

# BULLETIN

## SEMINARY EXTENSION

### DEPARTMENT

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#### FACT AND ASSUMPTION

All scholarship is, basically, twofold - fact and assumption. It is impossible to escape the importance of each. Many of the facts that we now possess grew out of assumptions. Some of these assumptions proved to be false; some were proved to be true, but the fact remains. In our Bible there are a number of points which require investigation. In order to begin an investigation a person must have some lead. Sometimes this lead will be a fact; sometimes it is an assumption.

To those who have had an opportunity to investigate fact and know that there is also a body of assumptions, it always seems ludicrous to read attacks upon fact. Assumptions may be well grounded, but they are still assumptions or theories. To illustrate - it is a fact that there are four Gospels; no one can dispute this. We have the evidence before our eyes. Tradition has assigned to them the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But the truth of the matter is that the fact of authorship has not been established. The assumptions are based upon tradition. Tradition

may be correct.

Often times we hear the word criticism used as if it is an individual standing off and making uncomplimentary remarks about the Bible. The word "critic" means "to judge," that is, "to ascertain the facts;" and the work of a critic is not done until he has ascertained the facts. The true critic can only say that these are assumptions when they are assumptions, or that the assumptions seem well grounded or ill grounded.

To take the case before us, by a study of the Book of Acts, scholars have recognized that in Acts 16:10, someone begins to speak of the journey as if he had just joined it along with Paul. Throughout the rest of the book, there are a number of these "we" passages. These are facts. It is assumed that the writer of the Book of Acts joined Paul at this moment. It is known that Luke was one of Paul's companions (see Col. 4:14). A number of scholars have gone through to find indications that the book was written by a physician; others have tried to disprove it. All of this is testing tradition. After all, the only reason we have for ascribing Luke and Acts to Luke

is tradition. It is possible that tradition is correct; it is possible that tradition is incorrect. The work of the critic is to ascertain as nearly as possible reasons why he believes tradition to be correct or incorrect. Every one of the four Gospels have come down to us with names attached to them. This indicates that they were thought to be written by those men by whom they were ascribed. But of course, they do not say that they were written by these men; and if in some way it were discovered that tradition were false, it would not change one whit of the value of scriptural references. Our Gospels would be just as authoritative, with or without the names of the men to which they are ascribed. Their value lies not in the fact that they were supposed to be written by these four men; their value lies in the fact that they are the Word of God.

Some writers say that Matthew was written by one who first knew the Book of Mark, and that in writing, he used Mark to a very great extent. That is a probable explanation for a fact which can be seen if you will take the Book of Mark and the Book of Matthew and note that the order of events run quite parallel. You will be struck by the number of times that words coincide. This same thing is true when you turn to Luke. You will note facts, such as, there is a place where Mark begins in Luke, or a place where this parallel situation begins in Luke. There is a place where it ends, and a place where it is taken up again. These blocks in Luke in their comparison with the Book of Mark, are facts. Now, the assumption of scholarship is that Luke and Matthew used Mark.

It is also easy to see in Luke and Matthew certain passages that are parallel or almost parallel-- passages that are not found in Mark.

The assumption of scholarship is that these two Gospels had another source from which they drew. It does no harm for a person to say, "I do not accept this for after all it is just theory." To many it appears to be a very strong theory, but to others, not so strong a possibility. The reasons on which they base their assumptions appear to be quite sound. That is, they appear to be quite sound to some, to others they appear to be not so sound.

The Christian minister is not forced to give up his belief in the Bible because he runs across an assumption which runs counter to his belief. The assumption may be very strong and it may seem quite plausible; yet, there are other reasons for believing the Bible. Make the habit of asking yourself, when you run across some strange idea, "Is this a fact, or is it an assumption?" Every man's theory stands on a logical basis in his own mind. Meanwhile, the proper attitude of a Baptist preacher is investigation.

In the county where I lived, there was a man who was afraid of storms. He would hide his head under the cover when lightning and thunder began to roll. One day his wife got tired and let him stay under the cover till he almost smothered, thinking that the storm was raging. She kept telling him, "John it's worse." Finally, when he came out saying, "I will have to face it, even if it kills me," he discovered that the sun had been shining nearly all the time he had been hidden. Many times we are like that. When someone says, "boo," we jump and hide our heads under the cover.

If the facts about the Bible were so uncertain that it would be disastrous to investigate it, there would be no New Testament scholars. Those who came to "look and see,"

could but in their honesty give up their claim. But some of the most humble believers in the Word of God are men who have spent their lives investigating its foundations.

Some of the theories and assumptions have been ordered by men who were not in the field of Biblical study and certainly by many who were not devout in their attitude toward the Bible. But the investigator cannot stop because the theorist happens not to be a Christian or a member of a Baptist church. Any assumption made needs to be tested. A Bible critic is the one who attempts to test Biblical assumptions. Whereas the basis on which investigation is built may be fact, many times the results announced are assumptions. The Bible in its original language is the most inspired book. The farther we get from the original language the more probable it is that some of our translations may be inaccurate. But when you find the translation properly, we find a literature which does not have to be proved, a literature that does not have to be defended, a literature that is more than literature; it is the Word of God.

Take your time, read a long time on writers that give you any problem or give your people a problem. You can be reassured that the answer will be nearer to the truth which you already believe than any cynical assumption given out by those who are antagonistic in their attitude toward the Word of God. The answer to the cynical critic is not anti-criticism but a greater open minded criticism, one which approaches his assumptions and tests them on the basis of facts.

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Statistical report: correspondence students 1336.

BOOK REVIEW

PEOPLES' PADRE, Emmet McLoughlin, Beacon Press, 1954.

This is a book which has been written up in the outstanding magazines and periodicals in the country. It seeks to present the work of a priest from the point of view of one who studied for the priesthood and made good. Those who know the author know that he left the Roman Catholic priesthood November 1, 1948 and married. As yet, the former padre has not unite with any church. This book is most stimulating. Of course, it is condemned outright by the Roman Catholic hierarchy, but the human interest revolving around the growth to priesthood of this man cannot but stir the heart of any Baptist preacher. In his new found position, the "peoples' padre" attempts to point out the psychological attitudes which had caused him as a priest to accept the church with its dictum. He brings to light many of the forbidden books and pre-suppositions of his church. The work is not an antagonistic one, but it is very frank. It is in the form of a story and theme presentation at the same time. I definitely would commend this autobiography to those seeking to understand Catholicism and every Baptist preacher ought to understand it.

A word of thanks is due to Mr. E. A. Herron who called this work to my attention by presenting me with a copy of it.

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The Director plans to visit extension centers in Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, Utah, and California during the month of February. Conferences will be held in the interest of establishing centers also.

## EPIGRAMMATIC THEOLOGY

We have heard so many short, easy definitions that we tend to search for them. The attempt to break words down into understandable terms is desirable, but far too often we glibly phrase ideas without realizing the content of the words we employ.

This tendency can be carried to the extreme. Such is the case when one attempts to phrase the great doctrines of our faith into epigrams. One often hears the church defined simply as, "called out"; often Grace is equated with "unmerited favor"; and faith is equated with "belief" or "trust." In the same vein the prophet is called "a forth-teller" and mediator becomes "one who comes between." All of these and other such definitions are built upon one or more ideas parallel to the main thought of the term, but are not sufficient for a comprehension of the great truths involved. While plain language is the best, yet in some realms one can become so simple that the value of the idea is lost.

Analyze these definitions. Is everything "called out" a church? Are unattached bodies, even of saved folk, to be called a church? Where, in God's providence and plan, can one stop with a simple phrase such as, "unmerited favor" and comprehend divine grace? Is this all the Cross means? Is this all there is to the inner workings of the Spirit before, during, and beyond conversion? Is the providential care of God for His own to be dismissed so lightly?

"One who comes between" not only is an insufficient definition for the translated word "mediate," it is inaccurate. The prophet was a preacher to his age; "forth telling" was only a part of the hope

he held out or a warning issued. He spoke for God.

In your preaching do not fall into the habit of dismissing great truths with epigrammatic statements. Preach on "grace" after studying it for a long time. Investigate the nature of the Church before you define it. Dig into the meaning of "Faith" and mediation. Good commentaries and dictionaries will help.

## LET'S TAKE THIS COUNTRY

Every now and then one runs across in our fine Baptist papers this statement on the part of some enthusiast, "Let's take this country." Of course, "for Christ," is always added. But really we need to analyze our thinking when we make such statements. How would we take this country for Christ? Does the speaker mean that we are going to take it from other denominations, from the devil, or the United States government? Are we not in danger of letting our emotions run away with us when we think of "taking this country"? Baptists had better be more interested in doing a great Christian work on the level that God has given them the opportunity to do.

I remember a statement by Dr. Conner once. He said in substance "I am not sure that all Christians ought to be Baptists. As a matter of fact, Baptists brag enough as a minority group. I don't believe I could live with them if they were in complete control of this country." Is it not possible that God has other people who had just as well plan to take this country as Baptists?

Before we start taking this country of 175,000,000, let's see if we can make 1,000,000 in one year. We haven't done that yet.