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Doctrinal Theology.

THEOLOGY.

Theology in the narrower sense of the term is the doctrine of holy Scripture concerning the true God.

Theology in this sense must be distinguished from Natural Theology, which is a chapter in Philosophy, primarily inscribed in the book of Nature, "*the heavens declaring the glory of God, and the firmament showing his handiwork, day unto day uttering speech, and night unto night showing knowledge,*"¹⁾ so that "*the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.*"²⁾ Thus it is that the fundamentals of natural theology swell the volumes of ancient philosophy, and the statement of modern ethnology that "there has not been a single tribe, no matter how rude, known in history or visited by travelers, which has been shown to be destitute of religion,"³⁾ says nothing that is new to us who have it from higher authority that there is among all heathen some knowledge of God, since "*that which may be known*

1) Ps. 19, 1. 2.

2) Rom. 1, 20.

3) Brinton, Religions of primitive peoples, p. 30.

Exegetical Theology.

THE PRACTICE OF EXEGESIS.

A man may be an eminent anatomist and a poor surgeon, a learned jurist and an inefficient barrister, a first authority in the science of war and an execrable general, an author of standard works on agriculture and horticulture who would run into bankruptcy as a farmer or gardener. Theory and practice, though they may and should go together, are by no means identical. And while theory may and should serve as a guide to methodical practice, theory as a rule succeeds long-continued practice. Practical ungodliness gives rise to atheistical doctrine, and practical materialism to materialistic philosophy. Languages are spoken and even written long before they are reduced to rules of etymology and syntax, composition and rhetoric. The human mind had performed the various processes of reasoning long before the principles of induction and deduction were laid down in logical systems and arranged in chapters and paragraphs. Preaching was before homiletics, and interpretation, before hermeneutics. Theory, when it has been well established and exhibited as a perspicuous system of rules and principles, is useful chiefly for methodical instruction and correction. In positive practice, the underlying theoretical principles are rarely heard of or even thought of, while they are not infrequently called up in controversy and criticism, where they are employed as arguments supposed to be conceded without debate or further investigation or experiment.

The theory of interpretation is Hermeneutics, the practice, Exegesis. The two must not be at variance with one another; where they disagree, the one or the other must be wrong and needs correction. But the one must not be mistaken for the other. A man may know the rules and

principles of Hermeneutics by rote and have the points at his fingers' ends, and be at the same time unfit for thorough and exact exegetical work. Indeed, when we behold the numerous biblical commentaries, especially those of modern make, with their numerous and often reiterated references to grammars and grammatical rules, the lexicographical and other linguistic remarks appearing on every page, the very features which are claimed as the distinctive points of excellence in modern commentaries, it would seem that the authors of such works were guided by a very low estimate of the exegetical proficiency of the theological rank and file, and if production is here as elsewhere regulated by the relation of supply and demand, that estimate would seem approximately correct. Think of a commentary on the English Bible loaded down with a mass of grammatical and lexicographical detail! If the truth must be told, it is that the average theologian comes short of that exegetical routine which would enable him to walk with a steady step where he now often hobbles on crutches which it ought to be below him to use. And yet with right methods and proper means every man with a fair knowledge of Hebrew and Greek and the spiritual sensory of a regenerate Christian may in the course of time require that proficiency which will capacitate him for thorough and profitable exegetical practice.

The proper task of the theological exegete is to ascertain, establish, and expound the true sense of Scripture for his own salvation and that of others.

The sense of Scripture can be found only in the *words* of Scripture. The first requisite, therefore, in the exegetical workshop is the genuine text of the book or passage of Scripture to be interpreted. Where blundering transcribers or editors have rendered the text in any way doubtful, it is the duty of the exegete to remove such doubt in his own mind and that of others. To do this, he must be equipped with sufficient critical apparatus. For the New Testament

an edition of one of the ancient codices, as the Vatican codex, with the various readings of the other five or six best codices and a few of the most valuable ancient versions will prove abundantly sufficient to establish the text beyond reasonable doubt in nearly all cases, and we prefer the apparatus here described to all the so-called critical editions. For the Old Testament most of the editions in the market give what is needful for sober, critical work. Beyond the comparatively simple processes of textual criticism¹⁾ based upon the codices, versions and, perhaps, a few *patres*, the exegete has no right or duty to trim the biblical text. What is called historical or higher criticism is not a legitimate business of a theologian, nor of anybody else, but a damnable sacrilege by which the living body of the word of God is dismembered on the dissecting table. The sacred volume as it was given by inspiration of God, entrusted to the Jews, acknowledged by Christ, and completed by the inspired apostles and evangelists, is the text of the theological exegete.

The genuine text having been ascertained, the interpreter will proceed to learn what his text says. And his text says what its words say, its words according to their biblical *usus loquendi*, the grammatical forms in which they appear in the text, and the syntactical and rhetorical arrangement in which their author has placed them in composing the text.

The biblical *usus loquendi* of a word is ascertained by comparing the passages in which that word occurs in the Old Testament, if it be a Hebrew word, or in the New Testament, if it be a Greek word. The passages thus related by *verbal parallelism* are grouped together in Hebrew Concordances of the Old Testament and Greek Concordances of the New Testament. The best Concordances are those which have all the parallel passages arranged in the order of the books, chapters, and verses of the Hebrew or the Greek Bible without any attempt whatever of combining

1) See also THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY vol. I, pp. 285—287. 506.

real with *verbal* parallelism in the manner adopted by the Lexica and some Concordances, which give references to a number of passages supposed to substantiate certain definitions or to exemplify certain *usus loquendi* under which they are grouped by the lexicographer or the compiler of the "real and verbal Concordance." The exegete who is competent and willing to perform the important work of ascertaining the general or special usages of the biblical vocabulary will prefer to see for himself, either at once, or after respectfully hearing the opinions of lexicographers and commentators. In this respect also, the biblical exegete knows of no real authority beside the word of Scripture. Scripture alone can authoritatively enlighten him on the biblical usages of such words as *σάρξ*, *πνεῦμα*, *νόμος*, *γνώστω*, אָמֵן, לֵב, נֶפֶשׁ, יוֹם, דָּר, and to search the Scriptures with this purpose in view, a simple, but complete verbal Concordance arranged by books, chapters and verses is of the greatest value. In fact, the Concordance is, next to the text itself, decidedly the most valuable piece in the equipment of the exegetical workshop, which no commentary or collection of commentaries can supplant.

As to the *ἅπαξ λεγόμενα*, which also appear as such in the Concordances, their *usus* is either restricted to the one place in which they occur, if they are absolute *ἅπαξ λεγόμενα*, and the etymology of the word together with the context and real parallelism will give the meaning; or they are only relatively *ἅπαξ λεγόμενα*, occurring but once in the original Bible, but found in the Septuagint or in rabbinical or secular literature, sources of information which may then be consulted. Lexica which give the pertinent quotations—and such Lexica only are of real value—will, in a measure, furnish what is needed or desired, although it must be said that the works themselves which may be referred to should be compared, if they be accessible, since there, also, the context may serve to more firmly and fully determine the meaning of the word.

To secure additional exactness in ascertaining the meaning of a word in a given place, it is often very profitable to compare synonymous words or phrases and note the *peculiar* significance of the word chosen from among the various synonyms. When Paul says *δοῦλος*, he does not mean *παῖς* or *διδάκωνος*, he means a servant who is his master's own, who is not only in the employ, or service, but under the will and authority and in the ownership of him whom he serves. In these distinctions our translations frequently fail. The English Bible gives the words *ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον, ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο*: "*another gospel, which is not another.*"¹⁾ The original says something which the translation does not explicitly say; *ἕτερον* is "different in kind or quality," *ἄλλο* is "another in number." The gospel which the false apostles preached was a different thing from what Paul preached, not a second gospel, but no Gospel at all, there being but one Gospel truly bearing that name.

Special lexica of or treatises on synonyms are, therefore, highly valuable aids to careful exegetical work.

The peculiar meaning of a word may sometimes be lifted into greater prominence by pointing out the etymological genesis of a word, the root whence it is derived, the parts of which it is composed, other words to which it is etymologically related. Thus *πίστις* is by its etymology, its origin from the root *BHADH*, Sanskr. *bandh*, and its relationship with *πείθω, πεποίθῃς, πιστός*, etc., expressive of a *firm, unwavering trust and confidence*. *ἐπίγνωσις* is not simply *knowledge* or *understanding*, but the meaning of *γνώσις* is intensified by *ἐπί*, which makes it a *direct, clear or thorough knowledge*.²⁾ Care should, however, be taken not to indulge in doubtful etymological conjectures and guesswork in the manner of Cicero's attempts in this direction. It is not probable that in *ἐκκλησία* there is any reference to

1) Gal. 1, 6. 7.

2) cf. Rom. 3, 20. Eph. 1, 17; 4, 13. Phil. 1, 9. Col. 1, 9. 10; 3, 10. 1 Tim. 2, 4. 2 Tim. 3, 7, where the English Bible has only *knowledge*.

the Gospel call whereby the church is gathered from the world, but the word is simply taken over from its secular use, where it signified the public meetings called out by heralds or town criers,¹⁾ or the usage of the Septuagint, where it stood for the congregation of Israel,²⁾ and endowed with a special *usus loquendi* of the New Testament, to denote the assembly of Christians, the congregation of believers, the *church*. Especially should the etymological remarks in the *Lexica* be taken with many grains of allowance and very cautiously applied in practical exegesis.

That the context chiefly must decide which of several meanings of a word must be looked upon as intended by the author in a certain place is a hermeneutical rule which does not properly lie within the scope of this article and is here only mentioned to remind the reader that we are not laying down new rules to take the place of the old ones, but simply endeavor to point out a few exegetical implements and recommend their proper use in accordance with the sound hermeneutical principles long since generally accepted among orthodox Lutherans.

Next to the substance of the words the *form* of each word as it occurs in the given text must be considered in order to find the sense of the text. We here speak of the forms of words with reference to such words as admit of inflection and its equivalents, of declension, conjugation, comparison, and grammatical agglutination. It is a gross mistake to suppose that the inspired penmen had been less careful and exact in the use of grammatical forms than the secular writers of their or any age. That some of the forms extensively used by the Attic classics were but sparingly or not at all employed by the apostles and evangelists proves nothing to the contrary. The forms of modern English can be used with fully as much care and correctness as the more manifold forms of mediaeval English were used by Chaucer and Wyclif. The various relations indicated by the cases

1) Acts 19, 39.

2) Acts 7, 38.

of nouns and pronouns, with or without prepositions, are as precisely distinguished in the New Testament as in Attic prose; *διὰ τὸν πατέρα* and *δι' ἐμέ* say "for the Father's sake" and "for my sake," not, as the English Bible has it, "by the Father" and "by me," which would be *διὰ τοῦ πατρὸς* and *δι' ἐμοῦ*.

The same must be said with regard to the *arrangement* of the words of the text, which is next to be considered. The rules of syntax are as strictly and consistently followed in the Bible as in any other book, and the rhetorical arrangement of words for the sake of emphasis will be found as nicely and judiciously adjusted in Isaiah and Paul as in Demosthenes. The words of the sacred text are not jumbled together, placed or omitted or arranged at random, but are made to serve the purposes of written words in full conformity with the laws and rules of the language. This has often been disregarded by commentators and translators. Some words, such as conjunctions and articles, have in many cases been passed by with little or no regard, while they were evidently placed where they stand with the utmost care. Thus, for example, the Greek *article* is used in the New Testament with fully as much precision as anywhere in Greek literature; subtleties which the rules given in the grammars used in the classical schools of to-day fail to cover are of frequent occurrence in the Gospels and Epistles. The student of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures should, therefore, make himself familiar with some good Grammar of biblical Hebrew and a comprehensive Grammar of New Testament Greek. He should make it a habit to compare the passages quoted or referred to for the purpose of substantiating or exemplifying the rules and thus, in a grammatical way, making Scripture its own interpreter. In fact, a Grammar embodying a strong apparatus of well-selected grammatical proof-texts is a most serviceable compendious commentary, the expeditious use of which is greatly facilitated by a complete *index locorum*. But we have a serious

objection against these *indices locorum* in Grammars; they are apt to serve as an excuse to negligent students who rely upon the index instead of familiarizing themselves with the book itself until they might put their finger on the paragraph or paragraphs covering a given text, or until the very spirit of such paragraphs would spontaneously associate itself in their minds with the grammatical features of such text.

Beside and beyond these grammatical or linguistic features of his text, the exegete should also take in the historical elements embodied in or connected with the scriptural statements with which he is occupied. He should acquaint himself from the Scriptures and from other sources of information with matters pertaining to biblical geography and archaeology, Jewish, Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Greek, and Roman antiquities, political events and conditions, with such topics as the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the Synedrium, the synagogues, courts and legal procedure in the Roman empire, and similar subjects. It is a mistake to think that the better part of what is accessible in these respects had been unearthed by recent historical research or scattered in libraries of ancient and modern historical literature. The chief source of historical information which will be of immediate service to the theological exegete is the Bible itself, which is not only a far richer storehouse of historical lore than most people think, but affords the great advantage of being reliable throughout and in every point, which cannot be said of any other book, however valuable and worthy of a theologian's consideration it may be. While, then, a continued and careful study of the Bible and other works on subjects of biblical and cognate history must be urgently recommended to the practical exegete, a digest in the form of a good topical Dictionary of the Bible should be kept within arm's length by the exegetical student. It will be well, however, to remember that much material of a problematical nature is generally marketed in such encyclopaedias, and the exegete should

always discriminate between what is taken from the Bible and what has been gathered from human authorities.

But with all the ways and means hitherto enumerated and recommended, the ulterior purpose of the biblical exegete may be approached without being accomplished. The purpose of searching the Scriptures should be, to find therein eternal life.¹⁾ Grammatico-historical exegesis is not necessarily theological work, it may be merely philological and is in many cases nothing more. A linguist and a historian may study a standard work on pulmonary diseases or a text book on marriage and divorce, the one for the purpose of gaining and giving information concerning the medical or legal vocabulary, and the other with a view of discussing the present status of medical science or legal practice in a history of the nineteenth century. But a physician and an attorney may study the same work, the former prompted by his earnest endeavors to save the life of a patient, the latter in the interest of a client who has confidently placed her own and her children's welfare into his professional hands. The physician and the lawyer as well as the linguist and the historian will, of course, pay due attention to the words and phrases of the works they are studying; but every one will readily conceive the vast difference between the merely grammatical or historical and the more properly professional interests by which these several readers would be inspired and prompted in their researches, and the bookseller who had but one last copy of the work on throat and lung diseases to dispose of would not for a moment doubt whose the book should be, if the linguist and the physician, both anxious to obtain it, stood side by side at his counter with the purchase money in their hands. Far greater still is the difference which prevails between merely grammatico-historical and truly theological exegesis of the holy Scriptures. To the theologian, the words of Scripture are the signs whereby God would teach us to know him and his

1) John 5, 39.

works and will and ways and by such doctrine make us wise unto salvation and strong in the panoply of truth to make a good fight against Satan, the world and the flesh, sin, error, and falsehood. And while every Christian should search the Scriptures thinking and knowing that therein he has eternal life for himself, the theologian will study the Scriptures and heed to their doctrine with a view of saving himself and them that hear him.¹⁾ Especially should the theological exegete endeavor to serve his hearers or readers by opening to them the Scriptures and thereby making their hearts burn within them, chiefly by expounding unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Christ.²⁾ This, however, is an accomplishment not to be acquired in a day nor to be carried to perfection in a lifetime, and the best guides and models by following which the theologian may become more and more thoroughly furnished also unto this good work, are, next to the Scriptures themselves, the commentaries of our Lutheran Fathers, first of all, of Luther, the greatest of Christian exegetes of post-apostolic times. While, therefore, the working library of the exegete should contain some modern grammatico-historical commentary on each of the books of the New Testament and, at least, on Genesis, Job, the Psalms, Isaiah and one or two of the minor Prophets, the Lutheran theologian who would enjoy the benefit of a continued course of exegetical training should be an assiduous student of such exegetical classics as Luther's Genesis and Galatians, his commentaries on many of the Psalms, most of the Prophets, and various chapters and books of the New Testament, the *Harmonia Evangelica* of Chemnitz, Leyser, and Gerhard, Balduin's *Commentarius in omnes epistolas Pauli*, etc., works with which nothing in modern exegetical literature can bear comparison. To obtain the full benefit of such models of theological exegesis, the student should not content himself with using them as works of reference or aids to help him over difficulties, but

1) 1 Tim. 4, 16.

2) Luke 24, 32. 27.

by coherent and extensive reading accustom himself to that ponderous theology of the Lutheran Fathers, who were great not only in the massive architecture of their dogmatical systems and the heavy artillery of their polemics, but also in the abundance of gold, silver, and precious stones which they have lifted from the inexhaustible mines of Scripture and laid up in their commentaries as in spacious storehouses of sound scriptural theology.

Finally, we would most emphatically say that proficiency in exegetical practice cannot be acquired but by *practice*; and for practice, the practical theologian, the pastor of a congregation, has ample opportunity. There are the gospels and epistles of the church year, the texts which he is to expound in his pulpit. Let him lay a good exegetical foundation for his sermons and secure scriptural material for the superstructure by elaborating a theological commentary on each text, not on loose slips of paper, but in a book, for future use, writing on alternate pages only and leaving the intervening blank pages free for future additions or corrections. There are the numerous proof-texts in the catechism which he is to expound to his catechumens and in public catechisations. Let him prepare a thorough theological commentary on this entire apparatus of texts, beginning with the first and ending with the last, also in a book for future use, again leaving ample space for additions and corrections. In the course of years, supplement volumes may be added with references to the principal volume and cross references in the latter. There are the texts he may select for his discourses on various occasions, funerals, preparatory services, etc.; let him collect them in a book and add a commentary to each.—Let him embody in all these commentaries the references to his sources of information or exegetical helps. And there is his Bible. Let him at all times have under exegetical treatment some book of Scripture. And let him rest assured that his labor will not be in vain in the Lord.

A. G.