

**MISREAD  
PASSAGES  
OF SCRIPTURE**

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Misread Passages of Scripture by J. Baldwin Brown

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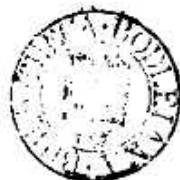
MISREAD PASSAGES  
OF  
SCRIPTURE.

*SECOND SERIES.*

BY

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## PREFACE.

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THE kind reception which was accorded to a former series of papers on Misread Passages of Scripture has led me to prepare a new series for the press. At no period probably was the interest manifested in the true interpretation of Scripture greater than it is at present. As the Bible becomes the subject of free and intelligent criticism, and men bring to bear upon it the same discrimination which they use in their judgment of other books, they find out for themselves how unlike it is to all other books, and how fully it is charged with a wisdom which is from a deeper than a human spring. We have been tempted to adopt, in our solicitude for the safety of the Bible, the policy of the pagan Olympus. We have flung around the object of our care a sheltering mist, which, while no doubt it has baffled many an assailant, has robbed it of its power of self defence—that self manifestation wherein lies the victorious strength of everything that is of God. When shall we learn that the Bible has more to fear from the policy of short-sighted defenders than from the assaults of searching critics, and leave it free to speak its own word and do its own work in the world?

The last few years have wrought a great emancipation for the Bible; and the kind of interest which is

now taken in its truths and its teachings is healthy and full of promise. Many of the difficulties with which it is supposed to be cumbered disappear the moment that an open eye is brought to bear upon them, and the reader is willing to interpret the parts in the spirit and by the light of the whole. To help young students, as far as lies in my power, to bring the open eye to bear on the sacred records, is the main purpose of this little book. It differs from the former in one important respect. It is less a criticism of particular texts which appear to be popularly misinterpreted, than a consideration of scriptural subjects on which much misunderstanding exists, owing mainly to the supposed teaching of various passages of the word of God. I have discussed a few of these in a free, simple, and I hope suggestive manner. I have not aimed in any case at an exhaustive argument. My object has been, as before, to stimulate and guide thought on biblical questions, rather than to formulate conclusions. If I can lead any thoughtful young students to read the Bible for themselves, with a desire to discover what the whole word teaches, rather than to rest on an isolated text, as though the whole mind of the Spirit on that point were there expressed, my object will have been gained.

J. BALDWIN BROWN.

CLAPHAM, *September, 1870.*



## Misread Passages of Scripture.

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### I.

#### THE PRINCIPLE OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.

"There shall be one fold, and one shepherd."—JOHN x. 16.

LITERALLY, "*there shall be one flock, one shepherd.*" The difference between the two renderings is a grave one. The mistranslation of the words of the Saviour in the English version is most unfortunate, as I believe that it has been at the root of much serious misapprehension of the true nature of that unity of the church which was contemplated by the Lord. "One flock, with one Shepherd," is distinctly the prevision of Christ. The word rightly rendered "fold" in the earlier portion of the verse is in this last clause advisedly changed, to the word which can only be translated "flock." Not one "fold;" many folds it might be, many visible bodies, many diverse forms of thought and energy; but one flock—one spirit, one heart to hear and to obey the Master, one hope, one home in the "general assembly and church of the firstborn" on high.

We mourn over the divisions of Christendom, and

most justly. The saddest, darkest thing under the sun, in the estimation of heaven, must be the rent, disfigured, distorted body of that church for which the Saviour prayed, as He entered into the shadow of the last agony, that it might be one as He and the Father were one, that the world might believe that He came forth from God. But it is discord that heaven mourns over, not diversity. Two hearts, hearts at war, hearts in schism—not two thoughts, two diverse because each of them necessarily partial modes of apprehending and setting forth the deep things of God. When Christendom agrees to one creed, one form of words, it will sign its own sentence of dissolution. When it agrees to one spirit, is of one heart to hear the voice of the one Shepherd, and to recognise by the heart's sure instincts all who in various forms and by various paths are striving to obey and to follow Him, it will have a fresh Pentecostal baptism, a fresh outburst of joyous victorious life. For Christendom to agree to the same words, and to rest in the same intellectual conceptions as setting forth the whole truth of God, would be simply to rest on a human foundation and not on a Divine. God has not given us a creed in the Bible. He could not have given us a creed. No words which even Divine art could combine could express to the understanding of man the whole sum of the truth of God. He has given us a life, and such light as flows from it; and "*the life is the light of men.*" To walk in the Light, to be drawn by the magnet of the Life, this is the life of faith.

And here we discover the basis of the true unity; a common openness of heart to the living constraints of the Lord Jesus; a common love, and an instinct to recognise that love in the disciples, as the bond of the common brotherhood. One flock in the great wide world, with its vast far-stretching mountain pastures, where by ten thousand paths the sheep are roaming, but all familiar with the one Voice, all ready to follow where the Shepherd leads them, and all trusting to His care and skill to bring them at length "into the place which He has prepared." "*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions:*"—various folds even there, and free play of the individual life—"if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also" (John xiv. 1-3).

These words of my text have a very peculiar and beautiful significance in the place in which they occur. The Lord's ministry on earth was ending. All that He had earned by His life of self-sacrificing devotion to man was the cross and the grave. The shadow of death was already darkening round Him. His heart was feeling in the gloom for all that the Father would give Him as the fruit of His pain, the purchase of His blood. Large visions floated before His sight as He drew near the hour of His anguish, the hour of the prince of darkness, of the kingdom which He would