

THE
BIBLE AND ITS LITERATURE;
AN
INAUGURAL ADDRESS,

DELIVERED IN THE MERCER-STREET CHURCH, IN THE CITY
OF NEW-YORK, JANUARY 20, 1841.

BY EDWARD ROBINSON, D. D.
Professor of Biblical Literature in the Union Theological Seminary of New-York.

WITH THE
C H A R G E

BY THE REV. WILLIAM PATTON, D. D.
Pastor of the Spring-street Church, New-York.

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C H A R G E .

MY DEAR BROTHER :—

Before proceeding directly to the charge, which, in the name of the Directors of "the Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York," I am appointed to deliver, permit me thus publicly to express to you their congratulations upon your safe return from your long and perilous wanderings. We cordially unite with you in the return of thanks to God for his kind protection, extended to you, both by sea and by land, both in the wilderness and on the fertile plain. We rejoice in his merciful oversight and care of you, and that with invigorated health, and with increased resources for usefulness, you are again permitted to resume your important and arduous duties in connexion with this Seminary.

Having, this evening, formally and publicly given your assent to the constitutional questions, required at the inauguration of every teacher in this Seminary, I proceed, at the bidding of the Directors, to place before your mind a few thoughts and suggestions. I do not, however, flatter myself that I shall present to you any thing new in the field of your appropriate responsibilities. But if, by simply recalling some of your own previous convictions, and holding them for a moment before your mind, they may become more vivid, this service will not be without its happy results.

You are placed, by the Great Head of the Church, in connexion with this Seminary, for the sole purpose of *training up his ministers*. There is no work, which for importance can be compared with this. If you should be unfaithful to the trust committed to you, no mind can compute the pernicious conse-

quences which must perpetually flow out upon the church of God—and if, by the grace of God, you are found faithful, imagination cannot conceive of the immensity of the blessed influence you will exert in all succeeding time. You stand at one of the fountain-heads, and as its waters are pure or turbid, so will be the streams which shall constantly issue from it.

It will be a question of the first importance with you, **WHAT KIND OF MINISTERS ARE NOW DEMANDED FOR THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AND THE REDEMPTION OF THE WORLD?** The settling of this question definitely in your mind is essential, before you can address yourself to your work. There are but two qualifications to which I shall now call your notice.

I. A ministry characterized by eminent piety.

All are ready to place piety as the essential thing in a minister of Jesus Christ; but the day in which we live, and the labours to which ministers are now called, demand a piety greatly above the ordinary standard. We need, and must have men of apostolic devotion—men as really full of faith and of the Holy Ghost as were those first commissioned by our Lord—men as ready to enter upon the great work of the world's redemption, with the feeling, that it must be accomplished before they die, as were the apostles. It is not enough to have a race of ministers who shall hold the church up to its present low standard of piety, and who shall, after a life of labour, leave it just where they found it—but we need and must have a ministry that shall, by the blessing of God upon its indefatigable toils, arouse the churches from their slumbers—quicken them to new activity—lead them forth to enlarged and self-denying exertions—men, who shall pervade the churches with the conviction, that God devolves upon them, in this generation, to secure the salvation of the whole world;—requires of them, without delay, to use their property, their time, their influence and their talents for this purpose;—requires of them to give up their sons and educate them for this work;—men, who shall themselves manifest so much of the spirit of Christ, that their influence, in the pulpit and in every circle in which they move, shall

powerfully impel others to acts of self-denial and holy devotion to the interests of the Redeemer. But to secure such blessed results, how elevated and glowing must be the piety of the ministry! They who preach Christ must be themselves deeply imbued with the spirit of Christ—men of unwavering faith and of uncompromising fidelity;—men of great boldness and of untiring devotion;—men ready to quit any station, no matter how honourable or lucrative, and go at once to the destitute of our own land or to the heathen, if the interests of the Redeemer's cause demands it. Says an eloquent writer, whose voice is often heard in this pulpit, "Few such men are now in the field. We have intelligent men, and pious men, and laborious men, but the work to be done demands men filled with all the fulness of God: men like Paul, and Brainerd, not needing (from the abundance of the divine communications to their souls) to consult with flesh and blood; nor to depend upon the sympathies of their brethren; but ready always to go, solitary, if needs be, into any desert part of the earth, trusting for support on him who feedeth the young ravens when they cry." It must be your care, by the blessing of God, to raise up such men—that they may be placed in all our pulpits, as orbs of glory—that they may spread themselves among all the heathen, and be unto them as the morning star, the certain precursor of the rising day. I charge you then, my brother, that you give yourself to the education of the heart—to the elevation of the piety of those who may come under your instruction. Our theological seminaries should be pre-eminently nurseries of holiness—places where the young men will rapidly grow in grace and form their character for manly piety, and be eminently fitted to advance the churches in godliness, and to mould the heathen world to the service of God. I would say, then, with deep and solemn emphasis,
TRAIN UP AN EMINENTLY HOLY MINISTRY.

II. *A ministry thoroughly educated and thoroughly Biblical.*

Your extended acquaintance with men, both in Europe and America, has I doubt not, strengthened your conviction that none other than a thoroughly educated ministry can exert much

influence upon the public mind. This conviction, I rejoice to say, is becoming very general ; even those denominations, who a few years since gloried in the ignorance of their ministers, are now making the most strenuous exertions to educate all their preachers. The indomitable enterprise and growing intelligence of the population of the United States demand, for their public religious leaders, men whose minds have been thoroughly disciplined and richly stored with knowledge. It is, if possible, more important, that the men who go forth to the heathen nations, should be thoroughly disciplined and trained ; since upon them devolves the difficult service of moulding the elements of society, of instilling into dark and depraved minds the very first conception of the true God, and of transmitting through a new language, the lively oracles of Heaven.

There is one point in this training upon which I would linger for a moment, viz. *that it be thoroughly Biblical*. And I the rather dwell a little on this topic, as it more naturally falls in with the department to which you are devoted. I would say, let it be *Biblical* rather than *Theological*. Not that I would, for a moment, undervalue the importance of a systematic arrangement of the truth as taught in the Scriptures, and of the well ordering of the arguments by which the doctrines are enforced or defended : but still it is of the highest importance that ministers should be, in the legitimate use of the words, **MEN OF ONE BOOK : EMINENTLY BIBLICAL**, in sentiment, in spirit, in courage, in self-denial ;—that they should be so imbued with the Bible, so thoroughly saturated with its spirit and teachings, that its imagery shall fill their imaginations—its promises kindle and animate their hopes—its commands rouse and brace their energies—and its spirit sweeten and embolden all their labours. While I would not undervalue the responsibilities which devolve upon your respected and gifted associates in this institution, (men in whom the church may safely repose implicit confidence, and men who, in their stations, are rendering the highest service to the church of God,) still, I am constrained to feel, that you occupy emphatically the foundation place.—

And if you are found faithful, you must, in a great degree, control the mind—the thinking of the young men. You handle the Word of God, irrespective of all systems, and untrammelled by all philosophy. It is yours to lead the young men to the original fountain from whence all the waters do flow, and to teach them to drink at the fountain head. Revealed truth comes to us in a volume consisting of a number of ancient books, written during a long series of years, and all written in languages which have for centuries ceased to be spoken. It is yours, not only to make your pupils familiar with those languages—to show them the claims which these books have to be inspired ; but also carefully and critically to examine, in the originals, the meaning of every part and particle of their contents. You are to place the young men at home in all the departments of *Exegetical Theology*. From you, they are to learn those laws of interpretation by which they will be safely conducted in their future investigations of the Bible, so that they may elicit the true meaning of the Word of God. From you they will learn how to subordinate and render auxiliary all other knowledge for the discovery and illustration of the truth. For so central and supreme is revealed truth—so vast the compass of its designs, and so multiplied its combinations and relations, that it includes and absorbs the whole circle of human science. It is impossible to name a branch of knowledge which may not be made subsidiary to its interests. From you they will learn, that the more ample their intellectual stores, the better will they be prepared to appreciate and enforce the wonderful teachings of the Holy Ghost. From you they will learn how to place the Bible as the great central magnet, which shall attract and hold tributary to it all other knowledge. When, by your faithful labours, they are rendered familiar with *Biblical Philology*—when they are thoroughly instructed into the principles of *Biblical Interpretation*—when they have become expert in *Biblical Exegesis* and are manly in *Biblical Criticism*, then will they be prepared with profit to enter upon the study of Systematic Theology. Firm in their confidence in the Bible,

they will try the doctrine—they will prove all things and hold fast that which is good. It is yours, my brother, to hold the empire of mind, in respect to the truth of God, in this institution. Therefore, I charge you—solemnly charge you—let the training be eminently Biblical. As the coin tells of the mint from which it received its impress, so let all who pass away from this Seminary bear the superscription of the King of Kings.

In view of these two positions, upon which I have ventured a few remarks, allow me to suggest several items for your particular attention.

I. *Set your standard high.*

This we have the fullest confidence you will do. As the design of this institution is to prepare young men for the loftiest and most responsible office out of heaven, it is indispensable that the standard which you set up be the highest attainable. Instead of inquiring how low the standard may be brought, without bringing into disgrace the ministerial rank, it should be your constant aim to advance the requisitions, that each successive class may be the more thoroughly furnished for the great work of the ministry. As your department will occupy a large portion of the first year, it will depend very much upon you whether insufficient men enter the Seminary, and proceed through its classes. Standing as you do at the portal, if you are firm, men of inferior talents and small attainments cannot enter, or if they enter, they cannot advance. I know that this course may possibly reduce the number of students. But numbers are not the glory or the strength of the Seminary. The indolent, the men of feeble talent, will turn away, and seek a resting-place in some other institution. But the men of vigorous mind and thorough attainments, the men on whom, under God, the hopes of the churches and the world rest—the men who will stand erect, and discharge with fidelity the high duties of the minister of Jesus Christ, will love to gather around you, and in all after life will thank God for your firmness in keeping the standard high. In maintaining this position, you will not stand alone.

Your associates are of the same mind and of the same heart. Keep, then, the standard high.

II. *Be careful what you teach.*

It is a truth, which your own experience must have amply corroborated, that most men are born to think other men's thoughts. It is only occasionally that you find a penetrating, independent mind—a mind not satisfied with the dictation of the professor or the authority of his station—a mind that must have the evidence by which his positions are to be sustained. Were all young men of this class, perhaps there would be less danger of communicating error. But as the great mass of mind is comparatively indolent, and disposed to be the passive recipient of the impressions which others may make upon it, it becomes a matter of the highest moment what you teach—not only what you actually communicate, whether of good or evil, but what you *fail* to teach, which might exert a happy influence. Standing, as you do, with the sacred Scriptures as the book upon which you are to employ all the energies which God has given you, should you teach error, you will teach it to unsuspecting minds, who will again teach it to others less suspicious. This would be corrupting the very fountain at which the confiding and unwary must drink. Your personal acquaintance with men of eminent talent and extensive philological learning, on the continent of Europe, will impress upon your mind the importance of carefully considering what you teach. You have seen the corrupting influence of their departure from the truth. The power of their talents, the immense influence of their learning and station, has banished from the churches the spirit of piety, and left them in the cold embraces of spiritual death. A slight departure from the truth in settling the principles of interpretation, may lead the students off from all evangelical religion. You cannot speak to your class without leaving impressions which will never be effaced—impressions which will be embodied in the practical thinking and working of these men all through their ministerial life. Do I not say well to you, my brother, when I say, Be careful what you teach ?

III. *Give yourself wholly to your work.*

To you are committed responsibilities under which Gabriel might tremble. They are such as will demand, and must have, your entire self—your undivided—your concentrated powers. Nothing less than this can meet your own estimate of the greatness of your work, and nothing less than this will our blessed Lord consent to receive. It hath pleased him who hath separated you from your mother's womb, by a careful and varied training, specially to qualify you for the station you now occupy. By the arrangements of his providence he has placed you in this station, and now the voice of his love to you is, Give yourself wholly to it. Fix your eye and your heart upon your class, and as you love Jesus Christ, subordinate, and make every thing you do tributary to their good. Read every book for them—lay every plan for them—treasure up knowledge for them. Have no individual interest superior to the interest of your class. Let it appear that you are wholly—with a full and determined heart—in the business. Thus will your profiting appear unto all—thus will you kindle a holy enthusiasm in the breasts of your students—thus will you make them a blessing to the world, your own career bright and happy, and your memory blessed forever.

IV. *Cultivate an elevated piety.*

In uttering this sentiment, I am but transcribing and giving publicity to the feelings of your own heart. Your past experience in the matter of instruction, has already taught you the value of this part of my charge. You know, my dear brother, that if you would train up an eminently holy ministry, you must yourself go high up, and live very near the throne. If you would wean them from base and worldly influences, you must show them how sweet and ennobling are the influences of holy converse with God. If you would train them up to works of self-denial and noble daring for the Lord, you must exhibit a disinterestedness that shall charm them to follow. If you would have them men of faith, to go forth in simple reliance upon God's pledge, you must show them how to live the life of faith.

If you would have them men of prayer—mighty wrestlers with the angel of the covenant—you must show them that you have obtained all your power upon your knees, pleading with God, and that the throne of grace is where you love to linger.

“ And as the bird each fond endearment tries,
 To tempt her new fledg'd offspring to the skies;
 Employ each art; reprove each dull delay;
 Allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way.”

O how much you will need eminent piety that you may, in simplicity, and godly sincerity, interpret the Word of the Lord. Where, O where, shall an erring mortal ascertain the right interpretation of divine truth, except in intimate communion with that Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration it was at first given? Our confidence that you will faithfully discharge the duties of your station, lies not in the fact that you are a man of talents, or that you are a man of extensive learning, but simply that you are a man of God, and taught by his blessed Spirit.

Let me charge you, then, to be eminently holy. Take every recitation directly from the throne to your class, and teach them as you are taught of God.

The position which you occupy is one of measureless solemnity and importance. You are to TEACH THE TEACHERS OF mankind. The most creative imagination cannot paint a scene more solemn, than that in which you are now the living actor. Look beyond your classes, and see the assembled thousands who receive their ministrations—beyond these, again, behold the myriads whom they will influence, generation after generation, to the end of time—and still, above and beyond all these, the throne of judgment, and Him who sits upon it waiting to determine the character of each, and the results of the whole—and immeasurably farther still, those same results diffusing themselves through heaven and hell, and demanding infinity and eternity for their full development. Look again, and recognise the lines of relationship drawn from yourself, to each and all of this immense multitude.

Nothing but the grace of God, then, is sufficient to sustain,

direct, and cheer you, in the discharge of your momentous duties. This grace, this rich and abundant grace, is freely promised to you. I charge you then, to cultivate an elevated piety—to aim at eminent holiness. Your usefulness in the employment of the talents and endowments with which God has blessed you, will be in direct proportion to the piety of your heart, and of the singleness of your devotion to the object of your calling.

While I thus recall to your attention some of the important and arduous duties of your station, and some of the solemn consequences which must be the inevitable results, it is not to burden your mind, or thrust you out to sustain or sink under them; but, that we may also quicken our own sympathies, and be led to remember you when at the mercy-seat. The Directors of this Seminary will leave neither you nor your associates, alone in your struggles. They will rally round you, and cheer you on by their prayers, their efforts, and their contributions.

It is true God has tried and chastened this institution, as he is wont to chasten and try those whom he loves; but he has never forsaken it. The night of our trial has been dark, very dark; but it is far spent, and the day is at hand. A brighter morning is rising upon us, when, through the liberality of his own children, God will free us from every pecuniary embarrassment, and place this Seminary upon a foundation which shall be both permanent and ample.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IN giving the following Address to the public, through the press, I must request the reader to bear in mind, that it was prepared solely for a popular audience, and that the occasion permitted only a very general outline of the great subject under review. Hence, some of the topics could be little more than merely entered upon; and one especially, which in itself perhaps is not less extensive than any other, the History of Interpretation, could only be named.

E. R.

A D D R E S S .

IN the good providence of God, I have now been called to take and record the vows, which connect me more intimately with the Union Theological Seminary of New-York. On this occasion, to me so deeply interesting and solemn, I would, first of all, offer heartfelt thanks to God, that he has preserved my life for so long a period in foreign lands; and that after permitting my feet to "stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem," and to wander over the mountains and plains and among the valleys of the Holy Land, he hath now brought me back in peace and safety, to enter upon my labours in this hallowed field. And next, with a feeling not less deep, I would desire to cast myself upon the Christian sympathies of this audience, and of the friends of the Institution in general; beseeching them, that while their prayers ascend to heaven for the prosperity of the Seminary, they would likewise bear upon their hearts, before the throne of grace, its officers and teachers; invoking upon them from on high that wisdom which is profitable to instruct and to direct, and which may enable them to administer, in the best manner, the high and responsible trust committed to their charge, for the glory of God, and the great interests of his church on earth.

The department over which I am thus called to preside, is that of Biblical Literature; and perhaps I cannot better fulfil the duty enjoined upon me at the present time, than by endeavouring to lay before this respected audience an outline of the nature, the extent, and the importance, of the studies embraced under this general appellation. If in this way I can, with God's blessing, bring home to the minds of the Students, the Directors, and the

Patrons of the Seminary, more distinct and impressive views of the nature of the whole subject, and of the duties of us all in relation to it, I would fain hope that the influence of this hour may not pass away unfelt; but may be hereafter manifested in a larger zeal and more entire devotedness, on the part both of those who enjoy the privileges of the Institution, and of those who sustain towards it the relation of Founders and Benefactors.

The term *Biblical Literature* in its proper acceptation, and as here employed, embraces all those branches of learning, which bear upon the study, the illustration, and the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. The object of the department is to train up able and faithful interpreters of the Word of God. And as the Word of God is the corner-stone of all Christian Theology, so the study and interpretation of that Holy Word, must of right be regarded as the first and fundamental branch of all theological education.

Upon this foundation, Scientific Theology next rears her superstructure of doctrines, and points out their relations and adaptedness to the elements of the human mind and character; and then Practical Theology comes in to show, how all these truths and doctrines may be brought home with the greatest power to the heart and conscience of mankind. These are the three great departments of Christian science,—Exegetical, Doctrinal, and Practical. But as all these, again, derive life and vigour from the light of experience, reflected from the pages of history as it recounts the dealings of God with his people in every age, and shows how the truths of the Gospel have been promulgated and received; and the doctrines of the church proposed, adopted, modified, or rejected; so the History of the Church has naturally come to occupy a place as the fourth branch of theological science, not less important and essential than the other three, to every complete system of theological instruction. Such, in fact, is the system upon which all Protestant Schools of Theology in our own or other lands, have usually been founded: first, the study and observation of the Scriptures; next, the scientific arrangement and proof of the

doctrines thence derived ; and afterwards, the practice and application of the science with its general history. The time has gone by in our country, theoretically at least, when this order was reversed ; when the Bible was appealed to merely to supply an illustration for the preacher, or to furnish proof-texts for a system of doctrines already drawn out from the storehouse of human reason.

It has ever been the glory of the Protestant Faith, that it has placed the Scriptures where they ought to be, above every human name, above every human authority. **THE BIBLE IS THE ONLY AND SUFFICIENT RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE.** Such is the fundamental maxim upon which Protestantism has ever rested ; and will rest, so long as the truth of God is duly honoured. In this maxim we have the very germ and essence of the glorious Reformation, whose seed was sown by Wickliffe, in the fourteenth century ; its rising shoots nourished by the blood of Huss and Jerome of Prague in the fifteenth ; and its growth brought to maturity and its fruit ripened in the sixteenth, under the vigorous training of Luther and Melancthon. What was it that first led Wickliffe to question the dogmas of the Romish church ? The study of the Bible. What led Huss and Jerome of Prague to cast off the authority of Rome in matters of faith, and press forward in the path which conducted only to martyrdom ? It was the Bible. What gave to Luther his chief power, and enabled him to establish the triumphs of the Reformation on a sure and permanent basis ? It was his version of the Bible, which brought divine truth into immediate contact with the mass of mind among the common people. It was no longer a human interpreter, standing between God and the people to tell them what the Lord had said ; but it was God himself speaking to the people themselves, and bringing his own truth directly home to their hearts. It was good seed sown in good ground ; it sprung up and bore good fruit ; and the spirit of the Reformation, which before had been smouldering for centuries, with only occasional flashes of light, now burst forth and shone with a steady and unquenchable splendour. Where the Scriptures

were translated and venerated as the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice, there the Reformation was established; and the limits within which this veneration of the Bible prevailed, are to this day the boundaries of Protestantism.

The maxim which we are considering, has usually been received as a self-evident truth throughout the Protestant world. Fifteen years ago, there probably could hardly have been found an individual bearing the Protestant name, who would have thought of calling it in question. But at the present day, a tendency has arisen in a portion of the Protestant community, directed primarily against certain levelling efforts to break down the external power and dignity of the church;—a tendency which ascribes to a portion of that church a supremacy, which she herself has never heretofore claimed, and exalts her to the dignity of the church primitive and apostolic, having authority over the faith and consciences not only of her own members, but virtually of all Christendom. It results as a main principle directly from this tendency, and we now hear the doctrine warily advanced, that the Bible must be interpreted by the church; or, in other words, that the authority of the church is above that of the Bible. Thus, so far as these views shall become current, there is danger, that the separating wall may again be built up between the truth of God and the mass of mankind; that the gigantic efforts of the present time to disseminate the Bible throughout all lands, shall go for nought; and that a portion of the Protestant church, verging in self-defence to an unhappy extreme, may strive to overthrow the fundamental and essential principle, on which she has hitherto reposed, as on an immovable basis.

But why should Protestants thus cast away the very foundation of their liberty in Christ? Why build up again a separating wall, to divide them from the truth and love of God? The Protestant maxim has in all ages been the watchword of Christian liberty; and the abandonment of it, the signal of spiritual thralldom and darkness. The manifestation of this principle in the Reformation, was but a return to it after a long

night of oblivion; it had already shone forth with equal power and splendour, in the still greater renovation of God's church under the ministry of the Redeemer himself.

When Christ appeared on earth, "the Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' seat,"* and had enveloped and obscured the light of divine truth in the Old Testament by their traditions. Theirs was then the authority of the church; they had made themselves the interpreters of Scripture to the people; and on their dictum hung the significancy of the law and of the prophets. Against this assumption of authority, Jesus set his face at once and for ever. In one of the earliest of his public discourses, the Sermon on the Mount, he declares to the assembled multitude by several examples: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time," that ye should do so and so; "but I say unto you," that this authority is nought.† On another occasion he exclaims: "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition;" and then he proceeds to inveigh against them in the language of Isaiah: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."‡ In like manner the great apostle of the Gentiles sets at nought the authority of Jewish tradition: "Why then," he exclaims to the Colossians, "as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, after the commandments and doctrines of men?"§ And again, in a strain of strong invective against "vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision," he directs Titus to "rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth."||

Nor were all these declarations merely negative; serving only to contradict the authority of the Scribes and Pharisees

* Matt. xxiii. 2.

† Matt. v. 21, seq.

‡ Matt. xv. 6—9. Comp. Mark vii. 6—13.

§ Col., ii. 20—22.

|| Tit. i. 10—14.

and their traditions. It was not the object of the Saviour and his apostles to overthrow one mass of error in order to set up another in its place. They never claimed themselves to be interpreters of the Word of God to others. That Holy Word was free to all; it was known and read of all men; and to it Christ and his apostles ever appealed, against the objections of the Jews, as the supreme authority, before which all human cavils must be dumb. Yea, even the opponents themselves were to be the interpreters and judges. "Search the Scriptures," says our Lord, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me."* The apostles, too, in their preaching, appealed always to the Scriptures, enforcing the study of them upon their hearers; and it is recorded as a trait of nobleness in the Bereans, to whom Paul and Silas preached the gospel, "that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so."† They went not to the Scribes and Pharisees, as the authoritative expounders of the Scriptures; but searched for themselves, in the light of God's truth and with the aid of his Spirit, which is ever vouchsafed to those who seek aright. The same great principle is inculcated by Paul, when in addressing Timothy, he reminds him, "that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus;" and then proceeds to enforce the thought more generally and strongly: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."‡ This, according to the apostle, is the fruit of the Scriptures to those who search them for themselves; and thus become rooted and grounded in the Christian faith. He says not one word of their being interpreted by, or according to, the authority of the church.

Indeed, the only occasion on record, in which the apostolic

* John v. 39. † Acts xvii. 11. ‡ 2 Tim. iii. 15—17.

church, as such, exercised an authority in any way paramount to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, was in the final decision of the great question relative to the binding power of the Jewish ceremonial law upon Gentile converts. Many of the Jewish Christians still venerated their ritual, and believed that other converts should be subject to its ordinances. This tendency Paul laboured long and vehemently to counteract, as contrary to the spirit of the Gospel; and at length the authority of the assembled church and elders at Jerusalem was called in, to determine between the opposing views. This they did; not of themselves, but as the ambassadors and representatives of Christ, expressly acting by inspiration from on high: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things."* Thus was abrogated in form the Jewish ceremonial law; not by the church acting on its own authority, but from the authority of Christ himself. Their decree was neither an interpretation of Scripture, nor a tradition claiming to be of equal weight with Scripture; but it was a part and parcel of Scripture itself, resting upon the same divine authority and sanction, and promulgated under the direct influence of the same Holy Spirit.

The main argument of the church in every age, in favour of its assumed authority, has been the fear lest "the unlearned and unstable should wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction." Such was already the complaint of Peter in respect to the epistles of Paul and other Scriptures; yet he suggests no interposition of ecclesiastical authority to prevent such a result. He merely exhorts those whom he was addressing, to greater caution not to fall from their own steadfastness, seeing they were thus forewarned.† And why should more than this be necessary? Because a few of the "unlearned and unstable" abuse their liberty, shall that liberty be wholly taken away from the steadfast and the intelligent? Far better were it for the church, for her ministers and her members, to instruct and enlighten

* Acts xv. 28. See the whole chapter. † 2 Pet. iii. 15—17.

these "unlearned and unstable," and so bring them willingly to the truth; and not at once to shut them up in the prison-house of human authority.

Let me not be misunderstood. I am not calling in question the propriety, nor even the necessity of creeds and confessions. I hold that every religious community has a right to prescribe the system of doctrines, conscientiously drawn from the Bible, which shall be the bond of its existence and the condition of membership. It follows as a matter of course, that when a member disregards, or acts contrary to, the profession he has made, such a community has the right to call him to an account, and even to exclude him from its pale. But it does not follow, nor can it ever be justified, that where there is merely a conscientious difference of opinion in respect to Scriptural doctrine, denunciation and persecution should be let loose upon their prey, or an individual be injured in his good name, or deprived of civil or social rights and privileges. This can never be otherwise than wrong in itself; directly opposed to the great and fundamental principle of Protestantism; and contrary to the whole spirit and tenor of the Gospel of Christ.

Having thus brought out to view the character and foundations of the great Protestant principle relative to the Bible, let us now trace it as applied to theological education. It follows from it, as I have already had occasion to remark, that the Bible must be the basis of all Christian theology. Our present inquiry, therefore, will have for its object the various subsidiary branches of study, which are essential for every one, who would aspire to the character of an able and thoroughly furnished interpreter of the Holy Scriptures. Let it be borne in mind that only of such am I here speaking;—of interpreters who may understand and explain the Word of God, not merely in things pertaining to our duties and destiny as immortal and accountable beings; for on these points the Bible is so plain, that he who runs may read, and even in the most imperfect translation presents enough of divine truth to make all men wise unto salvation. But I speak of interpreters who may

likewise enter into the full spirit of the Bible in all its other parts ; in its bearings upon the history and antiquities, not only of the Jews, but of the whole human race ; who may be able to clear up difficulties, illustrate what may seem obscure, and make the Scriptures in some degree as plain and simple to mankind now, as they were to the people to whom they were first addressed.

In this last remark lies the main clue, which is to guide all the efforts of the interpreter. The revelation of God's truth was made originally to the Jews, a people peculiar in their language, their modes of life, their laws, their manners and customs, their habits of thought and feeling. Perhaps in all the civilized world it would be difficult to find a nation, presenting in all these particulars a stronger contrast with ourselves. Yet to them the Scriptures were addressed, in their own tongue, and with a perfect adaptation to their character and circumstances. God addressed himself to them, intending to be understood ; and he spoke in such a way, that he was understood. He spoke to Jews in the language and manner of the Jews ; and as one Jew understood another Jew, so they all understood that which God uttered to them in the same tongue. Now if we too would comprehend the Scriptures fully, we must place ourselves in the situation of the Jews ; hear as they heard, and understand the language as they understood it ; while for the sense, especially of prophecy, we have the additional revelations of the New Testament, and the history of God's dealings with his church and with the world for many centuries later.

What then is requisite, to enable us as interpreters to stand in the position of the Jews, and at the same time grasp the further advantages resulting from the experience of centuries ? The proper answer to this question resolves itself into a variety of particulars, and covers the whole ground embraced by our present inquiry.

I. The first requisite, which indeed lies at the basis of all accurate study of the Bible, is an acquaintance with the origi-

nal tongues in which it has come down to us ; the Old Testament in Hebrew, with a few passages of Chaldee interspersed, and the New Testament in Greek. The necessity of learning both these languages is now universally acknowledged, wherever the importance of a thorough study of the Bible is prized ; and every Theological Seminary in Christendom, which makes provision for instruction in the Scriptures, takes them up in these original tongues. It would therefore be here a waste of time, to dwell upon the importance and necessity of a regular philological study of these languages ; for this is included in the very idea of a thorough critical knowledge of the Scriptures themselves. To think of such a knowledge of the Bible, to be obtained through the medium of any translation, is preposterous. The well qualified interpreter must be able himself to sit in judgment upon all translations, by comparing them in letter and in spirit with the originals. We all know how difficult it is to find an exact and yet spirited translation, even from one kindred language to another ; as from the French or the German into English ; but this difficulty is very greatly enhanced, when the version is to be from a language so totally diverse, as is the Hebrew from our own or any other occidental tongue.

Some minds are ready to admit the importance of studying the New Testament in the Greek original, but entertain doubts as to the propriety of a like study of the Old Testament in the Hebrew. True, the New Testament is the charter of the Christian dispensation and of our Christian hopes ; and as such occupies a higher and more important place in its bearings on theological education. But it is founded upon, and presupposes, the existence and binding obligation of the Old Testament ; and neither its precepts, nor its doctrines, nor its language, can be fully understood, without a like thorough knowledge of the latter. The question resolves itself into another, viz. Whether the Christian interpreter shall confine his studies and his acquaintance with the Scriptures, simply to one portion of the Bible ; or extend them over the whole ? If the reply be, as all will admit it ought to be, that he should embrace the *whole*

Bible ; then the importance of an acquaintance with the Hebrew tongue, rests upon the same grounds as the study of the Greek.

Nor is an adequate study of both these tongues the labour of merely a few weeks, or months, or even years. They are both to us dead languages, no longer spoken in this form ; and therefore no longer to be learned by daily intercourse with those to whom they are vernacular. Herein lies at once a great drawback in respect to time and accuracy ; and also the necessity of a great increase of labour and minute attention. Especially is this the case in relation to the Hebrew ; since apparently the greater portion of this language itself is utterly lost. Almost its only remains are contained in the Bible ; and even these are naturally only fragmentary. Take now any single volume in the English language, not larger than the Bible ; and how imperfect would it be as the representative of our tongue ! The speech of common life would be almost wholly wanting ; and of many peculiar words, phrases, and constructions, which go to make our language what it is, what a multitude would not be found ? or, if found at all, would occur but a single time, and thus be in themselves unintelligible or anomalous. Just so with the Hebrew language as exhibited in the Bible ; it is imperfect, and of course often obscure ; because the means of comparison and illustration from other parts of the language, are wanting.

For this reason, the labour and difficulty of a critical knowledge of the Hebrew are greatly enhanced, by the necessity of appealing to other kindred tongues, in order to supply, in an imperfect manner, the deficiencies arising from its incompleteness. The scholar who would possess this power, must make himself master of the Chaldee and Syriac dialects ; of the noble and widespread Arabic ; and, to some extent, also, of the Samaritan, the Ethiopic, and the corrupt Rabbinic. He must pursue his devious way throughout all these tongues, in search of analogies and correspondences, to illustrate the forms and meaning and construction of many Hebrew words, for which there exists no

other testimony. To the like end, he must examine the ancient versions of the Old Testament, in the same and other tongues; and when he has done all, he can perhaps in many cases arrive only at an uncertain or merely probable result. All this may well make out the main labour of a whole life; and such, indeed, has ever been the fact in respect to the giants of Hebrew literature, whether they lived in former days, or still adorn our own. The Hebrew with its kindred dialects, and the subsidiary branches of study necessary for its complete illustration, have sufficed to occupy their best hours and best years, by day and by night, from early youth to late old age.

Nor is the case very dissimilar with the Greek language of the New Testament. This, too, is but the fragment of a peculiar dialect in the wide field of Greek philology. True, we have here the aid of all the branches of the classic Grecian language and literature, in their poetic youth, their Attic manliness and vigour, and their later decline. We have, too, all the results of ancient and modern research in regard to Greek philology; while the idiom and character of the language are far more accordant than the Hebrew with our own. The Greek, too, in an altered form, is to this day a spoken language. Yet all this neither suffices for the illustration of the idiom of the New Testament; nor does it supersede, even here, the necessity of an acquaintance with the Hebrew tongue of the earlier Scriptures.

The language of the New Testament is *the later Greek, as spoken by foreigners of the Hebrew stock, and applied by them to subjects on which it had never been employed by native Greeks.* After the disuse of the ancient Hebrew in Palestine, and the irruption of western conquerors, the Jews adopted the Greek language from necessity; partly as a conquered people, and partly from the intercourse of life, of commerce, in colonies, in cities, founded like Alexandria and others, which were peopled with throngs of Jews. It was, therefore, the spoken language of ordinary life, which they learned; not the classic style of books, which has elsewhere come down to us. But they spoke it as foreigners, whose native tongue was the later Aramaean;

and it therefore could not fail to acquire upon their lips a strong Semitic character and colouring. When to this we add, that they spoke in Greek on the things of the true God, and the relations of mankind to Jehovah and to a Saviour—subjects to which no native Greek had ever then applied his beautiful language, it will be obvious that an appeal merely to classic Greek and its philology, will not suffice for the interpreter of the New Testament. The Jewish-Greek idiom must be studied almost as an independent dialect; and its most important illustrations will be derived from the idiom of the Old Testament, especially as exhibited in the version of the Seventy and the Apocrypha, and from the cotemporary writings of Philo and Josephus.

The volumes of controversy which have been written in former centuries, upon the character of the idiom of the New Testament, may at the present day be safely left out of view in a theological education, except as matters of history. Even in this view, they are important chiefly as showing by what crude theories and slow advances, the human mind and human learning often arrive at truth. The principle virtually laid down was, that as God spoke to man in Greek, he could employ only the most pure and perfect Greek; and therefore the idiom of the New Testament must be accounted as one of the purest models of the Greek language. It was here overlooked that God spoke to man only in the language of those whom he addressed; and that therefore to judge of this language, we must look to the character and circumstances of those who spoke it. These were at the time a conquered, and, in some respects, already an abject people; and their dialect of the Greek, in comparison with the language of Greece itself, was much like the dialects of the Jews at the present day in modern lands, unpolished and corrupted by foreign words, idioms, and forms.

Enough has been said to show, that a proper acquaintance with the original tongues of the Holy Scriptures, the very foundation of a critical study of the Word of God, is not to be gained by a few slight efforts, but requires years of diligence and toil. It is not, indeed, to be desired, nor would it of course

be possible, for every student in a Theological Seminary to go over the whole ground here pointed out; but it is incumbent on every such student, to be sufficiently prepared to understand and profit by the labours of the many and great minds who have trod this course before him, and whose efforts have been directed to make plain the way to those who should come after them.*

II. The power of studying the Scriptures in the original languages having been thus acquired, it becomes important to take a general survey of the wide field to be cultivated, and of the methods and means by which the labour may be accomplished with the greatest facility and success. For this end, a branch of biblical science has sprung up within the last century in Germany, which has hitherto found its way slowly and with difficulty into the English language, and has as yet been fostered by very little original effort in that tongue. It is called

* It is gratifying to mark the progress of this department of biblical learning in the United States, since its revival five and twenty years ago, chiefly through the exertions of the Rev. Professor Stuart, of Andover. That it is not now on the decline, is apparent from the fact, that besides the six editions of Professor Stuart's Hebrew Grammar, and two of that by Professor Bush, not less than fifteen hundred copies of Dr. Nordheimer's Grammar have been sold since its publication in 1838. Of the translation of Gesenius' Lexicon, also, published in the autumn of 1836, more than two thousand copies have been sold in this country, besides several hundreds ordered for England.—It may not be out of place likewise to remark, that England is now indebted to America for many other of her elementary books in the same department. Both the Hebrew and Greek Grammars of Professor Stuart have been republished in that country, as also the translation of Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar. The Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament, by the author of these pages, has also been brought out there, in three rival editions, and two abridgments.

“Introduction to the Bible;” and the object of it is, as the name imports, to introduce the learner to the best methods and means for prosecuting the study of the Scriptures. It takes the Bible as it is, as the Word of God; the evidences of its divine origin and inspired character being left to another department of theology; and proceeds to point out to the student the proper topics and order of his inquiries. It thus becomes either General or Particular.

The former, or General Introduction, comprises a description of all the various manuscripts and editions of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, and their comparative value. It enumerates the various ancient versions, their authors, their dates, the circumstances of their composition, and their importance to the biblical student. It details the efforts which have been made to obtain a correct text both of the Old and New Testaments, the sources and character of the various readings, and the general principles on which such researches must be conducted. It touches also, in general terms, upon the character of the language and style; on the history, chronology, geography, and antiquities, of the Jewish people. In all these branches, it names and characterizes the best books to be consulted. It gives, too, the history of the sacred volume itself; the manner in which it has been revered and studied in different ages; and the various external forms and divisions in which it has appeared.

Particular Introduction, on the other hand, takes up, first, the main portions of the Scriptures, as the historical, poetical, prophetic, or doctrinal books; and discusses the characteristics common to each division; and then proceeds to treat of each particular book. It inquires into the time when it was written, its author, its subject and object, its style and manner; and aims, in short, to afford all the information, which may enable the learner to read and understand each book and chapter of the Bible, in the best and most perfect manner.

This branch of biblical study has ever appeared to me one of great importance; and particularly adapted to interest the

minds both of the learned and unlearned. Its purpose is to tell all that is known about the Bible as a sacred volume, and to point out how every one may best read and understand it. All this would seem to be capable of very popular application; and would be especially appropriate for the youth of Bible classes and Sabbath schools, as a means of exciting and fixing their attention, and leading them forward in their biblical course. It is, indeed, matter of surprise, that so little account has as yet been made of this department, both in this country and in England; there having appeared in this branch, so far as I know, not more than a single original work of importance in the English language; and not one of a character adapted to popular instruction.

III. After this general survey of the whole field of biblical study, let us now bring under review more particularly the several branches. Of these, one of the first in place and importance, is the Criticism of the Biblical Text, by which we are taught to judge of the accuracy and authenticity of the Bible as it has come down to us. It is well known that the text of the common editions of the New Testament was fixed by Erasmus, on the authority of the few Greek manuscripts to which he had access; and that since his day, the collation of numerous other manuscripts, many of them older and better than those of Erasmus, has brought together a mass of various readings, differing from those of the common text, and sometimes of higher authority. It is the part of Biblical Criticism to compare and sift these readings, and to determine which of them, by weight of evidence and authority, is entitled to a place in the genuine text. The same science applies, in a similar manner, to the Hebrew text of the Old Testament; in the manuscripts of which, notwithstanding the vaunted care and exactness of the scribes and the Rabbins, vast numbers of like various readings have been found to exist.

The time, however, has gone by, when this accumulated mass of various readings, in both the Testaments, was an object of dread or suspicion to the learned or unlearned. The optim-

ism of the external form of the Bible has been laid aside; and it is now known and felt, that in the process of transcription or printing, by uninspired men, the Scriptures are not less liable to the occurrence of slight mistakes than other books. Such are, for the most part, all the various readings, both of the Hebrew and Greek Testaments; and it is a fact long well established, that not one of these affects a single article of faith or practice, unless in the very slightest degree.

In this country, we have no biblical manuscripts, either known or yet to be brought to light. We have no vast libraries, where the dust of ages has accumulated; beneath which we might hope still to find treasures of antiquity. In Biblical Criticism we must rest satisfied with the materials collected by Kennicott and De Rossi on the Old Testament, and by Mill, Wetstein, Griesbach, and others on the New. Still, it is in our power to make ourselves acquainted with the principles by which they have regulated their inquiries and their decisions; we have the same materials which they possessed, and can in some degree put the accuracy of their results to the test. Further than this, we are hardly called upon in this country to go; because we cannot appeal to the ultimate sources. There is something in the very aspect and external appearance of a manuscript itself, which goes far in aiding to form a judgment as to its readings. Thus, if I may speak from my own feelings, the bare inspection of the controverted passage in 1 Tim. iii. 16, "God manifest in the flesh," in the famous Alexandrine MS. preserved in the British Museum, affords more decisive and satisfactory evidence as to the reading of that manuscript, than can be drawn from all the varying testimony extant upon the subject.

IV. Another preliminary object of attention is the branch now known as Biblical Hermeneutics, or the Theory and Rules of Interpretation, as applied to the Scriptures. The actual application of these rules is Interpretation itself, now often called Exegesis. It may at first be difficult, for one not versed in Biblical Literature, to perceive the necessity and importance

of this branch of study. The principles of interpretation are as old as the creation ; and are instinctively impressed upon our nature, the moment we begin to employ language as the representative of thought. The child comprehends its mother ; and the mother finds no difficulty in interpreting the prattle of her child. We all interpret instinctively and involuntarily, when any one addresses us ; and this audience is even now in the full practice of every principle of interpretation, while they listen to my voice.

Why then should it be necessary to draw out these principles into rules, and make a theory and science of what in itself is so practical and instinctive ? We might reply, and with entire propriety, that it is interesting and important to bring out and exhibit in one general scientific view, the principles on which the human mind acts in this, as in so many other cases ; that this indeed is one of the most important aspects of the science of mind ; inasmuch as it respects all our intercourse with each other as intelligent beings. Still, the formation of rules to be applied to the interpretation of common discourse, or of books on ordinary subjects, would certainly be in great part a matter of supererogation. Yet we find, that this science is of great importance in the legal profession ; where the due interpretation of the words of a law often requires the nicest skill and a train of profound reasoning. So it is in the Bible. The Scriptures are the Word of God, and reveal his holy law ; they are in a language not our own, and which exists only in a fragmentary form. Hence the frequent necessity of applying all the various principles which can be brought to bear, for the elucidation of what might otherwise remain incomplete and obscure.

But in respect to the Bible, there is another aspect, in which the science of Hermeneutics becomes of still more definite application and practical importance. This is presented by the question so often raised : Whether, after all, the language of the Bible is to be interpreted and understood on the same principles, and in the same manner, as that of other books ? *A priori*

there would seem to be no reason why the sacred volume should form an exception to the general rule. God speaks to men in the words of men ; and means either to be understood, or not to be understood. If the former, then his language must be received and interpreted according to the innate fundamental principles of all human interpretation. If, on the contrary, he did not mean to be understood, then he has used the ordinary words of human language in a sense different from their ordinary and natural meaning ; and has spoken one thing to the ear and eye, which all could understand, and another thing in a more hidden sense, which none could understand. I speak not here, of course, of parables and allegories, which are common to all writings human or divine ; but more particularly of the poetical and prophetic parts of Scripture.

Here, in ancient times, Jewish interpreters were accustomed to suspend mountains of sense upon every word and letter of the Hebrew text ; that is to say, the words were held to mean, not only what they would naturally express in their ordinary acceptation ; but also every thing else, which the fancy of the interpreter might choose to attribute to them. This tendency passed over from the Jewish Rabbins to some of the fathers in the early Christian church ; and has been transmitted down in a greater or less degree even to the present day. This is the *double* or *deeper sense*, of which even now we hear so much ; and which, as it seems to me, rests on an imperfect apprehension of the force and character of divine truth. Besides, if we admit more than a single sense, except in obvious allegories and parables, how are we to decide upon this second meaning, which, by the very supposition, is *hidden* ? By what rules or instinct are we to interpret plain and intelligible language, so as to bring out this deeper hidden sense ? And being thus hidden, how are we to know, whether it is the *true* meaning ? Why may not another just as well bring out a different hidden sense ? And how, if there be one hidden meaning, can we determine that there is not a second and a third and a fourth, all equally hidden, and just as much concealed under the plain

language, as that which we propose? If all this be so, what barrier can we set up, indeed, against the interpretations of a Cocceius, or the dreamy reveries of a Swedenborg? I know of none.

In short, viewing the subject under every aspect, I must hold that any system of interpretation, which departs from the plain and obvious meaning of the language of Scripture, rests upon a wrong foundation, and is fraught with danger to the mind earnestly seeking after divine truth. It converts the Word of God into a book of riddles; such as were not uncommon in ancient times; and, more than all, it saps the fundamental principles, which regulate our conduct as beings capable of a mutual interchange of thoughts by means of language. It makes God profess to speak to us in the language of man; and yet takes his words out from the application of the rules, by which alone we understand or are understood, when speaking with each other.

It is on this ground, especially, that an attention to the principles and rules of Hermeneutics, becomes of high importance to the biblical student.

Thus far my remarks have had respect to the general method and principles of biblical study. Let us now survey, for a few moments, some of the more important sources, whence that information which must constitute the means and materials of the interpreter, is to be derived.

V. Among these, Biblical History occupies an important place. The Old Testament is itself the chief history of the Hebrew nation; for the early narrative of Josephus, the professed historian of his people, is drawn mainly from the Bible, with the addition of various particulars derived from traditional and doubtful authority. The Pentateuch indeed is the foundation of all human history, as well as of the Jewish; and brings down the narrative of that people to the eve of their establishment in the Promised Land. Every subsequent part of the Bible, whether it be history, or poetry, or prophecy, gospel or epistle, refers back both to the Pentateuch and to Hebrew his-

tory in later times ; and is absolutely unintelligible without an acquaintance with the facts there related. Thus far, the Bible is its own best interpreter,—the only storehouse where the facts are all laid up.

But there are also in the Scriptures frequent allusions to the history of other nations besides the Jews. Egypt and Ethiopia, Persia and Assyria, Babylon and Phenicia, play no unimportant part upon the pages of the sacred record ; and an acquaintance with the facts of their history not only serves to illustrate the Holy Scriptures, but greatly to strengthen their authority. Indeed, no stronger testimony to the truth and authenticity of any ancient document can ever be expected or required, than exists in behalf of the Bible upon the walls of the vast temples of the Egyptian Thebes. We find there, for example, Sheshonk, the Shishak of the Scriptures, sculptured as a colossal figure, with his name annexed, leading up rows of Jewish captives to present them to his god.* In this respect, the active spirit of the present age, in deciphering the sculptured monuments and writings of antiquity, is at the same time bringing out the strongest and most incontrovertible evidence, in behalf of the authenticity and claims of Holy Writ. And it is perhaps not too much to expect, that the illustrations and confirmations, which have thus flashed upon us from the deciphering of the hieroglyphic writings, are but the precursors of others, to be yet developed from the wedge-formed inscriptions of the ancient Medes and Persians.

Not less in general importance to the interpreter, is the history of the Jewish people and the neighbouring nations, during the interval of time between the Old Testament and the New. This whole period had a paramount influence in forming the character of the later Jews, and shaping their opinions on theological and moral subjects ; and all these require to be well understood, in order to comprehend many of the allusions and much of the teaching in the New Testament, and judge of its force and adaptation to

* 2 Chron. xii. 2—9.

times, circumstances, and persons. In like manner, an acquaintance with the general history of the time of Christ and of the apostolic age, is absolutely essential for understanding the scope and foundation of their instruction and doctrines; and the history of the primitive church during the same age, serves to clear up much that must otherwise remain "hard to be understood," in the writings of the great apostle of the Gentiles.

VI. Intimately connected with the History of the Hebrew people, are their Antiquities so called, Ecclesiastical, Political, and Domestic. In respect to the Bible, it is perhaps an acquaintance with these, which constitutes the main and most essential qualification of the interpreter. It is this kind of knowledge, which, most of all, places him in the position of the Jews themselves; enables him to think as they thought, feel as they felt, judge as they judged, and understand as they understood. Indeed, allusion to these varied topics, is interwoven in the very texture of every page and almost every paragraph of the Bible.

The Ecclesiastical Antiquities have relation to the whole constitution and ritual of the Hebrew church under the Old Testament; to develop and establish which, as well as to sustain and purify them, was the primary object of a great portion of the Hebrew Scriptures. The New Testament indeed abrogates the ancient ceremonial law; but in order to know what is thus abrogated, we must first know what once existed; and be able to mark the distinction between that which, as the spirit, is of permanent obligation, and that which, as the letter, has been done away. We must learn too what came in place of these former institutions; and what was the constitution imposed upon the Christian church, its sanctions, and its ordinances.

In the Political Antiquities of the Hebrews we are to look not only for a perpetual commentary and illustration of the sacred text; but also for the source of much that exists in modern legislation. The very peculiar character of a people governed by a theocracy; a nation of which God alone was king; needs to be well understood, in order to embrace the full

meaning of much of the Old Testament. In the New Testament likewise, the situation of this same people, pining under the galling yoke of foreign dominion; and all the complicated particulars of its government and administration under a foreign master; must constantly be taken into account, in order rightly to apprehend the language of the sacred writers.

But that branch which comes home most of all to "our business and bosoms," and introduces us most completely into the very sanctuary of Hebrew life, is their Domestic Antiquities. These show us their household and family arrangements, their manners and customs, their business and actions, their daily life and walk. These serve more than all else to bring us to a close *personal* acquaintance with that remarkable people; they enable us to be present with them in their houses, at their meals, in their affairs; to see them with their wives, their children, and their servants; in their rising up and lying down; in their going out and coming in; in short, in every thing relating to the persons and employments of themselves and families. Without an acquaintance with all these particulars, the interpreter can never be thoroughly furnished for his work. Whatever may be his qualifications in other respects, he can never enter fully into the meaning and spirit of very much of the sacred text.

It is greatly to be regretted, that this last branch, the Domestic Antiquities of the Hebrews, is just that which has been most neglected. There are perhaps books enough on the Jewish ritual; but I know of only a single important work in the English language, and that a translation, which gives any thing like a complete view of the domestic life and manners of this people.

VII. It is not necessary to dwell here on the importance of a knowledge of Biblical Chronology. This is perhaps the branch of biblical learning, which of all others has been most readily acknowledged, and most extensively and ably cultivated in the English tongue, as is testified by the distinguished names of Usher, Newton, and Hales. Yet, after all, the difficulties are by no means wholly cleared up; and many of the results as to dates,

can be regarded only as conjectural estimates. Hardly any two of the chronological systems agree throughout. Even in regard to the times, in which the several books of the New Testament were written, there exists great diversity of opinion and statement. All this does not affect, however, in the slightest degree, the question of their authority; it serves only to show that the biblical student has before him no light task, while he delves in the mists of gray antiquity, in search of some faint traces, which may serve as landmarks in the course of times and seasons.

VIII. A branch of biblical study which has excited comparatively little attention in English literature, and yet is one of great interest, is Biblical Geography. While geography in general, both historical and physical, has been cultivated with great success in England and in our own land; while the classic soil of Italy and Greece, and even that of India, has been traversed and described by multitudes; while we have treatises from the highest names on the geography of Herodotus, and other ancient profane writers; the geography of the Holy Scriptures has remained unsettled and unexplored, and even the physical features of the Land of Promise are to this day in a great measure unknown. Strange as it may appear, even the efforts of British science in behalf of navigation, have not been extended to this quarter. While even the polar regions have been traversed and explored; while the results of exact surveys and soundings are laid down in the latest charts of the Red Sea, and those of the coasts of Asia Minor and Northern Africa; the coasts of Syria and Palestine, that land of the earliest history and deepest interest, have never been surveyed, and cannot be given on any map, on the basis of astronomical observation or scientific measurement. As the theatre of recent naval war, it is to be hoped that these coasts may no longer thus remain a reproach to nautical science.

Another strange fact appears in the history of biblical geography. I mean the circumstance, that of all the multitude of pilgrims and travellers who have thronged the Holy Land for the

last five centuries, not one of them has gone thither with any reference to the geography of the Scriptures, or made the slightest preparation to qualify himself for instituting researches, or forming a judgment, on subjects falling within this important department. At least nothing of the kind has appeared before the public. The travellers have often been acute and observing men; but they have never inquired, in respect to the Holy Land, what was already known, or what was unknown; what was certain or uncertain; what was forgotten, or yet to be sought out. Hardly one has ever yet travelled with a sufficient knowledge of the Arabic language, to collect information for himself from the people of the land. The consequence has been, that travellers have mostly only listened to and reported the traditions and legends of the foreign monks; and no one has ever thought of seeking after what might yet remain among the common people.

These monastic traditions began early to take root and spring up; and as ages rolled on, they flourished more and more luxuriantly. The centuries of the crusades added to their number and strength; and then, and in later times, a mass of foreign tradition, which had thus foisted itself upon the Holy Land, spread itself over Christendom, until it has come to be received almost without doubt or question. Yet it frequently contradicts the express testimony of the Scriptures or of Josephus; and is, in fact, in itself worthless, unless when supported by collateral evidence. In looking down through the long period that has followed the labours of Eusebius and Jerome, in the fourth century, it is interesting, though painful, to perceive, how the light of truth has gradually become dim, and at length often been quenched in darkness. It is certain, that in the long interval between Eusebius and the crusades, very much was forgotten by the church, which still continued to exist among the common people; and in the subsequent period, the progress of oblivion has perhaps been hardly less rapid. Even within the last two centuries, so far as the convents and travellers in Pales-

tine are concerned, I fear the cause of sacred geography can hardly be said to have greatly advanced.

Yet there can be no doubt, and I speak from personal experience, that there does exist among the native population of Palestine, the Arab Fellâhs of the villages and hamlets, a species of tradition, which is destined to throw great light upon the ancient topography of the land. I mean *the preservation of the ancient names of places among the common people*. This is a truly national and native tradition; not derived in any degree from the influence of foreign convents or masters; but drawn in by the peasant with his mother's milk, and deeply seated in the genius of the Semitic languages. Such names still exist in every part of Palestine; and we ourselves, in travelling through regions both visited and unvisited, were enabled to collect many such, of which apparently there has been no written mention since the fourth century.

We all recognise the benefit and importance of a knowledge of geography, in reading the current works of the day, and even the newspapers. Of how much higher importance must it then be, for the due understanding of the Scriptures; in which the physical and topographical features of the country are so distinctly and definitely traced out, that we, like other travellers, found the Bible to be the best, and only accurate guide-book in the Holy Land. The delineation of a place or region on plans and maps, aids exceedingly to render definite our impressions of events; but how much more distinctly and vividly do they stand out before the mind, when we ourselves have been present in the very spots and scenes. I never felt the full force and energy of the eloquence of Paul, until I stood upon the Areopagus in Athens; nor the definiteness, and beauty, and power of the biblical history, until my feet had trod the courts and fields where God of old had dwelt; where the Saviour of the world had lived, and taught, and died; where patriarchs, and prophets, and holy men had walked and held converse with the Most High. It was with an absorbing and exciting interest,

that we thus visited these spots ; it was almost like communing with those holy men themselves ; and served, in a high degree, to give us a deeper impression of the reality and vividness of the Scriptural narrative, and to confirm our confidence in the truth and power of the sacred volume.

IX. Connected with the physical Geography of a land, is also its Natural History ; and allusions occur on almost every page of the Bible, to the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, as they exist in Palestine. Here, too, the interpreter is often at fault, for want of full and specific information. The animals of the Holy Land have never been thoroughly investigated ; nor its botany explored ; nor its minerals and geological structure scientifically examined. The leading geologist of the continent of Europe once remarked to me,* that he had long sought in vain for specimens of the limestone around the Holy City ; and the *Elah* or terebinth of the Hebrews, has, until recently, remained as undetermined among botanists, as the unicorn of the English version is still unknown to the zoologist.

X. Another important source of information for the interpretation of the Bible, and the only one which time permits me further to mention, may be termed the History of Interpretation. Under this branch I must here include the efforts and results of all former interpreters of the Holy Scriptures ;—a wide and fertile field, in which abundant fruit has been produced, both good and bad. The earliest documents of this kind are to be found in the literature of the Jews themselves ; since the apocryphal books of the Old Testament, the version of the Septuagint, as well as the history and philosophy of the Jews, are all imitations of, or founded upon, their inspired writings. Of the same class is the vast mass of tradition and direct interpretation, collected in the Talmuds, and the labours of the later Rabbins. Here is a mine never yet fully explored, which is probably destined yet to yield, along with much rubbish, not a little ore, for the use of the biblical interpreter. Then follow the ancient versions into va-

* Leopold von Buch.

rious tongues, and also the comments of the Fathers and of interpreters in all subsequent ages; to whose numerous tomes we might almost apply the hyperbolic language of St. John, that "even the world itself cannot contain the books that have been written." Yet amid all this mass of literature, besides the many treasures of commentary, most volumes have some grains of wheat mingled with much chaff; and these it is the duty of the interpreter to seek out, and transplant to a kindlier soil, and cause them to grow and flourish in his Master's field.

XI. We have thus passed in review the main branches of study, which go to make up the department of Biblical Literature, and furnish the sources and materials, from and with which, the interpreter is to illustrate the Word of God. A due acquaintance with all these may be said to comprise his *objective* qualifications; being such as are drawn from without himself. As to what relates to the inner man, the disposition of the mind, which we may term his *subjective* preparation, I would remark, that all external aids and qualifications will be in vain to the interpreter, without the spirit of prayer, and of humble reliance on the divine assistance. Without this spirit, the human heart and human mind are of themselves prone to wander from the truth in divine things, and to set up human judgment and human authority, above the revealed will of the Most High. The ancient Jews clung to the *letter* of their law, which they understood better than we; but they failed to imbibe its *spirit*. So the interpreter of Scripture, who rests merely on the support of human learning, will abide in the letter, while the spirit must ever remain beyond his comprehension. "The natural man," says St. Paul, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, seeing they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual, judgeth all things." The truth here propounded by the apostle, applies to the interpreter as well as to the hearer of the Scriptures; and unless he can stand the trial, even 'though he might speak with the tongues of men and of angels; though he might have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries,

and all knowledge ; yet without the spirit of love, he would be nothing,' and his teaching become only as "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

It may be asked, Why this spiritual frame of mind should be necessary for the interpretation of the Bible, more than of any other book ? We may reply : Because it is the main object of the Bible to describe and to inculcate just this spirit and this spiritual frame ; and, therefore, if the interpreter do not possess it ; if he do not know it in his own heart and experience ; how can he appreciate and explain it, as it lies upon the pages of Scripture ? How can he, who has no ear nor soul for music, sit in judgment upon the thrilling productions of the mighty masters of harmony ? How can he, who has no taste nor talent for mathematical science, soar with Newton and Laplace through the regions of unlimited space, and trace out, with them, the laws that bind together the remotest worlds, as they float in the realms of ether ? Just so "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him." He that would discern and teach the things of God, must himself be taught from on high.

In reviewing the foregoing remarks and illustrations, we might be justly led to exclaim : "Who is sufficient for these things!" Certainly no one person within the limited space of human life. But we are bound at all times to survey the whole field of our labours, that we may know where to choose our portion, in order to labour with effect, and direct our efforts to the best advantage. Various parts of the field have already been ably tilled by eminent scholars and servants of the Lord ; and we must be sufficiently prepared, to be able to enter in, and profit by the fruits of their labours. This every one of us, who begins a course of theological education, can do, and every one is bound to do. We are bound to employ our best powers and faculties, and improve every opportunity, for acquiring such a knowledge of every branch of Biblical and Theological Study, as shall make us, first, well qualified interpreters of the

Word of God ; and, secondly, the faithful heralds of this Word and Gospel-message to our fellow-men.

It is not, indeed, the object of a course of study in a Theological Seminary, to render the pupils all at once accomplished scholars ; but rather to sow the seed and nourish the shoot, which may hereafter of itself grow up into a noble and firmly rooted tree. The aim is simply to impart the rudiments of a professional education, and to point out the proper way and means, and materials of study, by which the learner may hereafter, through his own efforts, with God's blessing, arrive at a higher and more important standing and influence, as a teacher in the church of Christ.

Yet I would fain hope that the time is not far distant,—and this hope I would desire to press upon the consideration of the friends and patrons of this and every Theological Seminary,—when the multifarious and important subjects embraced in the Department of Biblical Literature, will not be left, as now, to the teaching and direction of a single individual. One of the most essential branches, indeed, does not belong at all to a course of theological education, and ought not to form an object of elementary study within the walls of such an institution. I mean an acquaintance with the Greek and Hebrew languages. This, indeed, is admitted at once in respect to the Greek ; and a previous knowledge of it is a matter of requisition in every Theological Seminary. The Hebrew rests upon precisely the same grounds ; there is in it nothing of theology ; it is a merely philological acquirement ; yet it is not now, perhaps, demanded for admission into any seminary of our land. Still, the time thus spent in the study of it, is so much time taken away from the proper objects of such an institution ; and I, for one, can never conscientiously cease to feel, and to press upon others, that a certain previous acquaintance with this language, ought to be made a condition of enjoying the privileges of every seminary for theological education.

The literature and interpretation of the Old Testament embraces a wide and difficult range of studies, entirely distinct

from those belonging to the New. Nor are these latter in any degree less extensive or difficult, though of a different character. Each of these clusters of science furnishes occupation enough for the life and labours of any individual; and this is known and felt wherever theological education has been fully carried out. In all the Theological Faculties of Europe, a separate department has charge of the Old Testament, and another of the New. The same feeling of the importance and necessity of such an arrangement, has already introduced it into some of the older seminaries of our own country; and I would indulge the hope, that in due time, the example may here and everywhere be followed.

In the mean while, I for myself,—and I am sure my colleagues in instruction join me in the feeling,—I have no wish but to lay my one talent and my acquirements at the feet of my divine Lord and Master, and to do all his bidding; to press forward in the performance of every duty, so far as my feeble powers may reach; to do whatsoever my hand findeth to do, with all my might,—as unto God, and not unto man. And may He who has the hearts of all men in his hands, so direct us all by his Spirit,—the patrons, teachers, and pupils, of this Seminary,—that we may walk according to his will in all diligence and holiness of life and conversation; and thus the institution committed to our charge, become through His blessing highly instrumental in promoting the best interests of his church on earth, and of the great city and community in which we dwell.

In behalf of this sacred Seminary, we solicit your sympathies, your prayers, your confidence, your benefactions. It was founded in many prayers; and was, from the very first, intended to rest solely and entirely upon the affections of the churches. It has been nursed “in weakness and in fear and in much trembling;” its night of trial and darkness has been long and gloomy. We would fain hope that a better day is dawning upon its prospects. God has fulfilled, and more than fulfilled, toward it, all *His* promise as to numbers; he hath done for it already, in that respect, more and better than the warmest

hopes of its founders could ever ask or think. It remains now for Christians to do their part. It is for the friends and benefactors of the Seminary,—it is for the churches of this city,—to determine, whether it shall grow up and become a fair and noble tree, whose roots shall strike deep in the hearts of the Christian community, and its leaves and fruits be for the healing of the nations; or whether, pining upon a barren soil, it shall again wither away, and its last state become worse than the first.