

ADDRESS

BY

REV. CHARLES A. BRIGGS, D.D.

ON OCCASION OF HIS

INAUGURATION

AS

DAVENPORT PROFESSOR

OF

Hebrew and the Cognate Languages,

IN THE

UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,

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INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

The Inauguration of the REV. CHARLES A. BRIGGS, D.D., as "DAVENPORT PROFESSOR OF HEBREW AND COGNATE LANGUAGES" in Union Theological Seminary, took place in the Chapel, Thursday, September 21, 1876.

Norman White, Esq., Vice-President of the Board of Directors, announced that Dr. Briggs, who had previously served the Seminary for two years as Provisional Professor with great acceptance, had been unanimously elected to the chair, in which he had now been inaugurated, at the meeting of the Board in May last; at which time the Professor elect made declaration of his assent to the Articles prescribed in our Constitution.

Prayer was offered by Rev. W. M. Taylor, D.D.

After this, the Address now published was delivered by Prof. Briggs.

This was followed by a brief charge and words of congratulation by Dr. Adams, the President of the Seminary, in behalf of the Faculty and the Board of Directors.

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EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY,

ESPECIALLY OF THE

OLD TESTAMENT.*

EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY is one of the four grand divisions of Theological Science. It is related to the other divisions, historical, systematic, and practical, as the primary and fundamental discipline upon which the others depend, and from which they derive their chief materials. Exegetical Theology has to do especially with the sacred Scriptures, their origin, history, character, exposition, doctrines, and rules of life. It is true that the other branches of theology have likewise to do with the sacred writings, in that their chief material is derived therefrom, but they differ from Exegetical Theology, not only in their *methods* of using this material, but likewise in the fact, that they do not *themselves* search out and gather this material, directly from the holy writings, but depend upon Exegetical Theology therefor ; whilst their energies are directed in Historical Theology in tracing the development of that material as the determining element in the history of the people of God ; in Systematic Theology, in arranging that material in the form most appropriate for systematic study, for attack and defense, in accordance with the needs of the age ; in Practical Theology, in directing that material to the conversion of souls, and training them in the holy life.

* The substance of this article was delivered as an Inaugural Address, by occasion of the induction of Dr. Briggs (Sept. 21, 1876) into the chair of Hebrew and the Cognate Languages in the Union Theological Seminary, N. Y.

Thus the whole of theology depends upon the exegesis of the Scriptures, and unless this department be thoroughly wrought out and established, the whole structure of theological truth will be weak and frail, for it will be found, in the critical hour, resting on the shifting sands of human opinion and practice, rather than on the rock of infallible divine truth.

The work of Exegetical Theology is all the more important, that each age has its own peculiar phase or department of truth to elaborate in the theological conception and in the life. Unless, therefore, theology freshen its life by ever-repeated draughts from the Holy Scriptures, it will be unequal to the tasks imposed upon it. It will not solve the problems of the thoughtful, dissolve the doubts of the cautious, or disarm the objections of the enemies of the truth. History will not, with her experience, unless she grasp the torch of divine revelation, which alone can illuminate the future and clear up the dark places of the present and the past. Systematic Theology will not satisfy the demands of the age if she appear in the worn-out armor or antiquated costume of former generations. She must beat out for herself a new suit of armor from Biblical material which is ever new; she must weave to herself a fresh and sacred costume of doctrine from the Scriptures which never disappoint the requirements of mankind; and thus armed and equipped with the weapons of the Living One, she will prove them quick and powerful, convincing and invincible, in her training of the disciple, and her conflicts with the infidel and heretic. And so Practical Theology will never be able to convert the world to Christ, and sanctify the church, without ever renewing its life from the Bible fountain; and so pervading our liturgy, hymnology, catechetical instruction, pastoral work and preaching, with the pure, noble, and soul-satisfying truths of God's word, that the necessities of the age may be supplied, for "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. iv : 4; Deut. viii : 3.)

And the history of the church, and, indeed, Christian experience, has shown that in so far as the other branches of Theology, have separated themselves from this fundamental discipline, and in proportion to the neglect of Exegetical Theology the church has fallen into a dead orthodoxy of scholasticism,

has lost its hold upon the masses of mankind, so that with its foundations undermined, it has yielded but feeble resistance to the onsets of infidelity. And it has ever been that the reformation or revival has come through the resort to the sacred oracles, and the organization of a freshly stated body of doctrine, and fresh methods of evangelization derived therefrom. We thus have reason to thank God, that heresy and unbelief so often drive us to our citadel, the sacred Scriptures, and force us back to the impregnable fortress of divine truth, in order that, depending no longer merely upon human weapons and defenses, we may use rather the divine, and thus reconquer all that may have been lost, and advance a stage onward in our victorious progress toward the end. Our adversaries may overthrow our systems of theology, our confessions and catechisms, our church organizations and methods of work, for these are, after all, human productions, the hastily thrown up out-works of the truth; but they can never contend successfully against the word of God that liveth and abideth forever (1 Peter i: 23), which, though the heavens fall and the earth pass away, will not fail in one jot or tittle from the most complete fulfillment (Matt. v: 18), which will shine in new beauty and glory as its parts are one by one searchingly examined, which will prove itself not only invincible but all-conquering, as point after point is most holy contested, until at last it claims universal obedience as the pure and faultless mirror of him who is himself the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person. (2 Cor. iii: 18; Heb. i: 3.)

Now it is an important characteristic of our Reformed and Calvinistic churches, that they give the sacred Scriptures such a fundamental position in their confessions and catechisms, and lay so much stress upon the so-called *formal* principle of the Protestant Reformation. Thus in both Helvetic confessions and the Westminster they constitute the first article*, whilst in the Heidelberg and Westminster catechisms they are placed at the foundation, in the former as the source of our knowledge of sin and misery, and of salvation (Quest. iii, xix), in the latter as dividing the catechism into two parts, teaching "what

* Niemeyer, *Collectio Confiss.*, p. 115, 467.

man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man."—(*Larger Catechism*, Quest. v; *Shorter Catechism*, Quest. iii.) And the authority of the word of God as "the *only* rule of faith and obedience" (*Larger Catechism*, Quest. v), has ever been maintained in our churches and seminaries.

Exegetical Theology being thus according to its *idea* the fundamental theological discipline, and all *important* as the fruitful source of theology, it must be thoroughly elaborated in all its parts according to exact and well-defined scientific *methods*. The *methods* proper to Exegetical Theology are the synthetic and the historical, the relative importance of which has been hotly contested. The importance of the historical method is so great that not a few have regarded the discipline, as a whole, as at once a primary division of Historical Theology. The examination of the Bible sources, the sacred writings being of the same essential character as the examination of other historical documents, they should be considered simply as the sources of Biblical history, and thus the writings themselves would be most appropriately treated under a history of Biblical literature (Hupfeld, Reuss, Fuerst, *et al.*), and the doctrines under a history of Biblical doctrine (the school of Baur).* But the sacred writings are not merely sources of historical information; they are the sources of the faith to be believed and the morals to be practiced by all the world; they are of everlasting value as the sum total of sacred doctrine and law for mankind, being not only for the past, but for the present and the future, as God's holy word to the human race, so that their value as historical documents becomes entirely subordinate to their value as a canon of Holy Scripture, the norm and rule of faith and life. Hence the synthetic method must predominate over the historical, as the proper exegetical method, and induction rule in all departments of the work; for it is the office of Exegetical Theology to gather from these sacred writings, as the storehouse of divine truth, the holy material, in order to arrange it by a process of induction and generalization into the generic forms that may best express the generic conceptions of the sacred Scriptures themselves. From this point of view it is clear, that the analytic method

* Compare my article on Biblical Theology, *Am. Presb. Review*, 1870; p. 122, *seq.*

can have but a very subordinate place in our branch of theology. It may be necessary in the work of separating the material, in the work of gathering it, but this is only in order to the synthetic process, which must ever prevail. It is to the improper application of the analytic method to exegesis, that such sad mistakes have been made in interpreting the word of God, making exegesis the slave of dogmatics and tradition, when she can only thrive as the free-born daughter of truth, whose word does not yield to dogmatics, but is divinely authoritative over dogmatics, and before whose voice tradition must ever give way; for exegesis cannot go to the text with preconceived opinions and dogmatic views that will constrain the text to accord with them, but rather with a living faith in the perspicuity and power of the word of God *alone, of itself*, to persuade and convince; and with reverential fear of the voice of him who speaks through it, which involves assurance of the truth, and submission and prompt obedience to his will. Thus, exegesis does not start from the unity to investigate the variety, but from the variety to find the unity. It does not seek the author's view and the divine doctrine through an analysis of the writing, the chapter, the verse, down to the word; but, inversely, it starts with the word and the clause, pursuing its way through the verse, paragraph, section, chapter, writing, collection of writings, the entire Bible, until the whole word of God is displayed before the mind, from the summit that has been attained after a long and arduous climbing.

Thus Exegetical Theology at least is a science, whose premises and materials are no less clear and tangible than those with which any other science has to do, and whose results are vastly more important than all other sciences combined, as they concern our salvation and everlasting welfare; and if, furthermore, this material with which we have to do be what it claims to be—the very word of God to man,—it is clear that here alone we have a science that deals with immutable facts and infallible truths, so that our science may take its place in the circle of sciences, despite all the efforts of false science to cast it out, as the royal, yes, the divine science. But let it be remembered that this position will be accorded it by the sciences only in so far as theology as a whole is true to the spirit

and character of its fundamental discipline, and does not assume a false position of dogmatism and traditional prejudice, or attempt to tyrannize over the other sciences in their earnest researches after the truth.

Exegetical Theology being thus fundamental and important, having such thorough-going scientific methods, it must have manifold *divisions* and subdivisions of its work. These, in their order and mutual relation, are determined by a proper adjustment of its methods and the subordination of the historical to the inductive process. Thus at the outset there are imposed upon those who would enter upon the study of the sacred Scriptures certain primary and fundamental questions respecting the holy writings, such as: Which are the sacred writings? why do we call them *sacred*? whence did they originate? under what historical circumstances? who were their authors? to whom were they addressed? what was their design? are the writings that have come down to us genuine? is the text reliable? and the like. These questions may be referred to the general department of *Biblical Introduction*. Then the text itself is to be interpreted according to correct principles and by all the instrumentalities at hand, with all the light that the study of centuries may throw upon it. This is *Biblical Exegesis*. Finally, the results of this exegetical process are to be gathered into one organic whole. This is *Biblical Theology*. These then are the three grand divisions into which Exegetical Theology naturally divides itself, each in turn having its appropriate subordinate departments.

I. BIBLICAL INTRODUCTION has as its work to determine all those introductory questions that may arise respecting the sacred writings, preliminary to the work of exegesis. These questions are various, yet may be grouped in accordance with a general principle. But it is, first of all, necessary to limit the bounds of our department and exclude from it all that does not properly come within its sphere. Thus Hagenbach* brings into consideration here certain questions which he assigns to the auxiliary disciplines of Sacred Philology, Sacred Archæology, and Sacred Canonics. But it is difficult to see why, if these are in any essential relation to our department, they should not

be logically incorporated; whilst if they do not stand in such close relations, why they should not be referred to their own proper departments of study. Thus Sacred Canonics clearly belongs to our discipline, whilst Sacred Archæology no less certainly belongs to the historical department; and as for Sacred Philology, it should not be classed with theology at all, for the languages of the Bible are not sacred from any inherent virtue in them, but only for the reason, that they have been selected as the vehicle of divine revelation, and thus their connection with the scriptures is accidental rather than necessary. And still further we are to remark, that all departments of theology are in mutual relation to one another, and in a higher scale all the departments of learning act and react upon one another—such as theology, philosophy, philology, and history. Hence, that one department of study is related to another does not imply that it should be made auxiliary thereto. Thus the languages of scripture are to be studied precisely as the other languages, as a part of General Philology. The Hellenistic Greek is a dialect of the Greek language, which is itself a prominent member of the Indo-Germanic family, whilst the Hebrew and Chaldee are sisters with the Assyrian and Syriac, the Arabic and Ethiopic, the Phœnician and Samaritan, of the Shemitic family. The study of these languages, as languages, properly belongs to the college or university course, and has no appropriate place in the theological seminary. Valuable time is consumed in these studies that is taken from Exegetical Theology itself and never compensated for. The Shemitic languages are constantly rising into prominence, over against the Indo-Germanic family, and demand their appropriate place in the curriculum of a liberal education. The time has fully come when philologists and theologians should unitedly insist that a place should be found for them in the college course; and that this valuable department of knowledge, upon the pursuit of which so much depends for the history of the Orient, the origin of civilization and mankind, as well as the whole subject of the three great religions of the world, should not give way to the physical sciences, which, whilst properly of subordinate importance as dealing mainly with material things, have already assumed an undue prominence in our institutions of learning over against philology, history, and philosophy, that

deal with higher and nobler problems. German theology has a great advantage, in that the theological student is already prepared in the gymnasium for the university with a knowledge of Hebrew relatively equivalent to his Greek. The Presbyterians of Scotland have advanced beyond us in this respect, by requiring an elementary knowledge of Hebrew, in order to entrance upon the seminary course, at the same time providing such elementary training during the seminary vacation. This is a step in which we might readily follow them. We cannot afford to wait until all the colleges follow the noble lead of the University of Virginia, Lafayette, and others, in giving their students the option of Hebrew instruction; but must use all our influence to constrain them to fulfill their duty of preparing students for the study of theology, as well as of the other professions. We might, at least for the present, provide in our larger seminaries a special preparatory course of study, of say three months in the summer in which instruction might be given in Hebrew, Hellenistic Greek, and Philosophy. Now this or some other plan must be adopted, if the study of the Old Testament is to assume its proper place in our theological instruction; if our church is to successfully meet and overcome the assaults, daily becoming more frequent and bitter, not only from without, but from within (*vide Scribner's Monthly*, Sept., 1876., Art.—“Protestant Vaticanism”), upon the Old Testament foundations of our faith.

Still further it is to be noticed, that there can henceforth be no thorough mastery of the Hebrew tongue by clinging reverently to the skirts of the Jew. We might as well expect to master the classic Latin from the language of the monks, or acquire evangelical doctrine from Rome. The cognate languages are indispensable. And it is just here that a rich treasure, prepared by divine Providence for these times, is pouring into our laps, if we will only use it. The Assyrian alone, as recently brought to light, and established in her position as one of the oldest sisters, is of inestimable value, not to speak of the Arabic and Syriac, the Ethiopic, Phœnician, Samaritan, and the lesser languages and dialects that the monuments are constantly revealing. Immense material is now at hand, and is still being gathered from these sources, that will considerably modify our views of the Hebrew language, and of the history and religion

of the Hebrews in relation to the other peoples of the Orient. We are only beginning to learn that the Hebrew language has such a thing as a syntax, and that it is a highly organized and wonderfully flexible and beautiful tongue, the result of centuries of development. As the bands of Massoretic tradition are one after another falling off, the inner spirit and life of the language are being discovered, the dry bones are clothing themselves with flesh, and rich, warm blood is animating the frame, giving to the features nobility and beauty.* If the Presbyterian Church is to be renowned for its mastery of the Bible, if the symbols and the life of the church are to harmonize, we must advance and occupy this rich and fruitful field for the Lord, and not wait for the unbelievers to occupy it before us, and then be compelled to contend at a disadvantage, they having the prestige of knowledge and success.†

Whilst, therefore, we exclude the study of the Hebrew and cognate languages from the range of Exegetical Theology, we magnify their importance, not only to the theological student, but also to the entire field of scholarship. Other scholars may do without them, but for the theologian these studies are indispensable, and we must at the very beginning strain all our energies to the mastery of the Hebrew tongue. If we have not done it out of the seminaries, we must do it in the seminaries. We must take our disadvantages as we find them, and make up by severity of study for the lack of time; and whilst we cannot at present do justice to the requirements of the Exegetical Theology of the Old Testament, though for the present she must be the little sister in the seminary course, yet we must not undervalue her; we must form a proper conception of her, employ faithfully her methods, cover the ground of her divisions, even if but thinly, and she will grow upon our hands and prove herself one of the excellent ones. For though we can only deal with *selections*, and study the broad outlines of our discipline, and have but a

*It is exceedingly gratifying that our American students are eagerly entering upon these studies. The large classes in the cognate languages, not only in our seminary (the Syriac class of 1875 was 9, the Arabic class of 1876 is 19), but also at Princeton, promise great things for the future in this regard.

†The church should be very grateful that the Assyrian researches have fallen at once into Christian hands, and not, like the Egyptian, been the storehouse at the start for the enemies of the truth.

fragmentary course at the best, yet we may taste of some of the tit-bits of Scripture and enjoy them to the full, and thus learn the richness of the word of God as the true soul food. We may be prepared by little things for greater things, and, above all, learning to love our methods and our work, we may devote our lives to it for the glory of God and the good of our race.

Having excluded Sacred Philology from Exegetical Theology and from Biblical Introduction, we now have to define more closely the proper field of Biblical Introduction. *Biblical Introduction* has to do with all introductory questions respecting the sacred Scriptures, all the introductory work that may be necessary to prepare the way of Biblical Exegesis. Looking at the sacred Scriptures as the *sources* to be investigated, we see three fields of inquiry presenting themselves: the individual writings, the collection or canon, and the text; or, in more detail the three groups of questions: 1. As to the origin, authorship, time of composition, character, design, and direction⁶ of the *individual writings* that claim, or are claimed, to belong to the sacred Scriptures. 2. As to the idea, extent, character, and authority of the *Canon*, into which these writings have been collected as the sacred Scriptures of the church. 3. As to the *text* of which the Canon is composed, the MSS. in which it is preserved, the *translations* of it and *citations* from it. These subordinate branches of Biblical Introduction may be called sacred Isagogics, sacred Canonics, and sacred Criticism.

Now with reference to these departments in detail: (1) *Sacred Isagogics* is in itself a kind of introduction to Biblical Introduction, dealing with those questions that are most fundamental. Here we have to do with individual writings and groups of writings. The parts are ever to be investigated before the wholes, the individual writings before the collected ones. With reference to each writing, or, it may be, part of a writing, we have to determine the historical origin and authorship, the original readers, the design and character of the composition, and its relation to other writings of its group. These questions must be settled partly by *external historical* evidence, but chiefly by *internal* evidence, such as the language, style of composition, archæological and historical traces, the conceptions of the author respecting the various subjects of human thought, and the like. Now with reference to such questions as these, it is manifest

that we have nothing to do with traditional views or dogmatic opinions. Whatever may have been the prevailing views in the church with reference to the Pentateuch, Psalter, or any other book of Scripture, they will not deter the conscientious exegete an instant from accepting and teaching the results of a historical and critical study of the writings themselves. It is just here that Christian theologians have greatly injured the cause of the truth and the Bible by dogmatizing in a department where it is least of all appropriate, and, indeed, to the highest degree improper, as if our faith depended at all upon these human opinions respecting the word of God; as if the Scriptures could be benefited by defending the indefensible, whereas by these frequent and shameful defeats and routs these traditionalists bring disgrace and alarm even into the impregnable fortress itself, and prejudice the sincere inquirer against the Scriptures, as if these were questions of orthodoxy or piety, or of allegiance to the word of God or the symbols of the church. Our standards teach that "the word of God is the only rule of faith and obedience,* and that "the authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God, the the author thereof."† How unorthodox it is therefore to set up another rule of prevalent opinion as a stumbling block to those who would accept the authority of the word of God alone. So long as the word of God is honored, and its decisions regarded as final, what matters it if a certain book be detached from the name of one holy man and ascribed to another, or classed among those with unknown authors? Are the laws of the Pentateuch any less divine, if it should be proved that they are the product of the experience of God's people from Moses to Josiah? ‡ Is the Psalter to be esteemed any the less precious that the Psalms should be regarded as the product of many poets singing through many centuries the sacred melodies of God-fearing souls, responding from their hearts, as from a thousand-stringed lyre, to the touch of the Holy One of Israel? Is the book of Job less majestic and sublime, as, the noblest monument of sacred poetry, it stands before us in its solitariness, with un-

* *Larger Catechism*, Quest. iii.

† *Confess. of Faith*, Chap. i: 4.

‡ *British and Foreign Evang. Review*, July, 1868, Art. "The Progress of Old Testament Studies."

known author, unknown birthplace, and from an unknown period of history? Are the ethical teachings of the Proverbs, the Song of songs, and Ecclesiastes, any the less solemn and weighty, that they may not be the product of Solomon's wisdom alone, but of the reflection of many holy wise men of different epochs, gathered about Solomon as their head? Is the epistle to the Hebrews any less valuable for its clear presentation of the fulfillment of the Old Testament priesthood and sacrifice in the work of Christ, that it must be detached from the name of Paul? Let us not be so presumptuous, so irreverent to the Word of God, so unbelieving with reference to its inherent power of convincing and assuring the seekers for the truth, as to condemn any sincere and candid inquirer as a heretic or a rationalist, because he may differ from us on such questions as these? The internal evidence must be decisive in all questions of Biblical Isagogics and we must not fear but that the *truth*, whatever it may be, will be most in accordance with God's Word and for the glory of God and the interest of the church.

The individual writings having been examined in detail and in their inter-relation, we now have to consider them as collected writings in the canon of the church.

(2) *Sacred Canonics* considers the *Canon* of sacred Scripture as to its *idea* in its historical formation, its extent, character, authority, and historical influence. These inquiries, like those in the previous department, are to be made in accordance with the historical and synthetic methods. We are not to start with preconceived dogmatic views as to the *idea* of the canon, but derive this *idea* by induction from the sacred writings themselves; and in the same manner decide all other questions that may arise. Thus the extent of the Canon is not to be determined by the consensus of the churches,* or by the citation and reverent use of them in the fathers, and their recognition by the earliest standard authorities,† for these historical evidences, so important in Historical Theology, have no value in Exegetical Theology,

* Indeed, they do not agree with reference to its extent whether it includes the Apocryphal books or not, and, still further, they differ in the matter of distinguishing within the canon, between writings of primary and secondary authority.

† These, indeed, are not entirely agreed, and if they were, could only give us a human and fallible authority.

as they had no influence in the formation of the Canon itself; nor, indeed, by their accord with orthodoxy or the rule of faith,* for it is not only too broad, in that other writings than sacred are orthodox, but again too narrow, in that the standard is the shifting one of subjective opinion, or external human authority, which, indeed, presupposes the Canon itself as an object of criticism; and all these external reasons, historical and dogmatic, after all, can have but a provisional and temporary authority—but the only authoritative and final decision of these questions is from the internal marks and characteristics of the Scriptures, their recognition of one another, their harmony with the idea, character, and development of a divine revelation, as it is derived from the Scriptures themselves, as well as their own well-tested and critically examined claims to inspiration and authority. These reasons, and these alone, gave them their historical position and authority as a Canon; and these alone can have their place in the department of Exegetical Theology. And it is only on this basis that the historical and dogmatic questions may be properly considered, with respect to their recognition by Jew and Christian, and their authority in the church. The writings having thus been considered individually and collectively, we are prepared for the third step, the examination of the text itself.

(3) *Sacred Criticism* considers the text of the sacred Scriptures both as a whole and in detail. The sacred writings have shared the fate of all human productions in their transmission from hand to hand, and in the multiplication of copies. Hence, through the mistakes of copyists, the intentional corruption of the heretic, and supposed improvement of the over-anxious orthodox, the MSS. that have been preserved betray differences of reading; and questions arise with respect to certain parts of writings, or, indeed, whole writings, whether they are genuine or spurious. This department has a wide field of investigation. First of all, the peculiarities of the Bible language must be studied, and the idiomatic individualities of the respective authors. Then the age of the various MSS. must be determined, their peculiarities, and relative importance. The ancient versions

*It was in accordance with this subjective standard that Luther rejected the epistle of James and Esther. Comp. *Dorner, Gesch der Protest. Theologie*, s. 234, seq.

now come into the field, especially the Septuagint, the Chaldee and Samaritan Targums, the Syriac Pechito, and the Vulgate, which again, each in turn, has to go through the same sifting as to the critical value of its own text. Here, especially in the Old Testament, we go back of any MSS. and are brought face to face with differences that can be accounted for only on the supposition of original MSS., whose peculiarities have been lost. To these may be added the citations of the original text in the works of rabbins, and Christian scholars. Then we have the still more difficult comparison of parallel passages, where differences of text show a difference in MSS. reaching far back of any historical MSS., or even version.* Now, it is manifest that Biblical Criticism has to meet all these difficulties and answer all these questions, and harmonize and adjust all these differences, in order that the genuine, original, pure, and uncorrupted text of the word of God may be gained, as it proceeded directly from the original authors to the original readers. And the exegetical method will begin with the differences of the Scripture texts, before it enters upon the study of MSS. and versions. This department of study is all the more difficult for the Old Testament, that the field is so immense, the writings so numerous, various, and ancient, the languages so little understood in their historical peculiarities, and, still further, in that we have to overcome the prejudices of the Massoretic system, which, whilst faithful and reliable so far as the knowledge of the times went, yet, as resting simply on tradition, without critical or historical investigation, and without any proper conception of the general principles of grammar and comparative philology, cannot be accepted as final; for the time has long since passed when the vowel points and accents can be deemed inspired. We have to go back of them, to the unpointed text, for all purposes of criticism.

Thus the work of *Biblical Introduction* ends, by giving us all that it can learn respecting the individual writings, their collection in the Canon, and their text, by presenting to us

*Comp. Psalm xiv with Psalm liii; Psalm xviii with 2 Samuel xxii, and the books of Samuel and Kings on one hand, with the books of the Chronicles on the other, and indeed, throughout. Compare also the Canonical books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel, with the Apocryphal additions and supplements in the Septuagint version, and finally the citation of earlier writings in the later ones, especially in the New Testament.

the sacred Scriptures as the holy word of God, all the errors and improvements of men having been eliminated, in a text so far as possible, as it came from holy men who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter i: 21), so that we are brought into the closest possible relations with the living God through his word, having in our hands the *very form* that contains the *very substance* of divine revelation; so that with reverence and submission to his will we may enter upon the work of interpretation, confidently expecting to be assured of the truth in the work of Biblical Exegesis.

II. BIBLICAL EXEGESIS. And now first of all we have to lay down certain general principles derived from the study of the word of God, upon which this exegesis itself is to be conducted. These principles must accord with the proper *methods* of Exegetical Theology and the nature of the work to be done. The work of establishing these principles belongs to the introductory department of *Biblical Hermeneutics*. The Scriptures are human productions, and yet truly divine. They must be interpreted as other human writings, and yet their peculiarities and differences from other human writings must be recognized,* especially the supreme determining difference of their inspiration by the Spirit of God, in accordance with which they require not only a sympathy with the human element in the sound judgment and practical sense of the grammarian, the critical investigation of the historian, and the æsthetic taste of the man of letters; but also a sympathy with the divine element, an inquiring, reverent spirit, to be enlightened by the Spirit of God, without which no exposition of the Scriptures as sacred, inspired writings is possible. It is this feature that distinguishes the discipline from the other corresponding ones, as *Sacred Hermeneutics*. Thus we have to take into the account the inspiration of the Scriptures, their *harmony*, their unity in variety, their sweet simplicity, and their sublime mystery; and all this not to override the principles of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, but to supplement them, yes, rather, infuse them with a new life and vigor, making them sacred grammar, sacred logic, and sacred rhetoric. And just here it is highly important that the *history of exegesis* should come

* Comp. Immer, *Hermeneutik der N. T.* s. 9.

into the field of study in order to show us the abuses of false principles of interpretation as a warning; and the advantages of correct principles as an encouragement.*

After this preliminary labor, the exegete is prepared for his work in detail, and, indeed, the immensity of these details is at once over-powering and discouraging. The extent, the richness, the variety of the sacred writings, poetry, history, and prophecy, extending through so many centuries, and from such a great number of authors, known and unknown, the inherent difficulty of interpreting the sacred mysteries, the things of God—who is sufficient for these things? who would venture upon this holy ground without a quick sense of his incapacity to grasp the divine ideas, and an absolute dependence upon the Holy Spirit to show them unto him! (John xvi: 15.) Truly, here is a work for multitudes, for ages, for the most profound and devout study of all mankind, for here we have to do with the *whole word of God to man*. The exegete is like the miner of Job xxviii.†

“To (nature’s) darkness man is setting bounds;
Unto the end he searcheth every thing,—
The stones of darkness and the shade of death
Breaks from the settlers’ view the deep ravine;
And there, forgotten of the foot-worn path,
They let them down—from men they roam afar.”

For the exegete must free himself as far as possible from all traditionalism and dogmatic prejudice, must leave the haunts of human opinion, and bury himself in the word of God. He must descend beneath the surface of the word into its depths. The letter must be broken through to get at the precious idea. The dry rubbish of misconception must be thrown out, and a shaft forced through every obstacle to get at the truth. And whilst faithful in the employment of all these powers of the human intellect and will, the true exegete fears the Lord, and only thereby hopes through his intimacy with the Lord for the revelation of wisdom.‡

1. The exegete begins his work with *Grammatical Exegesis*. Here he has to do with the *form*, the dress of the revelation,

*Compare especially Diestel, *Gesch. d. A. T. in der Christ. Kirche*, Jena, 1869.

†Taylor Lewis’ version *Lange’s Commentaries*, Volume on Job. N. Y., 1874.

‡Job xxviii: 28; Psalm xxv: 14; Proverbs viii: 17, *seq.*

which is not to be disregarded or undervalued, for it is the form in which God has seen fit to convey his truth, the dress in which alone we can approach her and know her. Hebrew grammar must therefore be mastered in its etymology and syntax, or grammatical exegesis will be impossible. Here patience, exactness, sound judgment, and keen discernment are required, for every word is to be examined by itself, etymologically and historically, not etymologically alone, for Greek and Hebrew roots have not unfrequently been made to teach very false doctrines, forgetting that a word is a living thing, and having, besides its root, the still more important *stem*, branches, and products—indeed, a history of meanings. The word is then to be considered in its syntactical relations in the clause; and thus step by step the *grammatical sense* is to be ascertained, the false interpretations eliminated, and the various possible ones correctly presented and classified. Now, without this patient study of words and clauses no accurate translation is possible, no trustworthy exposition can be made.* It is true that grammatical exegesis leaves us in doubt between many possible constructions of the sense; but these doubts will be solved as the work of exegesis goes on, and then, on the other hand, it eliminates many views as ungrammatical which have been hastily formed, and effectually prevents that jumping at conclusions to which the indolent and impetuous are alike inclined.

2. The second step in exegesis is *Logical and Rhetorical Exegesis*. The words and clauses must be interpreted in accordance with the context, the development of the author's thought and purpose; and also in accordance with the principles of rhetoric, discriminating plain language from figurative, poetry from prose, history from prophecy, and the various kinds of history, poetry, and prophecy from one another. This is to be done not after an arbitrary manner, but in accordance with the general laws of logic and rhetoric that apply to all writings whatever. Now it is clear, that whilst the use of figurative language has given occasion to the mystic and the dogmatist

*Yes, we may say that no translation can be thoroughly understood after the generation in which it was made, without this resort to the original text, which alone can determine in many cases the meaning of the translators themselves, when we come upon obsolete terms, or words whose meanings have become modified or lost.

for the most arbitrary and senseless exegesis, yet the laws of logic and rhetoric, correctly applied to the text, will clip the wings of the fanciful, and destroy the foundations of the dogmatist, and, still further, will serve to determine many questions that grammar alone cannot decide, and hence, more narrowly define the meaning of the text.

3. The third step in exegesis is *Historical Exegesis*. The author must be interpreted in accordance with his historical surroundings. We must apply to the text the knowledge of the author's times, derived from archæology, geography, chronology, and general history. Thus only will we be able to enter upon the *scenery* of the text. It is not necessary to resort to the history of exegesis; one's own observation is sufficient to show the absurdities and the outrageous errors into which a neglect of this principle leads many earnest but ignorant men. No one can present the Bible narrative in the dress of modern every-day life without making the story ridiculous. And it must be so from the very nature of the case. Historical circumstances are essential to the truthfulness and vividness of the narrative. Instead of our transporting Scripture events to our scenery, we must transport ourselves to their scenery, if we would correctly understand them and realize them. If we wish to apply Scripture truth we may, after having correctly apprehended it, eliminate it from its historical circumstances, and then give it a new and appropriate form for practical purposes; but we can never interpret Scripture without historical exegesis. This will serve to more narrowly define the meaning of the text, and to eliminate from the results thus far attained in the exegetical process.

4. The fourth step in exegesis is *Comparative Exegesis*. The results already gained with reference to any particular passage are to be compared with the results attained in a like manner in other similar passages of the same author, or other authors of the period, and in some cases from other periods of divine revelation. Thus, by a comparison of Scripture with Scripture, mutual light will be thrown upon the passage, the true conception will be distinguished from the false, and the results attained adequately supported.

5. The fifth step in exegesis is one of vast importance, which, for lack of a better name, may be called *Literary*

Exegesis. Great light is thrown upon the text by the study of the views of those who, through the centuries, in the various lands, and from the various stand-points, have studied the Scriptures. Here in this battle ground of interpretation we see almost every view assailed and defended, so that multitudes of opinions have been overthrown, never to reappear; others are weak and tottering—comparatively few still maintain the field. Manifestly it is among these latter that we must in the main find the true interpretation. This is the *furnace* into which the results thus far attained by the exegete must be thrown, that its fires may consume the hay, straw, and stubble, and leave the pure gold thoroughly refined. Christian divines, Jewish rabbins, and even unbelieving writers, have not studied the word of God for so many centuries in vain. No true scholar can be so presumptuous as to neglect their labors. No interpreter can claim originality or freshness of conception, who has not familiarized himself with this *mass* of material that others have wrought out. Nay, on the other hand, it is the best check to presumption, to know that every view that is worth anything must pass through the furnace. Any exegete who will accomplish anything, must know that he is to expose himself to the fire that centres upon any combatant that will enter upon this hotly-contested field. Thus, as from the study of the Scriptures he *first* comes into contact with human views, traditional opinions, and dogmatic prejudices; whilst on the one side these will severely criticize and overthrow many of his results, on the other side the results of his faithful study of the word of God will be a fresh test of the correctness of those human views that have hitherto prevailed, so that, from the acting and reacting influences of this conflict, the truth of God will maintain itself, and it *alone* will prevail.

I have thus far described these various steps of exegesis, in order that a clear and definite conception may be formed of its field of work—not that they are ever to be represented by themselves in any commentary, or even carried on independently by the exegete himself, but that they should be regarded as the component parts of any thorough exegetical process, and that although as a rule naught but the results are to be pre-

sented to the public, yet these results imply that no part of the process has been neglected, but that all have harmonized in them, if these are true and reliable results.

In advancing now to the higher processes of exegesis, we have to observe a marked difference from the previous processes, in that the former have had to do with the entire text, these with only select portions of it. And still further we are to remark, that whilst in these processes, the results are to be attained which will be most profitable to the great masses of mankind, we must severely criticize those who, without having gone through the previous processes themselves, either use the labors of the faithful exegete without acknowledgment, or else, accepting without examination traditional views, build on an unknown foundation; for the world does not need theological castles in the air, or theories of Christian life, but a solid structure of divine truth as the home of the soul, and an infallible guide for living and dying.

6. The sixth step in exegesis is *Doctrinal Exegesis*, which considers the material thus far gathered in order to derive therefrom the ideas of the author respecting faith and morals. These ideas are then to be considered in their relation to one another in the section and chapter. Thus we get the doctrine that the author would teach, and are prepared for a comparison of it with the doctrines of other passages and authors. Here we have to contend with a false method of searching for the so-called *spiritual sense*, as if the doctrine could be independent of the form in which it is revealed, or, indeed, so loosely attached to it, that the grammar and logic should teach one thing, and the spiritual sense another thing. There can be no spiritual sense that does not accord with the results thus far attained in the exegetical process. The true spiritual sense comes before the inquiring soul as the product of the true exegetical methods that have been described. As the differences of material become manifest in the handling of it, the doctrine stands forth as divine and infallible in its own light. Any other spiritual sense is false to the word of God, whether it be the conceit of Jewish cabbalists or Christian mystics.

7. The seventh and final effort of exegesis is *Practical Exe-*

sis—that is, the text is now to be given its application to the life and life of the present. And here we must eliminate not only the temporal bearings of the text from the eternal, but also those elements that apply to other persons and circumstances than those in hand. And here all depends upon the character of the work, whether it be catechetical, homiletical, evangelistic, or pastoral. *All* Scripture may be said to be *practical* for *some* purpose, but not every Scripture for *every* purpose. Hence, practical exegesis must not only give the true *meaning* of the text, but also the true *application* of the text to the matter in hand. Here we have again to deal with a false method of seeking *edification* and deriving pious *reflections* from every passage, thus constraining the text to meanings that it cannot bear, doing violence to the word of God, which is not only not to be added to or taken from as a whole, but also as to all its parts. This spirit of interpretation, whilst nominally most reverential, is really very irreverential. It originates from a lack of knowledge of the Scriptures, and a negligence to use the proper methods of exegesis, as if the Holy Spirit would reveal the sacred mysteries to the indolent, even if they should be pious; for whilst he may hide the truth from the irreverential critic, he cannot be expected to reveal it except to those who not only have piety, but also search for it as for hidden treasures. This indolence and presumptuous reliance upon the Holy Spirit, which too often proves to be a dependence upon one's own conceits and fancies, has brought disgrace upon the word of God, as if it could be manifold in sense, or was able to prove anything that might be asked of it. Nay, still worse, it leads the preacher to burden his discourse with material which, however good it may be in itself, not only has no connection with the text, but no practical application to the circumstances of the hour, or the needs of the congregation. Over against this abuse of the Scriptures, the exegete learns to use it properly, and whilst he cannot find everywhere what he needs, yet he can find by searching for it, far more and better than he needs; yes, he will learn, as he studies the word, that it needs no forcing, but aptly and exactly satisfies with appropriate material every phase of Christian experience, gently clears away every shadow of difficulty that may disturb the inquiring spirit, proving itself *sufficient* for each and every one, and abundantly ample for all mankind.

We thus have endeavored to consider the various processes of exegesis by which results are attained of essential importance to all the other departments of theology. The work of the exegete is foundation work. It is the work of the study, and not of the pulpit, or the platform. It brings forth treasures new and old from the word of God, to enrich the more prominent and public branches of theology. It finds the nugget of gold that they are to coin into the current conceptions of the times. It brings forth ore that they are to work into the vessels or ornaments, that may minister comfort to the household and adorn the home and the person. It gains the precious gems that are to be set by these jewelers, in order that their lustre and beauty may become manifest and admired of all. Some think it strange that the word of God does not at once reveal a *system of theology*, or give us a *confession of faith*, or *catechism*. But experience shows us that no body of divinity can answer more than its generation; no catechism or confession of faith but what will in time become obsolete and powerless, remaining as historical monuments and symbols, as the worn and tattered banners that our veterans or honored sires have carried victoriously through the campaigns of the past—but not suited entirely for their descendants. Each age has its own peculiar work and needs, and it is not too much to say, that not even the Bible could devote itself to the entire satisfaction of the wants of any particular age, without thereby sacrificing its value as the book of all ages. It is sufficient that the Bible gives us the *material* for all ages, and leaves to man the noble task of shaping that material so as to suit the wants of his own time. The word of God thus is given to us in the Bible, as his truth is displayed in physical nature—in an immense and varied store-house of material. We must search in order to find what we require for our soul's food, not expecting to employ the whole, but recognizing that as there is enough for us, so there is sufficient for all mankind and for all ages, in its diversities appropriate for the various types of human character, the various phases of human experience, so that no race, no generation, no man, woman, or child, but what may find in the Scriptures the true soul-food, material of abounding wealth, surpassing all the powers of human thought and all the requirements of human life.

The work of Exegetical Theology does not end, however, with the work of Biblical Exegesis, but advances to its conclusion in *Biblical Theology*. Exegetical Theology not only in the department of Biblical Exegesis produces the material to be used in the other department of theology in a confused and chaotic state, but it has its own highest problem to solve, in the thorough arrangement of that material in accordance with its own synthetic method. As there is a history in the Bible, an unfolding of divine revelation, a unity, and a wonderful variety, so Exegetical Theology cannot stop until it has arranged the Biblical material in accordance with its historical position, and its relative value in the one structure of divine revelation. And here, first, we see the culmination of the exegetical process, as all its departments pour their treasures into this basin, where they flow together and become compacted into one organic whole—for Biblical Theology rises from the exegesis of verses, sections, and chapters, to the higher exegesis of writings, authors, periods, and of the Old and New Testaments as wholes, until the Bible is discerned as an organism, complete and symmetrical, *one* as God is one, and yet as *various* as mankind is various, and thus only divino-human as the complete revelation of the God-man.

In this respect Biblical Theology demands its place in theological study as the highest attainment of exegesis. It is true that it has been claimed that the history of Biblical Doctrine, as a subordinate branch of Historical Theology, fully answers its purpose; and again, that Biblical Dogmatics, as the fundamental part of Systematic Theology, covers its ground; and, indeed, these branches of the sister grand divisions of theology do deal with many of its questions and handle much of its material. But this is simply for the reason, that Biblical Theology is the highest point of exegesis, where the most suitable transition is made to the other departments; but it does not, it cannot, belong to either of them. As Biblical Theology was not the product of Historical or Systematic Theology, but was born in the throes of the exegetical process of the last century, so it is the child of exegesis, and can flourish only in her own home. The idea, methods, aims, and, indeed, *results*, are entirely different from those presented in the above-mentioned parts of Historical and Systematic Theology. It

does not give us a *history* of doctrine, although it does not neglect the historical method in the unfolding of the doctrine. It does not seek the *history* of the doctrine, but the *formation*, the *organization*, of the doctrine in history. It does not aim to present the Systematic Theology of the Bible, and thus arrange Biblical doctrine in the forms that Systematic Theology must assume for the purposes of the day; but in accordance with its synthetic method of seeking the unity in the variety, it endeavors to show the *Biblical system* of doctrine, the form assumed by theology in the Bible itself, the organization of the doctrines of faith and morals in the historical divine revelation. It thus considers the doctrine at its first historical appearance, examines its formation and its relation to others in the structure, then traces the formation as it unfolds in history, sees it evolving by its own inherent vitality, as well as receiving constant accretions, ever assuming fuller, richer, grander proportions, until in the revelation of the New Testament the organization has become complete and finished. It thus not only distinguishes a theology of periods, but a theology of authors and writings, and shows how they harmonize in the *one* complete revelation of God.* Now it is manifest that it is only from this elevated standpoint that many important questions can be settled, such as the *relation of the Old Testament to the New Testament*—a fundamental question for all departments of theology. It is only when we recognize the New Testament as not only the historical fulfillment of the Old Testament, but also as its *exegetical* completion, that the *unity* and the *harmony*, all the grander for the variety and the diversity of the Scriptures, become more and more manifest and evident. It is only from this standpoint that the apparently contradictory views, as, for instance, of Paul and James, in the article of justification, may be reconciled in their difference of types. It is only here that a true doctrine of inspiration can be given, properly distinguishing the divine and human elements, and yet recognizing them in their *union*. It is only thereby that the *weight of authority* of the Scripture can be fully felt, and the consistency of the infallible Canon invincibly maintained. It is only in this

* See my article on Biblical Theology, in *Am. Presb. Review*, 1870.

culminating work that the preliminary processes of exegesis may be delivered from all the imperfections and errors that still cling to the most faithful work of the exegete. It is only from these hands that history receives its true keys, systematic theology its indestructible pillars, and practical theology its all-conquering weapons.

Thus Exegetical Theology is a theological discipline, which, in its various departments, presents an inexhaustible field of labor, where the most ambitious may work with a sure prospect of success, and where the faithful disciple of the Lord may rejoice in the most *intimate* fellowship with the Master, divine truths being received immediately from the divine hand, old truths being illuminated with fresh meaning, new truths filling the soul with indescribable delight. The Bible is not a field whose treasures have been exhausted, for they are inexhaustible, As in the past holy men have found among these treasures jewels of priceless value; as Athanasius, Augustine, Anselm, Luther, and Calvin, have derived therefrom *new* doctrines that have given shape not only to the church, but to the world; so it is not too much to expect that even greater saints than these may yet go forth from their retirement, where they have been *alone* in communion with God through his word, holding up before the world some *new* doctrine, freshly derived from the ancient writings, which, although hitherto overlooked, will prove to be the necessary complement of all the previous knowledge of the church, and, indeed, no less essential to its life, growth, and progress than the Athanasian doctrine of the Trinity, the Augustinian doctrine of sin, or the Protestant doctrine of justification through faith.

In presenting to you and to myself this ideal of the work set before us, it is deeply painful to reflect how incapable we are of attaining even this standard. It almost seems presumptuous in me to hold it up, as if inviting attention to the wounds of the church and my own short-comings. I can only say for myself, that whilst as in a mirror it shows me my deficiencies, it yet looks down upon me from an apparently inaccessible height, inviting me to come up hither to higher attainments and nobler results. And with reference to the church, we raise

the lofty standard, that the young men may gather about it, that the directors, the faculty, and the alumni, of this institution may encourage us to go forward. And we are firmly persuaded, that this noble institution, with such a metropolitan situation, such a princely endowment, such a suggestive name, and such a blessed history, will take its part in this advance in our country, and co-operate with our Christian brethren throughout the world.