

FULLY FURNISHED

or

THE CHRISTIAN WORKER'S EQUIPMENT

by

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE WORKER'S ACCURACY

ONE of the most important things in Christian work is, that we should be accurate in relation to the Scriptures, for a careless reader of the Book never makes a close walker with God, or an efficient worker for Him.

Every business man knows that attention to details, is one of the essential things in business, to make it a success. "Trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle," replied Michael Angelo, when one remarked to him that he seemed to be occupied with trifles, because he paid such minute attention to a statue which he was making. With equal force, if not with greater, the same principle applies to our quoting the Scriptures, and also in referring to them. As the title of the chapter suggests, it is most important for the Christian worker to be accurate in his dealings with Scripture, for there are two mistakes into which we are apt to fall, and these are, to misquote the Scriptures in attempting to quote them, and to misrepresent them in referring to them.

I - Mistakes in quoting the Scriptures.

In misquotation, one of three mistakes is generally made, namely, addition, saying more than is written; subtraction, taking from what is written; and alteration, misrepresenting what is written. Eve, in the garden of Eden, did all three of these. She added to the word of the Lord, took from it, and altered it. Let us briefly note her mistakes.

Subtraction

The Lord's command was as follows: "**And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat**" (Genesis 2:16). Eve's answer to the serpent's tempting question was: "**We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden**" (Genesis 3:2).

It will be seen that the woman left out of God's direction the word "**freely**," and by doing so, she not only took from His word, but cast a reflection upon His character, God made one exception to the trees, from which our first parents were to eat, and that was, the tree of knowledge of good and evil. His command was: "**But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die**" (Genesis 2:17).

Addition

Eve's reply to the tempter is as follows:- **"But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die"** (Genesis 3:3).

The woman added to the words of God, by saying, "Neither shall ye touch it." The Lord did not say anything about touching the tree. His command was, that they were not to eat of the fruit of it.

Alteration

The consequence of disobedience was stated very clearly and emphatically. The Lord said, **"Thou shalt surely die"** (Genesis 2:17). But the woman altered the words to **"Lest ye die"** (Genesis 3:3). Thus minimizing the sharp and pungent words, **"Thou shalt surely die."** I purpose taking these three mistakes, as suggesting the three kinds of mistakes which are made in quoting God's Word.

1. *Subtraction.* It has been said, "We shall lose Heaven by neutrality as well as by hostility, by wanting oil, as well as by drinking poison. An unprofitable servant will be as much punished as a prodigal son. Undone duty will undo our souls." and to omit any of the words of the Bible, is to subtract from its value, and mar its worth, even as a single nought taken from a thousand reduces it to a hundred.

A well-known evangelist once remarked to a number of ministers, that he would give a new Bible to the first one who could quote a single passage of Scripture correctly. One of the ministers accepted the challenge, and said, **"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."**

"You are wrong," replied the evangelist; "you have left out the first word of the verse, the word **'for'**."

A very important omission, as may be seen, by looking at the reason of the conjunction. It may seem to be an unnecessary remark to make, "John 3:14, 15, comes before John 3:16," but its importance is easily discovered when we read the three verses together. They read as follows:- **"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."**

In verse 14, the Lord Jesus states the absolute necessity of His atoning death - the Son of man must be lifted up; and then in verse 16 He brings out the great and glorious fact, that the sacrifice which He makes, is the expression of God's love for the world; hence the importance of the conjunction **"for."**

Many of God's saints have found consolation in the hour of death, power in the time of conflict with evil, and joy in the moment of doubt, as they have remembered, that "**the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.**"

Nothing should be done to discourage any of God's people in obtaining stimulus and strength from any given word of God, but, on the other hand, we must not take any words of grace out of their context; for to do so, is like removing the hub from a wheel, thus making the spokes useless.

The connection of the above words, which refer to the Blood of Christ, is seen at once if the preceding words are pondered.

The Scripture is, "**If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin**" (I John 1:7).

The truth of the verse is, the atonement of Christ continually meets the sin of which we are unconscious, while we are walking in the light, and having fellowship with the Lord.

The highest form of Christian experience is described to us as walking in the light, and having fellowship with the Father and the Son; and yet, while we are there, we still need the precious Blood of Christ to keep us clean, for we need Him, not merely as our Substitute to bear our sins (I Peter 2:24), but also as our Great High Priest to bear the iniquity of our holy things (Exodus 28:38).

There are many who believe in what is known as Universalism, who found their belief on a sentence of Scripture, viz., "**Restitution of all things.**"

Without any explanation, the words are wrested from their setting in Scripture, and as the cruel Inquisition often made Christians say things when they were tortured on the rack, so these words are taken as a basis upon which to build the theory, that all men will be saved, irrespective of faith and character; even the devil himself is ultimately to enjoy the felicity of Heaven.

The restitution to which reference is made, is limited in its application, as may be gathered from the words that follow, which are, "**Which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began**" (Acts 3:21). The times of restitution point onward to that period of universal blessedness and peace, which is described in Isaiah 11, and 65.

Romanizing clergymen, and self-opinionated Jesuits, when they want to make people bow to their authority, and give in to their behests, often appeal to the words, "**Hear the Church,**" as a God-given guarantee for their action, their thought being, that the Church is personified in themselves; therefore, what they direct is conclusive. Whereas, if they were to look at the connection of the words, they would find there is no reference to a representative action in general, as personified in any particular man or men, but to the decision of an assembly of believers, as such, which is called the Church, in giving judgment upon a difference that has arisen between two members of it (Matthew 18:15-19).

One of the most striking examples of taking from the Word of God, is found in connection with the words, “**Work out your own salvation.**”

While we recognize that these words are often misquoted, and made to mean, “*Work for your own salvation,*” there is really as grave a mistake when a full-stop is put after the word “**salvation,**” for the Scripture is, “**Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure**” (Philippians 2:12, 13). thereby to emphasize the words which direct us to work out our own salvation, is to throw us back on our own resources, and to land us in the bog of despair; whereas, if we recognize the fact that it is God who both wills and works in us, it makes us move in glad and swift obedience, removes all friction, and helps us to face every difficulty with fortitude and power, even as the Atlantic liner can move on in the face of the storm, by reason of the motive power which propels it along.

2. *Addition.* We now come to those mistakes which are made, by adding to what the Lord has said.

We have an instance of this in the latter part of Ephesians 4:21, which is usually quoted, “*The truth as it is in Jesus.*” By the misplacement of the “**as,**” and the addition of the “**it,**” we have a comparative statement which makes truth to reside in others, as well as in the Lord; whereas we know, that He Himself is the embodiment of all truth.

Bacon, in his Essay on Truth, begins thus: “‘What is truth?’ said jesting Pilate, and did not wait for an answer.”

May we not say that Christ Himself is the answer, for did He not say: “**I am the Truth.**” This is the thought in the passage before us, the correct reading of which is, “**As the truth is in Jesus.**”

The fad is, the statement is an exclusive one, for it makes truth to center in Christ, and in Him alone, and it is also a conclusive one, for there is no court of appeal when He is in question.

Some Christian workers, when they wish to draw attention to the fact that God must deal in judgment with those who refuse to receive Christ, seek to emphasize it by saying that “*God, out of Christ, is a consuming fire.*”

The text to which they refer is, “**Our God is a consuming fire**” (Hebrews 12:29); and the exhortation with which it is connected, is to the children of God, pointing out to them the manner in which they are to serve, viz., “**with reverence and godly fear;**” and then comes the reason why they are to serve Him thus: “**For our God is a consuming fire.**”

The declaration has often been made from the pulpit, “*Without shedding of blood, is no remission of sins.*”

The desire is to show that the blood alone, is that which removes the sins from the sinner’s conscience, and while this may be rightly inferred from the text, yet a great deal more may be found in it, if we take it as it is, without the addition of the words “**of sins.**”

It will be seen that the addition rather limits the fulness of the text, instead of making it more definite, which appears to be the reason for its wrong quotation, for while the Greek word “*Aphesis*” is translated “**forgiveness**” in Acts 5:31, in speaking of sins, it is also rendered “**liberty**” and “**deliverance**” in Luke 4:18.

We may, therefore, rightly say, that its meaning is not merely the pardoning of offences, but the discharge of all penalty, and also deliverance from that power which led the sinner to commit the sins.

Among the instructions which the Lord gave to Moses, in connection with the tabernacle in the wilderness, was a direction with regard to the loops, taches, pins, and cords (Exodus 36:12, 13; 38:20).

It may be said that these were things of no importance, and yet they were all important in their own places. Indeed, do we not often find, that the greater things depend upon the smaller ones. Attention to details is one of the main factors which tend to success. It is the mortar that holds the bricks together, which go to make the house; and the pivots, nuts, and screws, are indispensable in the machinery of the factory. What is true generally, is specially so in connection with the little words of the Bible; they make or mar its meaning.

The whole force of revelation is contained in two letters, viz., the Greek preposition “*en*,” which is generally translated “**in**.” Its force and fulness can easily be gathered, as it is found in connection with Christ. To be in Him, is to be in the sphere of His saving grace, and of His sanctifying influence. While to be out of Him, is to be beyond the pale of His redemption.

While it is necessary to recognize the little words which are used by the Holy Spirit, we must be equally careful to guard against interpolations. There is a common mistake made in quoting Hebrews 9:27. It reads: “**And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment;**” but is often quoted, “*It is appointed unto all men once to die,*” &c.

As is invariable with misquotations, the words are taken out of their connection. A definite statement is made, that death and judgment are the portion of all men; whereas, if we look at the context, we find that there is a contrast given, as may be seen in the “**as**” and “**so**.”

The whole passage is as follows: “**And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.**”

Death and judgment are the common lot of humanity because of sin, but for the believer, Christ has died the death and borne the judgment, so that he is looking for neither the one nor the other, but is expecting Christ to return and complete his salvation. We have the definite statement of the Apostle Paul, that “**We shall not all sleep**” (I Corinthians 15:51).

There is all the difference between taking of a thing, and taking the thing itself.

It is not an uncommon thing to hear the passage of Scripture where we are exhorted to “**take the Water of Life freely**” (Revelation 22:17), quoted, “*Take of the Water of Life freely.*”

It is not merely something from Christ that the Holy Spirit urges us to take; it is Christ Himself, as the Water of Life, who satisfies the thirsty soul with His salvation and blessing.

One of the greatest stumbling-blocks to believers, is when they become occupied with some blessing which Christ gives, and lose sight of Christ Himself, in whom all blessing dwells (Ephesians 1:3). The devil’s motto is, “Anything but Christ, even blessing.” The Holy Spirit’s direction is, “**Looking unto Jesus,**” and to Jesus alone (Hebrews 12:2).

The hymn tells us that we are not to judge “the Lord by feeble sense,” and it is not without its application when the words of the Lord are added to, and that addition reflects upon the goodness of God, or takes away from His power.

A case in point is Ephesians 3:20, which is often quoted, “*Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.*” By the addition of the “CAN,” the thought is suggested that God can just go beyond what we can ask or think; when there is really a positive and emphatic statement that “**He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.**”

Cases might be multiplied of adding to the Scriptures, but the above will suffice to show its evil, for when the Scriptures are altered or changed, it mars the meaning, and we fail to give what the Levites gave when they read the Word, viz., “**the sense**” (Nehemiah 8:8). Besides this, we are distinctly warned in the Scriptures against adding to what God has said, for He says: “**Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar**” (Proverbs 30:6).

3. *Alteration.* Some of the alterations which are made in scholastic establishments are rather amusing, and it might not be out of place to call attention to a few of them.

The report of the Liverpool Council of Education, recently issued, contains the following grotesque blunders, the result of teaching too much by ear, found in the papers of examinees from the voluntary schools, who competed for the Scripture prizes offered by the Council:

- “Weighed in the barrel and found wanting.”
- “Blessed are ye when men shall divide you.”
- “Wished ye not that I must be,” &
- “Blessed are the poor in heart.” (This last error ran through quite half the papers).
- “Ekan” is written for “Achan;” and “Hanner,” “Kain,” “Raab,” “Elie” (for “Eli”) occur. “St. Tureon” is in the papers, if not in the calendar.

Last year there were reported:

- “Simion Peater,”
- “Judas his Cariot” (!),
- “Judases Carrot” (!),

- "Ely,"
- "Ofnie,"
- "Rabit's house" (g.d., . . . Rahab's house"),
- "St. Look,"
- "King Faroe,"
- "Eran" (q.d., . . . Aaron").

It is most important that we should put first things first, because, if we make God's first things our chief study, we shall be in the line of His care and blessing; for we always find, as we are obedient to His directions, we are in the treasure-house of His fulfilled promise; but even when there, we must be careful not to take more than He has pledged Himself to give.

We are led to say this because Christ's command, "**Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you,**" is often misquoted, in that "*all other things*" is put in the place of "**these things**" (Matthew 6:33). "**These things,**" to which Christ makes reference, are food and raiment, and to make His promise read "*all other things,*" is to claim what God has never pledged Himself to give.

"There is a flaw in it, hence it is not so valuable as it would be," said one friend to another, in speaking of an amethyst, for in looking at the back, there was a distinct mark, which indicated its imperfection. As the flaw took from the value of the stone, so those who alter Scripture in quoting it, by their misquotation take from its worth; for instance, the passage which speaks of "**judgment**" in connection with the ministry of the Holy Spirit, is often quoted "*judgment to come,*" whereas the whole passage is, "**Of judgment because the prince of this world is judged**" (John 16:11).

The future condemnation of the wicked is not in question; it is the Spirit's message, which tells of Christ's triumph over the god of this world, in His death on the Cross, by depriving him of his power (Hebrews 2:14).

One of the glad features of the Gospel is its simplicity.

It is full and free in the warm gladness of its soul-saving rays. No speaker can emphasize and elucidate its simplicity too much, but there is a danger, lest passages of Scripture which have no relation in this connection should be taken by way of illustration; for instance, Habakkuk 2:2 is often quoted: "*Make it plain, that he that runs may read,*" the thought being, that the Gospel is so plain, that no effort is needed on the part of the observer, for he can read as he runs; in reality the thought in the passage is the very opposite, for the words are, "**Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it**" - thus the Correct thought is that the man reads, and the reading makes him run, not that he reads while he runs. By altering some of the promises of God, a great deal of their meaning and blessing are taken away.

The following is a case in point:- The writer was staying with a friend in Scotland, and noticed an illuminated text hanging up in his dining room, which was as follows: "*My God shall supply all your need out of His riches in glory by Christ.*" The Correct reading is not "*out of,*" but "**according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus**" (Philippians 4:19).

Perhaps the difference of the two readings may be best gathered by a simple illustration.

Suppose a millionaire meets a beggar in the street, who asks him for a few coppers to meet his necessity. The millionaire gives the beggar out of his riches, as he drops sixpence into his hand, but if he took him to his home, and adopted him as his son, made him his heir, and treated him as such, he would be giving him according to his riches.

In like manner, when the Lord blesses us, He does not bestow upon us the dribblets of His grace, but He gives us a deluge of blessing. His blessing is according to the “**riches of His grace**” (Ephesians 1:7). His power to us-ward is according to what He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead (Ephesians 1:19,20), and the measure of the Spirit’s strengthening, and Christ’s indwelling, is according to the riches of His glory (Ephesians 3:16, 17).

II - Mistakes that are made in referring to Scripture.

Froude says: “Instruction does not prevent waste of time, or mistakes; and mistakes themselves are often the best teachers of all;” and again, in speaking of experience, he remarks, “Experience teaches slowly, and at the cost of mistakes.”

It is that we may find instruction I refer to the mistakes of others, and not for the mere pointing out of their blunders. And further, I trust we shall find, if we have not already done so, the absolute necessity of being accurate in all our references to the Book of books, and this will mean, that we must not under any circumstances take anything for granted. but look things up for ourselves.

A learned judge on a recent occasion, made the solemn declaration from the bench, in calling attention to man’s tenacity to life: “We have the highest possible authority for saying, ‘**All that a man hath will he give for his life.**’” I presume the judge meant to say - and we are warranted in the presumption - that this was what the Lord said to man, whereas if the learned gentleman had taken the trouble to look up the passage of Scripture, he would have found, “**Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life**” (Job 2:4).

I am sure Satan would not have got the credit of being “the highest possible authority,” if it had been known he was the speaker. The judge took it for granted the Lord was the speaker, and blundered in consequence.

This leads me to say, in passing, it is most important to distinguish between revelation and inspiration. Revelation means, that God communicates His mind to us, in order that we may know His will, as when He gave the Law. Inspiration means, a correct record of what is said, but there may be many speakers. Inspiration covers revelation, but revelation does not necessarily take in inspiration.

There is a very common mistake made in connection with Absalom, namely, that he was caught in the oak by his hair, and he was hanged to his death as a result. The fact is, Absalom was killed by Joab, “**while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak**” (II Samuel 18:14).

A similar mistake is often made, and taught with regard to Elijah, for we frequently hear it said, “*that he went up to Heaven in a chariot of fire.*” The Scripture does not say anything of the kind, for there we are told, “**There appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into Heaven**” (II Kings 2:11).

There are many instances of most remarkable blunders which have been made by Oxford undergraduates in the Scripture examination, which they must undergo before taking their degree.

The following are a few among many:

One was asked who was the first king of Israel. Either by accident or real knowledge, he readily answered, “**Saul.**” Then, wishing to give a little additional Scripture information, he added, “*Saul, afterwards called Paul.*”

Another undergraduate was asked which were the two instances in the Bible where we have the record of the lower animals having spoken; he at once replied, “**Balaam’s ass.**”

“Yes,” said the examiner, “that is one; now the other.”

The young man answered after a slight hesitation, “The whale! The whale said unto Jonah, ‘**Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.**’”

The following stories are told in a book on University life at Cambridge:

A certain candidate, when asked for the substance of Paul’s sermon at Athens, stated, that “he cried out for the space of two hours, ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians!’”

Yet another was asked to give the parable of the Good Samaritan. He went on very well until he came to where the Samaritan said to the innkeeper, “**When I come again I will repay thee.**” Then the candidate made the following addition: “This he said, knowing that he should see his face no more.”

The above instances show the ludicrous blunders that those who have an imperfect knowledge of Scripture may fall into. Truly, “a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.” While we should always be careful in dealing with the Word of God, above all things we should be accurate in our heart and life, by seeing that the actions of our conduct correspond to God’s Truth, for it charges us:

- To keep our heart with diligence (Proverbs 4:23),
- To bridle our tongue with caution (James 1:26),
- To concentrate our gaze with attention (Hebrews 12:2),
- To watch our ways with vigilance (I Peter 5:8),
- To separate all pollution from our inner life (II Corinthians 7:1), and
- To set our affection on things above (Colossians 3:2).

Then we can pray-

“Oh, let me give
Out of the gifts
Thou freely givest;
Oh, let me live
‘With life abundant, because Thou livest;
Oh, make me shine
In darkest places, for Thy light is mine;
Oh, let me be
A faithful witness for
Thy truth and Thee.’”

~ end of chapter 15 ~

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