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Doctrinal Theology.

BIBLIOLOGY.

(Continued.)

The Author of the Bible is God; not man under God; not man and God; but simply God. The Old Testament Scriptures are "the oracles of *God*."¹⁾ What Moses said in the Pentateuch was "the word of *God*."²⁾ The words of the Psalmist are words which "the *Holy Ghost* saith."³⁾ By that which is written in Jeremiah, the Prophet, "the *Holy Ghost* is a witness to us."⁴⁾ The things that Paul, the Apostle, writes to the Corinthians, "are the commandments of the *Lord*,"⁵⁾ even as what Isaiah wrote was spoken *by* the prophet, but "*of* the *Lord*,"⁶⁾ and *by* the mouth of His servant David, the *Lord God* said what we read in the Psalm.⁷⁾ In short, every part of Scripture is the *word of God* and can not be broken;⁸⁾ and "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,"⁹⁾ not certain parts of Scripture, of

1) Rom. 3, 2.

2) Mark 7, 10. 13.

3) Heb. 3, 7. coll. Ps. 95, 7. 8.

4) Heb. 10, 15. 16. Cf. Jer. 31, 33. f.

5) 1 Cor. 14, 37.

6) Matt. 1, 22: τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου. Cf. Is. 7, 14.

7) Acts 4, 24 f. coll. Ps. 2, 1. 2.

8) John 10, 34. 35. coll. Ps. 82, 6.

9) 2 Tim. 3, 16.

Exegetical Theology.

WHAT IS EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY?

Theology may be considered *in concreto*, as it is inherent in a theologian, being that aptitude which constitutes him a theologian; or *in abstracto*, as it is laid down in books and treatises exhibiting what the theologian should know, and the rules and principles which the theologian should observe and maintain, as a theologian. The same may be said also of exegetical theology. In fact, exegetical theology is not a species or a part of theology, but theology viewed in a certain relation, as related to certain objects and functions wherewith a theologian's mind is occupied. We do not know of four theologies, *doctrinal*, *exegetical*, *historical*, and *practical*, but of *one* true theology in its various aspects. Neither do we distinguish four kinds or classes of theologians, dogmatic theologians, exegetical theologians, etc.; but the same theologian's selfsame theological mind is directed upon the various fields or objects of theological lore and occupied with the various operations of theological practice. Even in the same performance, as in the preparation or delivery of a sermon, the same theological mind may be, not only successively, but even simultaneously, occupied in various theological ways, exegetically, historically, dogmatically, and homiletically. But when the theologian is occupied in seeking and finding and establishing and setting forth the true sense of holy Scripture, and inasmuch as he is so occupied, he exerts himself *exegetically*; and the aptitude of his mind by virtue of which he is capable of thus exerting himself is his *theology*; and his theology as qualified for and directed upon such exegetical performances is his *exegetical theology*.

Thus, then, exegetical theology is primarily and properly an aptitude of the mind. Not a natural faculty; for no one is a theologian by nature. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them.¹⁾ The aptitude of theology, and of exegetical theology especially must be acquired, and even its acquisition is not a mere natural process or achievement, but the acquisition of a gift of God achieved under the guidance of God and in the power of God. Cleopas and his companion on their way to Emmaus were ignorant of the true sense of the Scriptures, until Christ, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."²⁾ And also of the "eleven and them that were with them" it is said: "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures."³⁾ Exegetical theology is *habitus practicus θεοδότητος*, a God-given practical habitude. It is that aptitude in which the man of Ethiopia was deficient, who, when he was asked, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" replied, "How can I, except some man should guide me?"⁴⁾ and which was manifest in Philip when he "opened his mouth and began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus."⁵⁾

The task for which the exegete must be qualified being the interpretation of Scripture, the specific nature of such qualification will, in a measure, appear from a consideration of the nature of such task.

Scripture is the written word of God composed in words of human speech or language with which God has for all times connected certain thoughts which were in his mind when he indited those words and which he would by such words convey to the minds of those who should read or

1) 1 Cor. 2, 14.

2) Luke 24, 27.

3) Luke 24, 33. 45.

4) Acts 8, 30. f.

5) Ibid. v. 35.

hear these words as they were chosen and arranged by inspiration of God, in order that those thoughts of God should produce in the minds and hearts of men the effects intended by such utterances. But these effects are not to be wrought by magic, as a conjurer's unintelligible incantations may be effective; but the word of God directs itself to the human understanding, suggesting to the reader or hearer certain notions or ideas and establishing in the mind of the reader or hearer the relations of such notions or ideas, viz. the relations which exist between a subject and its predicate, or which are indicated by attributive or adverbial words, phrases, or clauses, in rational human speech. This is condescension in the Spirit of God; but condescension to rational mind, not to irrational instincts; to rational intellect, which is so organized and constituted as to be capable of spiritual enlightenment, of being imbued with knowledge, not only of temporal, but also of spiritual things. Even to the heathen nations that walked in their own ways, God "left not himself without witness;"¹⁾ by the works of creation and preservation he "shewed unto them,"²⁾ what might thus be known of him by rational beings. Brutes might see the sun and moon and stars and hear the peals of thunder; but men, seeing the visible things, were capable of seeing at the same time "invisible things," not with their eyes, but *νοούμενα*, as by the inner vision of a rational mind, of which the brute is destitute. This is the peculiar oxymoron in the passage here referred to,³⁾ and its solution; *τὰ ἀόρατα . . . καθορᾶται*, the *invisible* things . . . *are seen*, but not with the sense of sight by the eye of the body, but *νοούμενα*, as by mental perception. Since the world was made, man, seeing with his eyes the *ποιήματα*, the *works* of God, would with his *νοῦς*, his rational mind, behold the maker of such works, who is himself *ἀόρατος*, invisible, but

1) Acts 14, 16. 17.

2) Rom. 1, 19.

3) Rom. 1, 20. *Τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου τοῖς ποιήμασι νοούμενα καθορᾶται.*

who by his wondrous works suggests himself and his *αἰδιος δόναμις καὶ θεϊότης*, his eternal power and Godliness,¹⁾ to those by whom he would be sought and found.²⁾ Thus also by his written word God would manifest himself to rational minds, and not only his existence, but also τὰ δόρατα αὐτοῦ, the invisible things of him, and not only such attributes of his *θεϊότης* as his eternal power and wisdom, but also his grace and mercy, his good and gracious will, his counsels and decrees and their ways and means of execution. And as the existence of God and his divine majesty is suggested and may be known by the works of God, so all the counsel of God and whatever he would have us know concerning him is suggested and may be known by the word of God. Both the works of God in the universe and the words of God in the Scriptures are signs suggestive of certain truths relative to God and the relation between God and man, the former suggesting truths of natural theology, the latter, of revealed theology.

But Scripture as well as Nature must be interpreted in order that the truths which *may be* derived from them should actually *be* derived by those for whom they are intended. And while only rational minds *can* interpret the signs of nature or of Scripture, not every rational mind is so conditioned or constituted that it actually *will* interpret them. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork;³⁾ but Lalande, the Astronomer, declared that he had searched the heavens far and wide and had nowhere found a trace of God; and Laplace explained to Napoleon that he had not once mentioned God in his System of Celestial Mechanics, because he had no use for that "hypothesis." Others have turned around and read Pantheism into the universe. In fact, the human mind in its fallen state has been for ages and is to-day the world over very little disposed to interpret as it should the book of Nature, though its characters stand forth

1) *Not θεότης, Godhead.*

2) Acts 17, 27.

3) Ps. 19, 1.

in bold relief to-day as they did in the days of Job. As children would view hieroglyphics and note and count and compare and copy the stars and birds and reptiles, etc., there depicted, amusing themselves and others, but reposing in profound ignorance of the intended meaning of those signs and never so much as thinking that they had any meaning at all, so men, even men of learning priding themselves as naturalists, grope about in God's encyclopedia, every article of which should teach them precisely what they utterly fail to understand "through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."¹⁾

But owing to this ignorance and blindness of his heart, man, indisposed properly to interpret the works of God in Nature, is even less disposed to interpret as he should the word of God in Scripture. This word of God, it is true, was not composed in a language devised expressly for the purpose of thereby uttering what was in the mind of God, as it might have been, if God had chosen thus to communicate with man, but in languages which had been in substance the spoken languages of men before they were made the vehicle of divine thought to be conveyed to human minds. These languages, Hebrew and Greek, having thus been for all times elevated to the dignity of sacred languages, the vocabularies and the grammatical forms and structure of which were adopted and adapted by the Holy Spirit to serve the purpose of a divine revelation to man, it, of course, becomes incumbent upon those who would interpret the *ipsisima verba Spiritus Sancti* to acquire a knowledge, and not only a superficial, but a thorough knowledge of and familiarity with these languages, just as, if God had chosen to frame a new language for this purpose, the study of that language would have become the task of those who would equip themselves for exegetical theology. But while the knowledge of Hebrew and Greek must be looked upon as an indispensable prerequisite for the interpretation of the

1) Eph. 4, 18.

Greek and Hebrew Scriptures, such linguistic preparation does not constitute a man a theologian qualified for exegetical work, the interpretation of Scripture. To the Gentiles in the days of St. Paul the gospel of Christ was "foolishness,"¹⁾ though it was preached to them in Greek, and they are expressly termed *Ἕλληνας*, *Greeks*, by the apostle.²⁾ A philologist may be able to point out all the peculiarities of Pauline and Petrine diction, of the Pastoral epistles, of the book of Job and the prophesies of Isaiah, all the linguistic beauties of the Song of Songs and of the Gospel according to St. Mark, and yet be only a philologist and in no sense a theologian, but the very reverse, an impugner of all sound theology. As a philologist he may render very valuable services to the theologian who knows how to avail himself of such services. He may write a linguistically excellent Grammar of New Testament Greek, or a grammatical commentary which may conclusively settle a multitude of grammatical questions and difficulties, thus rendering services which the theologian should gratefully accept and utilize,³⁾ and yet deserving the name of a theologian far less than many a man who had never learned the Greek alphabet and would not know if he held the Hebrew Bible upside down.

Biblical linguistics, then, must not be confounded with exegetical theology, the former being part of the equipment of a theologian, not theology itself. There are still other *subsidiaria theologica*, such as biblical archaeology, biblical geography, contemporary history, Assyriology, Egyptology, all of which should be made subservient to exegetical theology, but are not themselves either jointly or severally theology in any proper sense of the term. A man may be conversant with all these disciplines, and still be void of true theology. A man may be a celebrated astronomer, familiar

1) 1 Cor. 1, 23.

2) 1 Cor. 1, 22. 24.

3) — though also in such works of untheological biblical philologists the lack of true theology will not fail to make itself most painfully felt.

with the stars, computing their movements and positions for thousands of years, and yet fail to find in them a trace of their sublime testimony to the power and wisdom of their Maker. And a man may be a linguist quoted as an authority in Hebrew and Greek, an ingenious writer of commentaries covering the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and failing to find Him, who from Genesis to Revelation is the Alpha and Omega of the book of God, to whom "all the prophets give witness,"¹⁾ fail to find that very God who by the Scriptures would reveal himself and the counsel of our salvation, the mysteries of his grace. And should such a man, to whom true theology has remained a hidden wisdom and even foolishness, be termed a theologian, *lucus a non lucendo?* Luther is right when he says: "As to the internal clearness, no man sees one Iota in Scriptures, unless he have the Spirit of God; all have darkened hearts, so that, even if they profess and know how to propound all that Scripture contains, yet they know and truly understand nothing thereof. . . . For the Spirit is required in order to understand all Scripture and any part thereof."²⁾ And Chemnitz truly says: "The gift of interpreting (Scripture) is not without the church in the unregenerate; for it is the light of the Holy Spirit received in the hearts of godly men."³⁾

Yet we must not confound exegetical theology with the state of regeneration. The two are not identical. While no unregenerate man is truly a theologian, not every regenerate man is apt to perform the various tasks of a theologian. Every general is a soldier; but not every soldier is a general.

1) Acts 10, 43; cf. Luke 24, 27; John 5, 39.

2) Si de interna claritate dixeris, nullus homo unum iota in Scripturis videt, nisi qui Spiritum Dei habet; omnes habent obscuratum cor, ita ut si etiam dicant et norint proferre omnia Scripturae, nihil tamen horum sentiant aut vere cognoscant. . . . Spiritus enim requiritur ad totam Scripturam et ad quemlibet eius partem intelligendam. *Opp. Jen. Lat. vol. III, fol. 163, b.*

3) Donum interpretationis non est extra ecclesiam, in non renatis; est enim lumen Spiritus Sancti acceptum in cordibus piorum. *Exam. Conc. Trid. Sess. IV, decr. II, can. II, f. 57.*

There may be greater bravery and loyalty in a private than in his general; yet it may be impossible to make a general of that private. To be a general requires more knowledge, more experience, more training, superior talents, greater ability. Thus also every true theologian is a truly regenerate man, a Christian, but a Christian with certain qualifications many or most of which are not found nor sought in most of his fellow Christians. There may be greater strength and energy of faith and love in a theologian's wife than in her husband; but she is not for that reason what he is; she may be unable to define any article of her faith, or to analyse any text upon which it is based, or to frame any argument wherewith to refute any antithesis in a theological controversy. The martyrdom of Blandina is for all times one of the most illustrious ensamples of Christian heroism recorded, though the only words she has left to history are "I am a Christian, and no wickedness is committed among us;"¹⁾ but Stephen was a martyr not only of the Christian faith, but also of Christian theology, also of exegetical theology.²⁾

Maintaining, as we must, that exegetical theology is *theology*, nothing less, we find no difficulty in defining in what sense or aspect theology is *exegetical* theology. It is theology in its occupation with the text of Scripture as the source and norm of doctrine and rule of life and practice, and intent upon finding and propounding the true sense of such text. The theologian is exegetically occupied when he searches the Scriptures and finds therein and draws therefrom and establishes by and exhibits as from the word of Scripture whatever the Holy Spirit has laid down in any text or book of Scripture for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, for consolation and comfort in life and death; and the aptness to perform this is exegetical theology.

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1) Χριστιανή εἰμι, καὶ παρ' ἡμῶν οὐδὲν φαῦλον γίνεται. Euseb. H. E. V, 1.

2) Acts 7.

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