



CONDUCTED BY
L. CHANNING

Send your questions
direct to L. Channing,
9 Ripon Street,
Aylesbury, Bucks.

Q. New Testament writers often refer to an Old Testament statement, then quote it incorrectly—*i.e.* they do not use the same words. Why is this and how does it square with the belief in verbal inspiration?

A. The answer can be divided into three parts.

(a) *Variations.* It is quite true that sometimes there is considerable difference between an O.T. passage and the way it is quoted by N.T. writers. In some cases the writer does not quote from the Hebrew text of the O.T., but from the Septuagint version. This is a Greek translation of the O.T. Hebrew, made by seventy scholars at Alexandria about 200 years before the birth of Christ. There are many such quotations, as, for instance, Rom. 9 : verses 7, 12, 13, 15, 26-29. Sometimes the writers deliberately make variations in the text, as in Rom. 11 : 8 (different from the Hebrew) ; Heb. 2 : 12 (different from the Septuagint) ; 1 Cor. 3 : 19 (different from both the Hebrew and the Septuagint). Sometimes only the general sense of an O.T. passage is given and not the actual words : as 2 Cor. 6 : 17 (of the Hebrew) ; John 15 : 25 (of the Septuagint). Sometimes the writers merely make indefinite allusions to particular passages, as 2 Cor. 13 : 1 to Deut. 19 : 15.

(b) *Reasons for Variations.* The main reasons why there should be such variations are the different design of each N.T. writer ; the circumstances under which he wrote ; and the people to whom his writing was addressed. Thus Luke, writing to a Gentile (Theophilus), quotes a prophecy of Isaiah at some length (Luke 3 : 4-6, quoting Isa. 40 : 3-4) in order to impress upon the Gentiles that they too have a part in God's salvation. But Matthew, using the same prophecy and writing mainly to Jews needs only to quote one verse (Matt. 3 : 3 ; Isa. 40 : 3). Again, some writers, as Paul, quote from the Septuagint version because they, in the first instance, were writing to Greek-speaking Jews or to Gentiles, and the Greek translation of the O.T. scriptures was the version most widely used amongst them. But sometimes even a greater variation of the O.T. text is needed. Thus Mark, in order to impress on his readers the need for response to the gospel (4 : 12) makes a free translation of Isa. 40 : 9-10. Further, the writers often make only an indirect allusion to a particular passage, because the passage is either already well known to those to whom they are writing, or its general sense is sufficient to establish the point they wish to make.

(c) *Variations and Verbal Inspiration.* Such variations do not affect either the verbal inspiration of the O.T. or the N.T. With the O.T., as with the N.T. it is the *original text* that is verbally inspired. A version, such as the Septuagint, is no more inspired as a *version* than is any modern version. With the N.T. writers, verbal inspiration did not always mean that O.T. passages should be quoted verbatim, but that any variations made should be in harmony with the particular passages on which they were based. The Spirit of God led the writers to select whatever was appropriate to their needs, either the Hebrew text, a Greek translation, a translation of their own, or a variation or paraphrase. The *result* is a verbally inspired statement (see 1 Cor. 2 : 12-13). Rather than disproving verbal inspiration, variations between O.T. passages and N.T. quotations serve to prove it, for nowhere are there contradictions, but only inspired *elaborations* of the original text.

Q. In Matt. 21 : 43. the Lord says to the Jews, 'The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation [Greek, *ethnos*] bringing forth the fruits thereof.' This is not the church (ecclesia), but 'a nation.' Who is it? Where is it?

A. *Who Is It?* This statement of our Lord's is both an explanation and an application of the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen. There the vineyard represents the religious privileges of the Jews, the messengers, the prophets, and the son, the Lord Himself. Jesus now says plainly that the Jewish nation would be rejected and the kingdom of God and its privileges would pass to the Gentiles. The same warning is given in Matt. 8 : 11-12 ; 22 : 1-14 ; Luke 13 : 28-29 ; and see also Acts 28 : 28 ; Rom. 11. Further, the Greek word *ethnos*, in this verse translated by the word 'nation,' is in its plural form, according to Jewish usage, translated directly by the word 'Gentiles' (see Rom. 11 : 4 ; 16 : 4 ; Gal. 2 : 12 and 14 ; Eph. 3 : 1).

Where Is It? The questioner is incorrect in supposing that this prophecy was not fulfilled in the church, for the scripture clearly indicates that it was. (See Acts 13 : 46 ; 15 : 14 ; 1 Pet. 2 : 9). The last reference uses the same word as in Matt. 21 : 43, 'nation' (*ethnos*). Further, the previous verse to that we are considering (Matt. 21 : 42), indicates the same truth. Jesus connects the two verses by the word 'therefore' (for this reason). His meaning is plain. The Jews were going to have the kingdom of God taken from them, by reason of their rejection of the 'stone' (Christ). But that stone was going to be the corner-stone of a new kingdom, or nation, that God would form. The fulfilment of this is seen in the church : see Eph. 2 : 13-22. Historically, too, it can be proved, for, especially after the destruction of Jerusalem, with the break-up of the Jewish kingdom, the church became predominantly Gentile, both in membership, and characteristics.

Q. What is the meaning of the phrase 'replenish the earth' (Gen. 1 : 28)? Surely this is a foundation for the evolutionary theory?

A. The word translated 'replenish' in this passage, is the Hebrew word, *malah* (imperative mood). In the same form it is elsewhere translated by the words 'replenish' (Gen. 9 : 1) ; 'fill' (Gen. 1 : 22 ; 1 Kings 18 : 33) ; 'consecrate' (margin 'fill your hands' Ex. 32 : 29) ; 'gather' (Jer. 51 : 11). It is a word of somewhat wide application, but its primary meaning is 'to fill.' The Jews in translating this word into the Greek, when making the Septuagint version, also gave it this meaning by using the Greek word *pleroo*, 'to fill.' In the A.V., the word 'replenish' is used, because in Old English it had exactly the same meaning, namely 'to fill,' and not, as in modern English, 'to fill again.' The syllable 're' was not then a prefix as in modern grammar, but part of the body of the word itself. The rendering has also been retained in the R.V.

The reference to the rendering of the word in this way as being a foundation for the evolutionary theory is a little obscure. Surely it is just the reverse, for it plainly indicates that mankind has not evolved from the anthropoid ape, but is the result of the fact that God said to the originally created first man and woman 'Be fruitful and multiply' and fill the earth, that is, fill it with creatures after their kind.