

CLARENCE LARKIN

DISPENSATIONAL
TRUTH



WHITAKER
HOUSE

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ who, through the Holy Spirit, has imparted to me the knowledge and mechanical skill to construct these charts.

—Clarence Larkin

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible. Scripture quotations marked (RV) are taken from the Revised Version of the Holy Bible. Scripture quotations marked (YLT) are taken from *Young's Literal Translation* by Robert Young (1898). Scripture quotations marked (ASV) are taken from the American Standard Edition of the Revised Version of the Holy Bible.

DISPENSATIONAL TRUTH God's Plan and Purpose in the Ages

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PREFACE

The preparation and publication of this book is a wonderful story of divine leading. The author by profession was a mechanical engineer and architect. When he entered the gospel ministry directly from business and without any previous theological training, at the age of thirty-four, he believed that he would have no further use for his skill as a draughtsman and sold all his professional books and appliances except his drawing instruments. His first charge was in a small town, where he remained fifteen years.

He was not premillennialist at the time of his ordination, but his study of the Scriptures, aided by some books that fell into his hands, led him to adopt that view. He began to make large colored wall charts on "prophetic truth" for use on the pulpit. This led to his being invited to teach, in connection with his pastoral work, in two Bible institutes. During this time, he published a number of prophetic charts that had a wide circulation. These led to the request that he publish a book, illustrated with charts, on prophetic truth.

But it was not until the spring of 1915 that the Lord laid it upon his heart to prepare a work on dispensational truth or God's plan and purpose in the ages illustrated with charts. The designing and drawing of the charts and the writing of the descriptive matter took over three years. The book therefore has not been hastily gotten up. It is the outcome of over thirty years of careful and patient study of the prophetic Scriptures, and aims to give not the opinions of men, but the teaching of the Word of God. The writer's purpose has been to prepare a standard work on dispensational truth. That such a work was greatly longed for is evidenced by the reception the book has had. In ten months, the first edition was exhausted and was widely circulated all over the world. The first edition was a feeler to see whether such a book would be in demand, and so was printed and circulated in the cheapest form. When the author awoke to the fact that the book was what the students of prophecy were looking for, he decided to revise and enlarge the book and put it out in a more substantial and usable form, but before he could do this, a second edition was called for and had to be printed in the old form.

This, the third edition, has been revised and enlarged by the addition of twice as many charts and twice as much descriptive matter as the previous editions, and the charts are now inserted in the descriptive matter where they belong. The book has also been printed in Atlas form, eleven inches square,

and bound in cloth, making it more convenient to handle and carry about. The large charts of the earlier editions have not been reduced in size or form, but are printed from the old plates, and when the book is open, spread across two pages. This method and manner of printing the book adds greatly to its cost, but the buyer gets far more than the additional cost in the increased value of the contents of the book, which contains twice as much as the previous edition. There are 170 double pages of descriptive matter in the book, or 340 single pages, and as each page contains one-half more matter than the page of an ordinary book, there are the equivalent of 500 pages of an ordinary book.

If the author had had to employ a skilled draughtsman to draw the charts, the cost of the book would have been prohibitive. In fact, the charts could not have been drawn that way, for the draughtsman would have had to have had the scriptural knowledge of the author; for the charts had to be thought out and developed under the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit. In this, the Holy Spirit did not confuse the author by suggesting all the charts at one time. When one was completed, another was suggested. And upon more than one occasion when a problem arose, the answer was given in the night or at awakening in the morning.

The author does not claim infallibility for the charts, but having drawn the main chart, "Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth," it stands to reason that in developing the sectional or topical charts, if he had made an error in the main chart, it would have been detected in the sectional or topical charts. It is this agreement in the study of the sectional or topical charts with the main chart that confirms the author in his belief that the charts are scripturally correct.

The author has always deplored the tendency of writers on dispensational truth to say uncharitable things of each other, and to unfairly present the side of their opponent; he has therefore earnestly and prayerfully sought to avoid any such criticisms and to simply expound the Word of God as the Holy Spirit opened it up to him. He has sought not to be influenced by any religious or doctrinal bias, and with "open mind" to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, and let the Scriptures say what they want to say. His writings therefore must be judged by their agreement or disagreement with the holy Scriptures.

With profound gratitude and thankfulness for the blessing of his heavenly Father upon the previous editions of this work, the author sends forth this third revised and enlarged edition, earnestly praying that it may be of untold blessing to thousands of God's dear children who love the Lord's

appearing, and be an instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit for the conversion of the unsaved, and of those who deceitfully handle the Word of God.

—Clarence Larkin, author
Sunnyside, Fox Chase, Philadelphia, PA
March 25, 1920

INTRODUCTION

Much has changed since Clarence Larkin published the enlarged edition of his most popular work in 1920. Israel is again a nation. Our understanding of the solar system is vastly different. He supposes the mark of the Beast might be branded or burnt on, whereas we might suppose it would be an implant. However, as a study of classical dispensationalism, this book is invaluable.

We have taken some liberties to make *Dispensational Truth: God's Plan and Purpose in the Ages* more accessible to the modern reader:

- Scripture quotations are in italics and the citations are spelled out.
- Scripture references that were missing from the original have been included.
- Some complex sentences have been edited for clarity.
- Terms no longer in common usage are explained.
- Quoted poems have now been attributed to their authors.
- Where Larkin would refer readers to a chapter by name only, the chapter number has been added.

Although a hundred years have passed, Larkin's heartfelt dedication to helping the church understand biblical prophecy is evident throughout these pages. There is no question that *Dispensational Truth* will give modern readers much to ponder and consider.

CHAPTER 1

THE PROPHETIC WORD

The Bible is not a systematic treatise on theology, or morals, or history, or science, or any other topic. It is a revelation of God, of the fall of man, the way of salvation, and of God's plan and purpose in the ages. It treats of:

1. **Four persons:** God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and Satan
2. **Three places:** heaven, earth, and hell
3. **Three classes of people:** the Jew, the gentile, and the church of God

The Scriptures were given to us piecemeal, at sundry times and in diverse manners. Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, during a period of 1,600 years extending from 1492 BC to AD 100. The Bible consists of sixty-six separate books, thirty-nine in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New Testament. These books were written by about forty different authors—by kings such as David and Solomon; by statesmen such as Daniel and Nehemiah; by priests such as Ezra; by men learned in the wisdom of Egypt such as Moses; by men learned in Jewish law such as Paul; by a herdsman, Amos; a tax-gatherer, Matthew; fishermen such as Peter, James, and John, who were unlearned and ignorant men; a physician, Luke; and such mighty seers as Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah.

It is not an Asiatic book, though it was written in that part of the world. Its pages were penned in the wilderness of Sinai, the cliffs of Arabia, the hills and towns of Palestine, the courts of the temple, the schools of the prophets at Bethel and Jericho, in the palace of Shushan in Persia, on the banks of the river Chebar in Babylon, in the dungeons of Rome, and on the lonely island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea.

Imagine another book compiled in a similar manner. Suppose, for illustration, that we take sixty-six medical books written by forty different physicians and surgeons during a period of 1,600 years, from various schools of medicine—such as allopathy, homeopathy, hydropathy, osteopathy, etc.—and bind them all together, and then undertake to doctor a man according to that book. What success would we expect to have, and what accord would there be in such a medical work?

While the Bible has been compiled in the manner described, it is not a heterogeneous jumble of ancient history, myths, legends, religious speculations, and superstitions. There is a progress of revelation and doctrine in it. The judges knew more than the patriarchs, the prophets knew more than

the judges, and the apostles knew more than the prophets. The Old and New Testaments are not separate and distinct books, the new taking the place of the old; they are the two halves of a whole. The new is enfolded in the old, and the old is unfolded in the new. You cannot understand Leviticus without Hebrews, or Daniel without Revelation, or the Passover or Isaiah 53 without the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

While the Bible is a revelation from God, it is not written in a superhuman or celestial language. If it were, we could not understand it. Its supernatural origin, however, is seen in the fact that it can be translated into any language and not lose its virility or spiritual life-giving power, and when translated into any language, it fixes that language in its purest form.

However, the language of the Bible is of three kinds: figurative, symbolic, and literal. Such expressions as “*Harden not your heart*” and “*Let the dead bury their dead*” are figurative, and their meaning is made clear by the context.

Symbolic language, like the description of Nebuchadnezzar’s *colossus*, Daniel’s *four wild beasts*, or Christ in the midst of the *seven candlesticks*, is explained either in the same chapter or somewhere else in the Bible.

The rest of the language of the Bible is to be interpreted according to the customary rules of grammar and rhetoric. That is, we are to read the Bible as we would read any other book, letting it say what it wants to say, and not allegorize or spiritualize its meaning. It is this false method of interpreting Scripture that has led to the origin of so many religious sects and denominations. There are three things that we must avoid in the handling of God’s Word:

1. **Misinterpretation** of Scripture
2. **Misapplication** of Scripture
3. **Dislocation** of Scripture

The trouble is, men are not willing to let the Scriptures say what they want to say. This is largely due to their training, environment, prejudice, or desire to make the Scriptures teach some favorite doctrine.

Then again, we must not overlook the parabolic method of imparting truth. Jesus did not invent it, though he largely used it; it was employed by the Old Testament prophets. In the New Testament, it is used as a mystery form of imparting truth. (See Matthew 13:10–17.) A mystery is not something that cannot be known, but something that, for the time being, is hidden.

Suppose I hand you a sealed letter. What it contains is a mystery to you. Break the seal and read the letter and it ceases to be a mystery. But you may not be able to read the

letter because it is written in a language with which you are not familiar. Learn the language and the mystery ceases. But perhaps the letter contains technical terms that you do not understand; learn their meaning and all will be plain. That is the way with the mysteries of the Scriptures: learn to read them by the help of their author, the Holy Spirit, and they will no longer be mysteries.

This brings us to the great question: is the Bible God’s Book or man’s book?

That is, did God write it, or is it simply a collection of the writings of men? If it is simply a collection of the writings of men, without any divine guidance, then it is no more reliable than are the writings of men; but if God wrote it, then it must be true, and we can depend upon its statements. It is clear from the character of the Bible that it is not the work of man, for man could not have written it if he would, and would not have written it if he could.

It details with scathing and unsparing severity the sins of its greatest men, such as Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and Solomon, charging them with falsehood, treachery, pride, adultery, cowardice, murder, and gross licentiousness, and presents the history of the children of Israel as a humiliating record of ingratitude, idolatry, unbelief, and rebellion. It is safe to say that the Jews, unguided and undirected by the Holy Spirit, would never have chronicled the sinful history of their nation.

How then was the Bible written? The Bible itself gives the answer: “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God*” (2 Timothy 3:16).

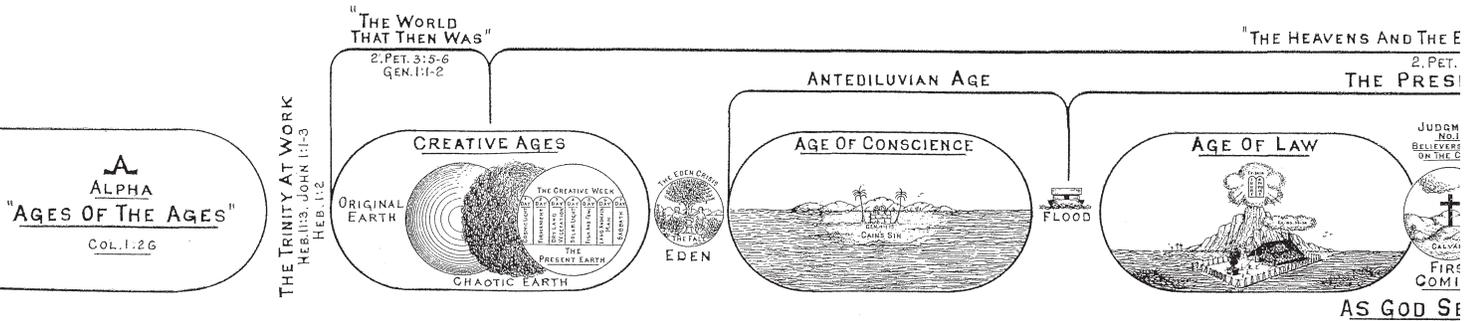
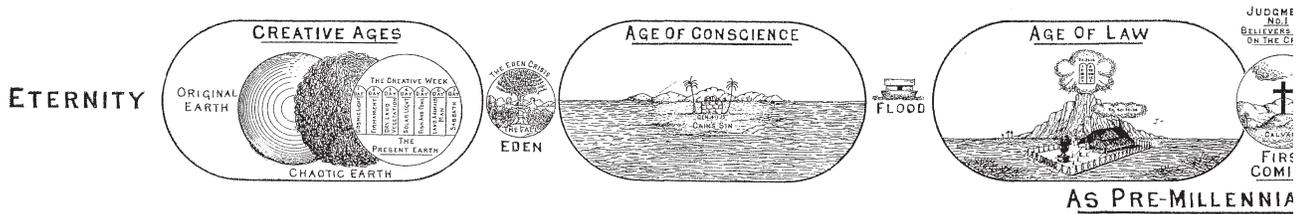
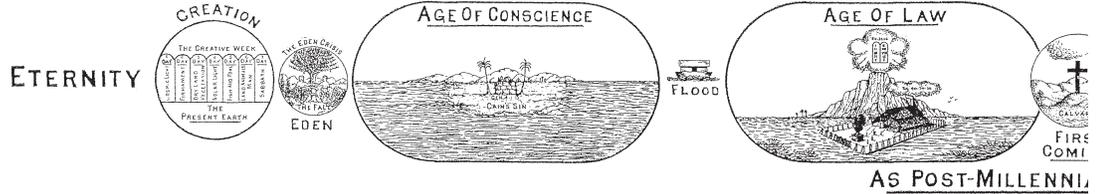
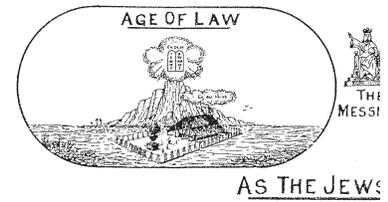
I. WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES?

We are to understand that God directed men, chosen by Himself, to put into writing such messages, laws, doctrines, historical facts, and revelations as He wished men to know.

All Scripture (the *graphe* writing), is given by inspiration (*the-op-neu-stos*)—that is God breathed.

God Himself, or through the Holy Spirit, told holy men of old just what to write. The Bible, then, is the Word of God, and does not simply here and there contain it. God is a Person and can both write and speak. He wrote the two tables of testimony on stone (see Exodus 31:18; 32:16), and on the wall of Belshazzar’s palace (see Daniel 5:5, 24–28). He talked with Moses on the mount when He gave him the specifications for the tabernacle, its furnishings, and all the Levitical law and order of service. He spoke at the baptism of Jesus (see Matthew 3:17), on the Mount

THE "AGES" AS VIEWED FROM DIFFERENT STANDPOINTS



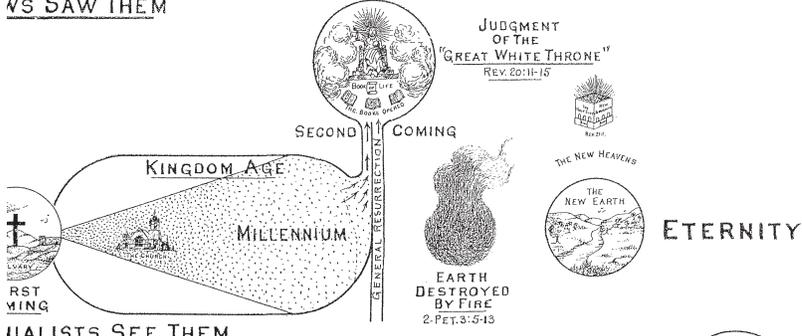
of Transfiguration (see Matthew 17:5), and one day when Jesus was talking to the multitude (see John 12:27-30). But God not only spoke directly to men, He spoke to them in the person of Jesus, for Jesus was God manifest in the flesh. (See John 1:1-5, 14; 1 Timothy 3:16.) Matthew and John's gospels contain forty-nine chapters—1,950 verses, 1,140 of which, almost three-fifths, were spoken by Jesus. And He claimed that what He spoke, He spoke not of Himself, but that the Father who sent Him gave Him a commandment of what He should speak. (See John 12:49-50.) We see then that God can both write and speak, and therefore can tell others what to write and speak.

II. DOES THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE EXTEND TO EVERY PART?

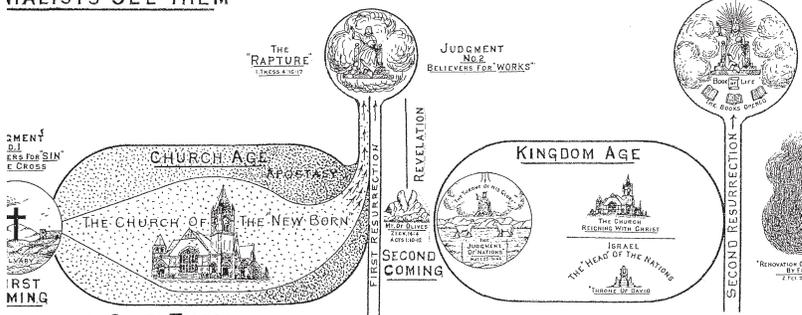
Yes. From the dry lists in Chronicles to the very words of God in Exodus, and through Christ. And more, it extends to every sentence, word, mark, point, jot, and tittle in the original parchments. When Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-18 that not one jot or tittle should pass from the Law until all be fulfilled, He referred to the smallest letter (jot) and the smallest mark (tittle) of the Hebrew language, thus indicating that even these were inspired and were necessary for a complete understanding of God's meaning in His Word.



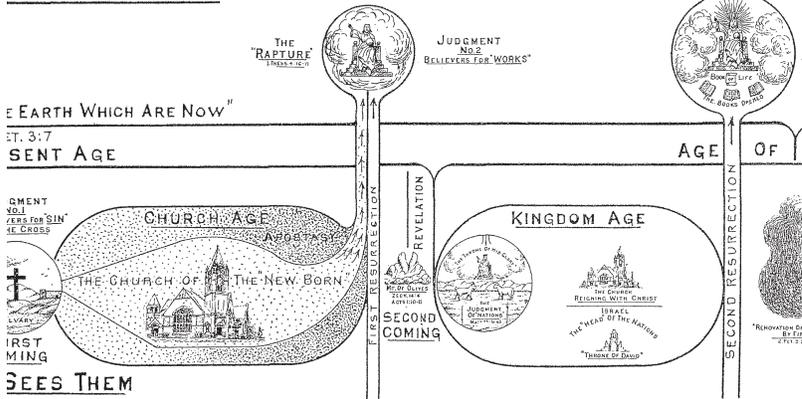
AS WE SAW THEM



AS THE REALISTS SEE THEM



AS THE REALISTS SEE THEM



AS WE SEE THEM

EXPLANATION

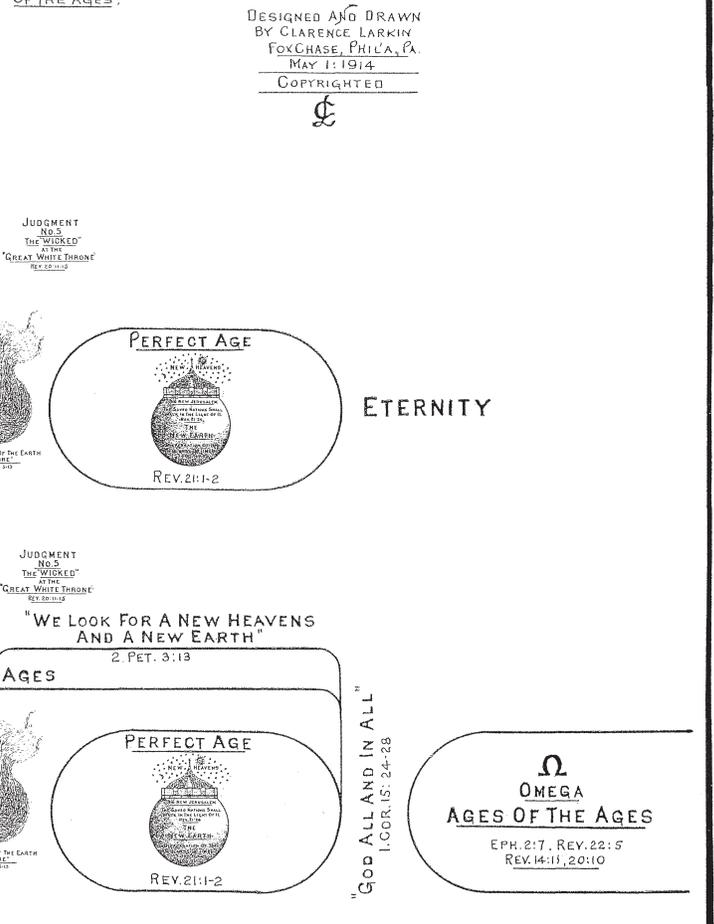
THERE IS MUCH CONFUSION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT BECAUSE THE GREEK WORD "AION", MEANING "AGE", HAS BEEN TRANSLATED BY 8 DIFFERENT ENGLISH WORDS, AS FOLLOWS-- "WORLD" 35 TIMES; "WORLDS" TWICE; "COURSE" ONCE; "ETERNAL" TWICE; "END" ONCE; "AGES" TWICE; "EVER" 30 TIMES; "EVER AND EVER" 21 TIMES. WHEN THE WORD "AGE" IS SUBSTITUTED FOR THE ABOVE IT WILL BE SEEN THAT NOT OUR MATERIAL WORLD IS MEANT BUT A "PERIOD OF TIME". TAKE THE FOLLOWING FOR ILLUSTRATION. MATT. 12:32; 13:39-40; 24:3; MARK 10:30; LUKE 20:34-35; GAL. 1:4; 2.TIM. 4:10; HEB. 6:5; REV. 20:10.

IN THE GREEK IT WILL BE SEEN THAT WE HAVE THE SINGULAR "AION" MATT. 24:3; THE PLURAL "AIONS", EPH. 2:7; "AIONS OF AIONS", REV. 20:10; AND THE "AION OF THE AIONS", EPH. 3:21.

THIS CHART IS TO SHOW THE WAY THE "JEW", THE "POST-MILLENNIALIST", THE "PRE-MILLENNIALIST", AND "GOD" SEE THE AGES. THE "JEW" SAW, CONCERNING HIMSELF, BUT 2 AGES. THE "POST-MILLENNIALIST" SEES BUT 3 AGES, TWO BEFORE, AND ONE AFTER THE †. HIS VIEW IS UNBALANCED. THE "PRE-MILLENNIALIST" SEES 6 AGES, 3 ON EACH SIDE THE †. HIS VIEW IS BALANCED AND CORRESPONDS WITH GOD'S VIEW AS OUTLINED IN THE SCRIPTURES, AND THEREFORE IS CORRECT.

THE PRE-MILLENNIALISTS 6 AGES INCLUDE "TIME" ONLY AND ARE BOUNDED BY "ETERNITY", WHILE GOD'S 6 AGES ARE BOUNDED BY THE "ALPHA" AND "OMEGA" AGES OF THE AGES.

DESIGNED AND DRAWN BY CLARENCE LARKIN FOXCHASE, PHILA., PA. MAY 1: 1914



Ω
OMEGA
AGES OF THE AGES
EPH. 2:7, REV. 22:5
REV. 14:11, 20:10

But how about the words of Satan, and wicked and un-inspired men, the genealogical tables, and the account of the fall of man, the flood, and other historical portions of the Bible? They were inspired of record. That is, the inspired penman or historian was told what historical facts to record and what to omit. To one who has read the Old Testament, and also profane history covering the same period, with its legends, traditions, and detailed descriptions, it is very clear that the writers of the Old Testament were divinely inspired to record only those things that would throw light on God's plan and purpose in the ages.

III. HOW WERE THESE MEN INSPIRED TO WRITE THE SCRIPTURES?

Were they simply thrown into a kind of spell, ecstasy, or trance, and wrote under its influence whatever came into their minds, or did God through the Holy Spirit dictate to them the exact words to use?

We know that thought can only be expressed in words and those words must express the exact thought of the speaker or writer; otherwise, his exact thought is not expressed. We see then that inerrancy demands that the sacred writer be simply an amanuensis, a literary assistant. This we see is what the Scriptures claim for themselves. In 2 Peter 1:20-21, we read,

“No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” No man has a right to say what the Scriptures mean according to his opinion.

And this is confirmed by the fact that much that the Old Testament prophets wrote they did not themselves understand. (See 1 Peter 1:10–11.) They must then have been mere amanuenses, recording words that needed an interpreter. That they were mere instruments is shown by the fact that not all of them were good or holy men; think of Balaam (see Numbers 22:38; 23:26), King Saul (see 1 Samuel 10:10–12; 19:20–24), the prophet of Bethel (see 1 Kings 13:7–10; 20:22; 26), and Caiaphas (see John 11:49–52).

That the Old Testament writers spoke and wrote the exact words that God gave to them is clear from their own statements. Moses declares that the Lord said unto him, *“Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say”* (Exodus 4:12). The prophet Jeremiah says, *“Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth”* (Jeremiah 1:9).

Ezekiel, Daniel, and all of the prophets make the same claim. Expressions such as, “The Lord said,” “The Lord spake saying,” and “Thus saith the Lord” occur 560 times in the Pentateuch, 300 times in the historical and prophetic books, 1,200 times in the prophets (twenty-four times in Malachi alone), and in all, over 2,000 times in the Old Testament, thus proving the statement of Peter that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

But you say, “If this is true, how do you account for the difference in the style of the writers; for Isaiah’s style is different from Ezekiel’s or Daniel’s, and Peter’s from that of John or Paul?” This is easily explained. On the principle that when we wish a legal document to be written, we choose a lawyer, or a poetical article, a poet, etc., so God when He wanted to speak in symbols chose an Ezekiel, a Daniel, a John, or, in poetry, a David.

How are we to explain the fact that sometimes a New Testament writer, in quoting from the Old Testament, instead of quoting literally paraphrases the quotation? For instance, in Amos 9:11, we read, *“In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old.”*

But when the apostle James, in the first church council at Jerusalem, quotes this passage, he paraphrases it, saying, *“After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of*

David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof; and I will set it up” (Acts 15:16).

Why the change in the wording? Simply because the Author of both passages was not Amos or James, but the Holy Spirit, and an author has a perfect right to change the phraseology of a statement he may make in the first chapter of his book, in the tenth chapter, if by so doing, without contradicting himself, he can make his meaning clearer.

That is an illuminating statement in 1 Peter 1:11, where the apostle tells us that it was the Spirit of Christ that testified through the prophets of His sufferings. That is, the Spirit of Christ took possession of the prophets and through them forecast or prophesied His sufferings on the cross, as in Isaiah 53:1–12.

The question is often asked, “Is there any difference between Bible inspiration and the so-called inspiration of poets, orators, preachers, and writers of today?” In answering the question, we must distinguish between inspiration, revelation, and illumination.

As we have seen, Bible inspiration is something totally different and unique from the inspiration of poets, writers, and public speakers. It is an inspiration in which the exact words of God are imparted to the speaker or writer by the Holy Spirit.

Bible revelation is the disclosure to men of things that they otherwise could never know, things hidden in the mind of God, such as His plan and purpose in the ages.

Bible revelation ceased with the book of Revelation. There has been no new revelation from God since then. When men today claim that they have received some new revelation, they must be classed as imposters.

Spiritual illumination is different from either Bible inspiration or revelation. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer, by which he has his spiritual understanding opened to understand the Scriptures. (See John 16:12–15.) The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (See 1 Corinthians 2:11–14.) The work then of the Holy Spirit in these days is not to impart some new revelation to men, or to inspire them to write or speak as the prophets and apostles of old, but to so illuminate men’s minds and open up their understanding of the Scriptures that their hearts will burn within them as they compare Scripture with Scripture, and have revealed to them God’s plan and purpose in the ages as disclosed in His holy Word.