse is true. One can take a well annotated King James Version of the scripture and learn the scheme in a relatively short period of study. But to know the background which actually gave birth to scripture requires the most persistent study over a period of years.

I had in my early ministry the two champion schemes of Bible interpretation at my disposal. I learned those schemes so well that ministerial students in our school asked me to explain the outlines in the afternoons. I had a series of charts which explained everything. In addition I read the inter-denominationalists papers, books, and so called commentaries until my preaching was saturated with them. I know what a false sense of security these approaches give. Every scripture can be "pigeon-holed" under the classification of the system. Preaching under this method is relatively simple, just make running comments on each passage on a given subject "running references" until you cover the subject from Genesis to Revelation.

This whole method should be carefully examined. A statement by one who has turned from it is insufficient. What the student of God's Word must do if he would

learn the truth of God's Word is to study a few historical facts. Get a good encyclopedia and read articles on "Apocalyse," "Apocalyptical Literature," and "Eschatology." These will help him to understand the peculiarities of the type of literature found in Ezekial, Daniel, Zechariah, Revelation, and in some of the epistles. Once he grasps its significance, the messages of these books become more important. So many theories have been built upon the numbers in the books that they defy enumeration. The world should have ended in A.D. 1000, 1847, 1914, 1918, 1932, etc. It all depends on which set of numbers you follow and how you combine them.

Such a method violates the very basic foundation of scripture. The purpose of Revelation is "unfolding." This method can best be described as "hide-and-seek." Early heretics tried to make the Bible appear to have hidden truths which only the "initiated" could understand. It is not unfair to assert that without the special Bibles, ideas which are so prominent in them would never have arisen with the majority of careful readers. One must become "initiated" to get the point. This is not a safe approach. Information is safer.

There is no "short cut" to information. Learning is a tedious process. The place to begin is with books which deal with the background of the Bible. At least two books of introduction, one for the Old Testament, another for the New, should be on every pastors desk. For the Old Testament one could buy Introducing the Old Testament, Clyde T. Franscisco (Broadman) or A Conservative Introduction to the Old Testament, Samuel T. Cartledge (Athens, University of Georgia Press). New Testament introductions are abundant. The conservative views are found in Samuel T. Cartledge's A Conservative Introduction to the New Testament (Zondervan) or Thiessen's Intro-

duction to the New Testament (Eerdman's). These works are rather inexpensive but have invaluable information. Thiessen's book tends to be a little argumentive and his conclusions are not always dependable, but he raises basic issues and gives some important facts. Dana, New Testament World is a most important book. Another helpful book is Halley's Bible Handbook.

Reading about the background, the purpose, the people to whom a work was written, and issues relative to a book or letter is important in the highest degree. The preacher need not fear such a study. It may cause him to tear up a few sermons, but he will replace them by richer and better ones. He might quit preaching on the Song of Solomon as an allegory on the second coming, but a sermon idealizing human love as ordained of God would take its place and he could still preach on 1 Thessa-lonians 4:13-17. A good resolution for one who expects to grow in his knowledge of the background of the Bible would be to refuse to take a position on a basis of emotional choice. If you do not have the facts do not lay claim to possessing them. "I do not know" hurts no one. But many distortions arise from preaching schemes and notions which lack historical or factual basis.

Lead your people to look for the messages of the Bible rather than for curious answers. A text for a good sermon is Acts 1:6-8. "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?...It is not given to you to know...But you shall shall receive power... and ye shall be witnesses..." Topic: Curiosity of revelation. Jesus did not satisfy their curiosity, he gave them a promise. Preach it.

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