

2) The varying usages of syntactical forms

In making a systematic theology it is necessary to recognize that syntactical forms and usages vary from language to language. Those who know only one language generally fail to comprehend this fact. They use the forms of their own language without realizing how different the variety of possibilities is from those of most other languages.

Thus three hundred years ago, when the King James Version was written, the words, "I go," "you go," "he goes," etc., represented the present tense. This is no longer true. The present tense is now "I am going," "you are going," "he is going," etc. Today if one should ask a student returning to his home, "Where do you go to school?" the student might answer, "I go to Biblical Theological Seminary," even if he were at that moment walking in the opposite direction.

Languages are constantly changing, and much investigation must be carried on to determine exactly what any expression meant at a particular period of time. To determine the meaning of a Scriptural sentence the rules of its syntax must be ascertained. For the New Testament this means careful study of koine Greek. For the Old Testament it means careful study of Biblical Hebrew.

Some distinctions that are common in present English are not expressed in Hebrew or Greek, and some distinctions found in those languages do not exist in English. Precise determination of these points, and in particular, comparison of all the Scripture passages bearing on a subject, is extremely important to systematic theology.

Propositional truth can be drawn from the Bible, but it must be recognized that every proposition has to be interpreted, and the making of a general proposition should deal with all relevant Biblical passages.