

PREFACE.

THE first edition of this work was published in the autumn of 1883, and has received such cordial and continued welcome as to put beyond doubt that a treatise of its character is needed in our English theological literature. The general plan of the volume has been adapted to meet what appear to be the practical wants of most theological students. Specialists and experts in exegetical learning will push their way through all difficulties, and find delight in testing principles; but the ordinary student, if led at all into continued and successful searching of the Scriptures, must become interested in the practical work of exposition. The bare enunciation of principles, with brief references to texts in which they are exemplified, is too dry and taxing to the mind to develop a taste for exegetical study; it has a tendency rather to repel. Our plan is rather to familiarize the student with correct methods by means of continuous exercise in the actual work of exegesis. The statement of principles is introduced gradually, and abundantly illustrated and verified by a faithful application of them to such portions of the Holy Scriptures as are known to have peculiar difficulties, or to be of special interest and value. It is not expected that all our interpretations will command unqualified approval, but it is confidently believed that a selection of the more difficult Scriptures for examples of exposition will enhance the real value of the work, and save it from the danger, too often common in such treatises, of running into lifeless platitudes. With ample illustrations of this kind before him, the student comes by a natural inductive process to grasp hermeneutical principles, and learns by example and practice rather than by abstract precept.

The larger portion of the volume is devoted to Special Hermeneutics. This fact will, we believe, meet the approval of all biblical scholars. They will acknowledge the propriety of passing more rapidly over those general principles, on which there exists little or

no difference of opinion, and of allowing greater space for the treatment of parables, allegories, types, symbols, and apocalyptic prophecy. The necessity of sound principles is most deeply felt in the study of these enigmatical portions of the Bible. Our constant aim has been to abstain from all appearance of dogmatism, and to adhere strictly to the method of scientific and conscientious inquiry. If Special Hermeneutics serves any useful end, it must cultivate the habit of searching for what the Scripture has to say for itself, not of imposing upon its language the burden of whatever it is able to bear.

Considerable space has been given to the subject of prophetic symbolism. The apocalyptic books have ever been regarded as most difficult to explain, but not a few of the difficulties have grown out of the extravagant notion that we may expect to find in prophecy a detailed history of events from the advent of Christ to the end of time. We have tried to show that the biblical symbols and apocalypses are largely self-interpreting, and, if allowed to speak for themselves, are not more difficult of exposition than the parables of Jesus.

Profoundly grateful for the generous commendation of the former editions, and profiting by the friendly criticism of numerous reviews, the author has spared no pains to make this new edition more worthy of general favour. The revision has extended to nearly every page, and considerable portions have been rewritten. A number of chapters, not strictly belonging to Hermeneutics, have been omitted, and others have been condensed, so that the substance of the original work of 782 pages now appears in a more convenient, and, we trust, not less valuable, volume.

EVANSTON, *May* 15, 1890.

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AND

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INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY.

HERMENEUTICS is the science of interpretation. The word is usually applied to the explanation of written documents, and may therefore be more specifically defined as the science of interpreting an author's language.¹ This science assumes that there are divers modes of thought and ambiguities of expression among men, and, accordingly, it aims to remove the supposable differences between a writer and his readers, so that the meaning of the one may be truly and accurately apprehended by the others.

It is common to distinguish between General and Special Hermeneutics. General Hermeneutics is devoted to the general principles which are applicable to the interpretation of all languages and writing. It may appropriately take cognizance of the logical operations of the human mind, and the philosophy of human speech. Special Hermeneutics is devoted rather to the explanation of particular books and classes of writings. Thus, historical, poetical, philosophical, and prophetic writings differ from each other in numerous particulars, and each class requires for its proper exposition the application of principles and methods adapted to its own peculiar character and style. Special Hermeneutics, according to Cellérier, is a science practical and almost empirical, and searches after rules and solutions; while General Hermeneutics is methodical and philosophical, and searches for principles and methods.²

¹ The word *hermeneutics* is of Greek origin, from *ἑρμηνεύω*, to *interpret*, to *explain*: thence the adjective *ἡ ἑρμηνευτική* (sc. *τέχνη*), that is, the *hermeneutical art*, and thence our word *hermeneutics*, the science or art of interpretation. Closely kindred is also the name *Ἑρμῆς*, *Hermes*, or *Mercury*, who, bearing a golden rod of magic power, figures in Grecian mythology as the messenger of the gods, the tutelary deity of speech, of writing, of arts and sciences, and of all skill and accomplishments.

² *Manuel d'Herméneutique Biblique*, p. 5. Geneva, 1852.

Biblical or Sacred Hermeneutics is the science of interpreting the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. According to the order of books in the Christian Canon, we have, first, the five Books of Moses, commonly called the Pentateuch; next follow twelve Historical Books, recording the history of the Israelites from the death of Moses to the restoration from Babylonian exile, and covering a period of a thousand years. Then follow five Poetical Books—a drama, a psalter, two books of proverbial philosophy, and a song of love; and after these are seventeen Prophetical Books, among which are some of the most magnificent monuments of all literature. In the New Testament we have, first, the four Gospels, a record of the life and words of Jesus Christ; then the Acts of the Apostles, a history of the beginning of the Christian Church; then the thirteen Pauline Epistles, followed by the Epistle to the Hebrews and the seven General Epistles; and, finally, the Apocalypse of John.

Inasmuch as these two Testaments differ in form, language, and historical conditions, many writers have deemed it preferable to treat the hermeneutics of each Testament separately. And as the New Testament is the later and fuller revelation, its interpretation has received the fuller and more frequent attention. But it may be questioned whether such a separate treatment of the Old and New Testaments is the better course. It is of the first importance to observe that, from a Christian point of view, the Old Testament cannot be fully apprehended without the help of the New. The mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known unto men, was revealed unto the apostles and prophets of the New Testament (Eph. iii, 5), and that revelation sheds a flood of light upon numerous portions of the Hebrew Scriptures. On the other hand, it is equally true that a scientific interpretation of the New Testament is impossible without a thorough knowledge of the older Scriptures. The very language of the New Testament, though belonging to another family of human tongues, is notably Hebraic. The style, diction, and spirit of many parts of the Greek Testament cannot be properly appreciated without acquaintance with the style and spirit of the Hebrew prophets. The Old Testament also abounds in testimony of the Christ (Luke xxiv, 27, 44; John v, 39; Acts x, 43), the illustration and fulfillment of which can be seen only in the light of the Christian revelation. In short, the whole Bible is a divinely constructed unity, and there is danger that, in studying one part to the comparative neglect of the other, we may fall into one-sided and erroneous methods of exposition. The Holy Scrip-

Biblical or Sacred Hermeneutics.

Old and New Test. Hermeneutics should not be separated.

tures should be studied as a whole, for their several parts were given in manifold portions and modes (*πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως*, Heb. i, 1), and, taken all together, they constitute a remarkably self-interpreting volume.

Biblical Hermeneutics, having a specific field of its own, should be carefully distinguished from other branches of theological science with which it is often and quite naturally associated. It is to be distinguished from Biblical Introduction, Textual Criticism, and Exegesis. Biblical Introduction, or Isagogics, is devoted to the historico-critical examination of the different books of the Bible. It inquires after their age, authorship, genuineness, and canonical authority, tracing at the same time their origin, preservation, and integrity, and exhibiting their contents, relative rank, and general character and value. The scientific treatment of these several subjects is often called the "Higher Criticism." Textual Criticism has for its special object the ascertaining of the exact words of the original texts of the sacred books. Its method of procedure is to collate and compare ancient manuscripts, ancient versions, and ancient scripture quotations, and, by careful and discriminating judgment, sift conflicting testimony, weigh the evidences of all kinds, and thus endeavour to determine the true reading of every doubtful text. This science is often called the "Lower Criticism." Where such criticism ends, Hermeneutics properly begins, and aims to establish the principles, methods, and rules which are needful to unfold the sense of what is written. Its object is to elucidate whatever may be obscure or ill-defined, so that every reader may be able, by an intelligent process, to obtain the exact ideas intended by the author. Exegesis is the application of these principles and laws, the actual bringing out into formal statement, and by other terms, the meaning of the author's words. Exegesis is related to hermeneutics as preaching is to homiletics, or, in general, as practice is to theory. Exposition is another word often used synonymously with exegesis, and has essentially the same signification; and yet, perhaps, in common usage, exposition denotes a more extended development and illustration of the sense, dealing more largely with other scriptures by comparison and contrast. We observe, accordingly, that the writer on Biblical Introduction examines the historical foundations and canonical authority of the books of Scripture. The textual critic detects interpolations, emends false readings, and aims to give us the very words which the sacred writers used. The *exegete* takes up these words, and by means of the principles of hermeneutics, defines their meaning, elucidates the

Distinguished from Introduction, Criticism, and Exegesis.

Textual Criticism.

Exegesis and Exposition.

scope and plan of each writer, and brings forth the grammatico-historical sense of what each book contains. The expositor builds upon the labours both of critics and exegetes, and sets forth in fuller form, and by ample illustration, the ideas, doctrines, and moral lessons of the Scripture.¹

But while we are careful to distinguish hermeneutics from these kindred branches of exegetical theology, we should not fail to note that a science of interpretation must essentially depend on exegesis for the maintenance and illustration of its principles and rules. As the full grammar of a language establishes its principles by sufficient examples and by formal praxis, so a science of hermeneutics must needs verify and illustrate its principles by examples of their practical application. Its province is not merely to define principles and methods, but also to exemplify and illustrate them. Hermeneutics, therefore, is both a science and an art. As a science, it enunciates principles, investigates the laws of thought and language, and classifies its facts and results. As an art, it teaches what application these principles should have, and establishes their soundness by showing their practical value in the elucidation of the more difficult scriptures. The hermeneutical art thus cultivates and establishes a valid exegetical procedure.

The necessity of a science of interpretation is apparent from the diversities of mind and culture among men. Personal intercourse between individuals of the same nation and language is often difficult and embarrassing by reason of their different styles of thought and expression. Even the Apostle Peter found in Paul's epistles things which were difficult to understand (*δυσνόητα*, 2 Pet. iii, 16). The man of broad and liberal culture lives and moves in a different world from the unlettered peasant, so much so that sometimes the ordinary conversation of the one is scarcely intelligible to the other. Different schools of metaphysics and opposing systems of theology have often led their several advocates into strange misunderstandings. The speculative philosopher, who ponders long on abstract themes, and by deep study

¹Doedes thus discriminates between explaining and interpreting: "To explain, properly signifies the unfolding of what is contained in the words, and to interpret, the making clear of what is not clear by casting light on that which is obscure. Very often one interprets by means of explaining, namely, when, by unfolding the sense of the words, light is reflected on what is said or written; but it cannot be said that one explains by interpreting. While explaining generally is interpreting, interpreting, properly speaking, is not explaining. But we do not usually observe this distinction in making use of these terms, and may without harm use them promiscuously." *Manual of Hermeneutics*, p. 4.

constructs a doctrine or system clear to his own mind, may find it difficult to set forth his views to others so as to prevent all misconception. His whole subject matter lies beyond the range of common thought. The hearers or readers, in such a case, must, like the philosopher himself, dwell long upon the subject. They must have terms defined, and ideas illustrated, until, step by step, they come to imbibe the genius and spirit of the new philosophy. But especially great and manifold are the difficulties of understanding the writings of those who differ from us in language and nationality. The learned themselves become divided in their essays to decipher and interpret the records of the past. Volumes and libraries have been written to elucidate the obscurities of the Greek and Roman classics. The foremost scholars and linguists of the present generation are busied in the study and exposition of the sacred books of the Chinese, the Hindus, the Parsees, and the Egyptians, and, after all their learned labours, they disagree in the translation and solution of many a passage. How much more might we expect great differences of opinion in the interpretation of a book like the Bible, composed at sundry times and in many parts and modes, and ranging through many departments of literature! What obstacles might reasonably be expected in the interpretation of a record of divine revelation, in which heavenly thoughts, unknown to men before, were made to express themselves in the imperfect formulas of human speech! The most contradictory rules of interpretation have been propounded, and expositions have been made to suit the peculiar tastes and prejudices of writers or to maintain preconceived opinions, until all scientific method has been set at nought, and each interpreter became a law unto himself. Hence the necessity of well-defined and self-consistent principles of Scripture interpretation. Only as exegetes come to adopt common principles and methods of procedure, will the interpretation of the Bible attain the dignity and certainty of an established science.

The rank and importance of Biblical Hermeneutics among the various studies embraced in Theological Encyclopedia and Methodology is apparent from the fundamental relation which it sustains to them all. For the Scripture revelation is itself essentially the centre and substance of all theological science. It contains the clearest and fullest exhibition of the person and character of God, and of the spiritual needs and possibilities of man. A sound and trustworthy interpretation of the scripture records, therefore, is the root and basis of all revealed theology. Without it Systematic Theology, or Dogmatics, could not be legitimately constructed, and would, in fact, be essentially

Rank and importance of Hermeneutics in Theological Science.

impossible. For the doctrines of revelation can only be learned from a correct understanding of the oracles of God. Historical Theology, also, tracing as it does the thought and life of the Church, must needs take cognizance of the principles and methods of scripture interpretation which have so largely controlled in the development of that thought and life. The creeds of Christendom assume to rest upon the teachings of the inspired Scriptures. Apologetics, polemics, ethics, and all that is embraced in Practical Theology, are ever making appeal to the authoritative records of the Christian faith. The great work of the Christian ministry is to preach the word; and that most important labour cannot be effectually done without a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures and skill in the interpretation and application of the same. Personal piety and practical godliness are nourished by the study of this written word. The psalmist sings (Psa. cxix, 105, 111) :

A lamp to my foot is thy word,
 And a light to my pathway.
 I have taken possession of thy testimonies forever,
 For the joy of my heart are they.¹

The Apostle Paul admonished Timothy that the Holy Scriptures were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (2 Tim. iii, 15). And Jesus himself, interceding for his own chosen followers, prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth" (John xvii, 17). Accordingly, the Lord's ambassador must not adulterate (2 Cor. ii, 17), but rightly divide, the word of the truth (2 Tim. ii, 15). For if ever the divinely appointed ministry of reconciliation accomplish the perfecting of the saints, and the building up of the body of Christ, so as to bring all to the attainment of the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God (Eph. iv, 12, 13), it must be done by a correct interpretation and efficient use of the word of God. The interpretation and application of that word must rest upon a sound and self-evidencing science of hermeneutics.

¹ All scripture quotations in the present work have been made by translating directly from the Hebrew, Chaldee, and Greek originals. To have followed the Authorized Version would have necessitated a large amount of circumlocution. In many instances the citation of a text is designed to illustrate a process as well as a principle of hermeneutics. It is often desirable to bring out, either incidentally or prominently, some noticeable emphasis, and this can be done best by giving the exact order of the words of the original. The observance of such order in translation may sometimes violate the usage and idiom of the best English, but, in many cases, it yields the best possible translation.

CHAPTER II.

QUALIFICATIONS OF AN INTERPRETER.

IN order to be a capable¹ and correct interpreter of the Holy Scriptures, one needs a variety of qualifications, both natural and acquired. For though a large proportion of the sacred volume is sufficiently simple for the child to understand, and the common people and the unlearned may find on every page much that is profitable for instruction in righteousness, there is also much that requires, for its proper apprehension and exposition, the noblest powers of intellect and the most ample learning. The several qualifications of a competent interpreter may be classified as Intellectual, Educational, and Spiritual. The first are largely native to the soul; the second are acquired by study and research; the third may be regarded both as native and acquired.

INTELLECTUAL QUALIFICATIONS.

First of all, the interpreter of Scripture, and, indeed, of any other book, should have a sound, well-balanced mind. For Defective mental powers dis- dulness of apprehension, defective judgment, and an qualify. extravagant fancy will pervert one's reason, and lead to many vain and foolish notions. The faculties of the mind are capable of discipline, and may be trained to a very high degree of perfection; but some men inherit peculiar tendencies of intellect. Some are gifted with rare powers of imagination, but are utterly wanting in the critical faculty. A lifetime of discipline will scarcely restrain their exuberant fancy. Others are naturally given to form hasty judgments, and will rush to the wildest extremes. In others, peculiar tastes and passions warp the judgment, and some seem to be constitutionally destitute of common sense. Any and all such mental defects disqualify one for the interpretation of the word of God.

A ready perception is specially requisite in the interpreter. He must have the power to grasp the thought of his au- Quick and clear perception. thor, and take in at a glance its full force and bearing. With such ready perception there must be united a breadth of view and clearness of understanding which will be quick to catch, not only the import of words and phrases, but also the drift of the

¹ Comp. the import of *ικανοί, ικανότης, and ικάνωσεν* in 2 Cor. iii, 5, 6.

argument. Thus, for example, in attempting to explain the Epistle to the Galatians, a quick perception will note the apologetic tone of the first two chapters, the bold earnestness of Paul in asserting the divine authority of his apostleship, and the far-reaching consequences of his claim. It will also note how forcibly the personal incidents referred to in Paul's life and ministry enter into his argument. It will keenly appreciate the impassioned appeal to the "foolish Galatians" at the beginning of chapter third, and the natural transition from thence to the doctrine of Justification. The variety of argument and illustration in the third and fourth chapters, and the hortatory application and practical counsels of the two concluding chapters will also be clearly discerned; and then the unity, scope, and directness of the whole Epistle will lie pictured before the mind's eye as a perfect whole, to be appreciated more and more fully as additional attention and study are given to minutest details.

The great exegetes have been noted for acuteness of intellect, a Acuteness of intellect. critical sharpness to discern at once the connexion of thought, and the association of ideas. This qualification is of great importance to every interpreter. He must be quick to see what a passage does not teach, as well as to comprehend its real import. His critical acumen should be associated with a masterly power of analysis, in order that he may clearly discern all the parts and relations of a given whole. Bengel and De Wette, in their works on the New Testament, excel in this particular. They evince an intellectual sagacity, which is to be regarded as a special gift, an inborn endowment, rather than a result of scientific culture.

The strong intellect will not be destitute of imaginative power. Imagination needed, but must be controlled. Many things in narrative description must be left to be supplied, and many of the finest passages of Holy Writ cannot be appreciated by an unimagi-native mind. The true interpreter must often transport himself into the past, and picture in his soul the scenes of ancient time. He must have an intuition of nature and of human life by which to put himself in the place of the biblical writers and see and feel as they did. But it has usually happened that men of powerful imagination have been unsafe expositors. An exuberant fancy is apt to run away with the judgment, and introduce conjecture and speculation in place of valid exegesis. The chastened and disciplined imagination will associate with itself the power of conception and of abstract thought, and be able to construct, if called for, working hypotheses to be used in illustration or in argument. Sometimes it may be expedient to form a concept, or adopt a theory, merely for the purpose

of pursuing some special line of discussion; and every expositor should be competent for this when needed.

But, above all things, an interpreter of Scripture needs a sound and sober judgment. His mind must be competent to analyze, examine, and compare. He must not allow himself to be influenced by hidden meanings, and spiritualizing processes, and plausible conjectures. He must weigh reasons for and against a given interpretation; he must judge whether his principles are tenable and self-consistent; he must often balance probabilities, and reach conclusions with the greatest caution. Such a discriminating judgment may be trained and strengthened, and no pains should be spared to render it a safe and reliable habit of the mind.

Correctness and delicacy of taste will be the result of a discriminating judgment. The interpreter of the inspired volume will find the need of this qualification in discerning the manifold beauties and excellences scattered in rich profusion through its pages. But his taste, as well as his judgment, must be trained to discern between the true and the false ideals. Many a modern whim of shallow refinement is offended with the straightforward honesty and simplicity of the ancient world. Prurient sensitiveness often blushes before expressions in the Scriptures which are as far as possible removed from impurity. Correct taste in such cases will pronounce according to the real spirit of the writer and his age.

The use of reason in the interpretation of Scripture is everywhere to be assumed. The Bible comes to us in the forms of human language, and appeals to our reason and judgment; it invites investigation, and condemns a blind credulity. It is to be interpreted as we interpret any other volume, by a rigid application of the same laws of language, and the same grammatical analysis. Even in passages which may be said to lie beyond the province of reason, in the realm of supernatural revelation, it is still competent for the rational judgment to say whether, indeed, the revelation be supernatural. In matters beyond its range of vision, reason may, by valid argument, explain its own incompetency, and by analogy and manifold suggestion show that there are many things beyond its province which are nevertheless true and righteous altogether, and to be accepted without dispute. Reason itself may thus become efficient in strengthening faith in the unseen and eternal.

But it behooves the expounder of God's word to see that all his principles and processes of reasoning are sound and self-consistent.

He must not commit himself to false premises; he must abstain from confusing dilemmas; he must especially refrain from rushing to unwarranted conclusions. Nor must he ever take for granted things which are doubtful, or open to serious question. All such logical fallacies will necessarily vitiate his expositions, and make him a dangerous guide. The right use of reason in biblical exposition is seen in the cautious procedure, the sound principles adopted, the valid and conclusive argumentation, the sober sense displayed, and the honest integrity and self-consistency everywhere maintained. Such exercise of reason will always commend itself to the godly conscience and the pure heart.

In addition to the above-mentioned qualifications, the interpreter should be "apt to teach" (*διδασκτικός*, 2 Tim. ii, 24).
Apt to teach. He must not only be able to understand the Scriptures, but also to set forth in clear and lively form to others what he himself comprehends. Without such aptness in teaching, all his other gifts and qualities will avail little or nothing. Accordingly, the interpreter should cultivate a clear and simple style, and study to bring out the truth and force of the inspired oracles so that others will readily understand.

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS.

The professional interpreter of Scripture needs more than a well-balanced mind, discreet sense, and acuteness of intellect. He needs stores of information in the broad and varied fields of history, science, and philosophy. By many liberal studies will his faculties become disciplined and strong for practical use; and extensive and accurate knowledge will furnish and fit him to be the teacher of others. The biblical interpreter should be minutely acquainted with
Geography. the geography of Palestine and the adjacent regions. In order to be properly versed in this, he will need to understand the physical character of the world outside of Bible lands. For, though the sacred writers may have known nothing of countries foreign to Asia, Africa, and Europe, the modern student will find an advantage in having information, as full as possible, of the entire surface of the globe. With such geographical knowledge
History. he should also unite a familiar acquaintance with universal history. The records of many peoples, both ancient and modern, will often be of value in testing the accuracy of the sacred writers, and illustrating their excellence and worth. What a vast amount of light have ancient authors, and the deciphered inscriptions of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia, shed upon the narratives of the Bible!