

# Lesson Six: The Inductive Method

Induction is to reason by noting particular facts and instances and from them drawing general conclusions. That is how the inductive method operates. Developed mostly by Roger Bacon, this method is a leading or drawing off of a general fact from a number of instances, or summing up the results of observations and experiments.

## **Roger Bacon (1214-1294)**

Roger Bacon was an English monk and philosopher. He was born in Ilchester, Somersetshire. Educated at the University of Oxford and the University of Paris, he remained at the University of Paris as a teacher until about 1251. He then returned to England and entered a religious order of the Franciscans and settled at Oxford where he carried on active studies and did experimental research, mainly in alchemy, optics and astronomy.

He was critical of the methods of learning of the times and, at the request of Pope Clement IV, he wrote his "Opus Magnus" (Major Work) in which he represented the necessity of a reformation in the sciences through different methods of studying the languages and nature. His work was an encyclopedia of all sciences, embracing grammar and logic, mathematics, physics, experimental research and moral philosophy.

Because of his revolutionary ideas about the study of science, he was condemned by the Franciscans for his "heretical views." In 1278 the general of the Franciscan order, Jerome of Ascoli, later Pope Nicholas III, forbade the reading of Bacon's books and had him arrested. After ten years in prison, he returned to Oxford and wrote "A Compendium of the Study of Theology" (1292) shortly before his death.

## **The Inductive Method**

This method demands that all facts be reported. By reporting all facts and allowing them to speak for themselves, no error will be possible. No interpretation of any fact can be true which does not harmonize with all other known facts.

Such is the law of analogy which this method employs: everything must be found to agree. Two truths are never contradictory. When any fact has come to be known, and about it there can no longer be any doubt, whatever may be reported afterward which contradicts that fact, is rejected as untrue.

The Bible recognizes this method as correct. All the facts are reported, given by God, and from them general conclusions are to be reached. Such is the way Jesus proved to two men the truth about Himself. In Luke 24, they were discussing His death and how they were saddened by it for they had hoped that it was He who would redeem Israel. They further stated how they were distressed because they had heard from certain women who had gone to His tomb and seen a vision of angels who said He was alive but others who had gone to His tomb had not seen Him. In Luke 24:25-27, Jesus said, "'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory.' **And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.**" Notice what Jesus did. He introduced all the facts from the Scriptures about Himself so that those two men would understand the truth about Him. He used the inductive method to establish the truth.

## Questions for Review and Discussion

1. Who was Roger Bacon? What influence does he have on hermeneutics?
2. Define "induction."
3. Summarize the inductive method of interpretation.
4. From a positive perspective, why, in the study of any matter, is it important to first collect all the facts?
5. List some of the dangers of not considering all the facts in any matter.
6. What is the "law of analogy?"
7. Does the Bible recognize and support the correctness of the inductive method of interpretation? Explain your answer.
8. Using Scripture, illustrate the inductive method of interpretation.