

Directions for Use

Each of the volumes in this series, *The Exegetical Labors of the Reverend Matthew Poole* is actually composed of two separate works: *A Synopsis of Interpreters, Both Critical and Otherwise, of the Sacred Scriptures* (known by its Latin title, *Synopsis Criticorum*, the translated text of which is printed in this regular type) and *Annotations upon the Holy Bible* (the text of which is printed in **bold** type). In the *Synopsis*, written primarily for students, ministers, and scholars, Poole presents something of a verse-by-verse history of interpretation, setting forth the most important interpreters and interpretative positions. The *Annotations*, on the other hand, are written for the use of the common man, giving a summary of the most important interpretive issues and Poole's own, most mature (being written in the years immediately prior to his death), judgment. In these volumes, the *Annotations* have been interspliced into the translation of the *Synopsis*, creating an omnibus of Poole's exegetical efforts.

It may already be apparent from this brief description of these volumes that they are intended for study; they are certainly not a light read. So that every reader, from the unlearned to the scholar, might get the most profit from these volumes, these directions are proffered:

1. ***Read and study the prefatory material, especially the "Preface to the Synopsis: Genesis-Esther."***

In the "Preface to the *Synopsis: Genesis-Esther*," the reader is introduced to the interpreters, writing on these Books of the Bible, that, in Poole's judgment, are of the greatest significance. Whereas the *Synopsis* is primarily about the history of interpretation, an acquaintance with the interpreters is of the utmost importance. The translator has provided additional information about these men in the footnotes to aid the reader. Paul taught the Ephesian Christians that the ascended Lord Jesus provides teachers for the edification His Church in all ages;¹ this is a synopsis of their teaching and testimony, a thing of surpassing value.

2. ***Note that a brief summary of each book and an outline of each chapter has been provided.***²

This will help the reader get and keep the entire context in view as he studies particular verses.

3. ***Study the cross-references.***

¹ Ephesians 4:11-13.

² Poole composed the book outlines from Genesis to Isaiah, but the chapter outlines were not added until the third edition of the *Annotations*, 1696, by Samuel Clarke and Edward Veale. Samuel Clarke (1626-1701), one of the ejected ministers under the Act of Uniformity, was well-qualified for this editorial work, having composed his own *The Old and New Testament, with Annotations and Parallel Scriptures* (1690) and *A Survey of the Bible; or, an Analytical Account of the Holy Scriptures, Containing the Division of Every Book and Chapter, thereby Shewing the Frame and Contexture of the Whole* (1693). Edward Veale was one of the divines called upon to complete Poole's *Annotations*, writing the portions on Ephesians, James, 1 and 2 Peter, and Jude. He will be discussed at greater length in conjunction with those portions.

The Authorized Version of the text has been provided at the beginning of each verse. In the *Annotations*, Poole provided a great many cross-references in the printing of the verse itself.³ These should not be neglected; they are of great value in gaining an understanding of the verse being studied, and it will be found that the verse being studied has implications for the right interpretation of other texts.⁴ Furthermore, the reader will find the verses, referenced in the *Synopsis* portion for the illustration of grammatical principles, to be of great help and use. When the reason for the citation of a particular verse is not clear in English, the translator has provided annotations in the footnotes to aid understanding.

4. ***Begin the study of the commentary portion under each verse with the Annotations portion (printed in bold).***

Remember that the *Annotations* were written for the common man, and in them Poole summarizes and gives his most mature evaluation of the most important matters. Reading the *Annotations* portion will frequently shed much light upon the mass of raw exegetical material in the *Synopsis* portion.

5. ***Note that Poole often presents a wide variety of interpretive positions in a short space.***

In the *Synopsis* portion, contradictory positions can be presented without any transition. The interpreters who held a certain view are usually given in parentheses after the presentation of the interpretive position, and this is frequently all that the reader is given with respect to a transition from one position to another.

6. ***Be patient and persevere.***

Solomon the Wise teaches in the Proverbs that in some things knowledge and wisdom come only with effort,⁵ and penetrating beyond a superficial understanding of the Scriptures will require hard work; but let the Christian give himself to this labor in the assurance of faith, that Jesus Christ is speaking to him through the Word,⁶ and that in this study he will taste of the Lord that He is good.⁷

³ Samuel Clarke and Edward Veale appear to be responsible for supplemental cross-references, added to Poole's own. All of the cross-references have been provided in this text.

⁴ Westminster Confession of Faith 1:9: "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one) it must be search and known by other places that speak more clearly."

⁵ Proverbs 2:1-5.

⁶ 1 Peter 1:11.

⁷ 1 Peter 2:3.