

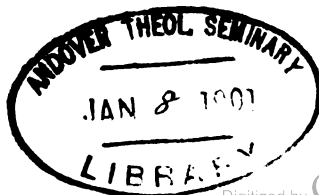
THE
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I. CALVINISM AND CONFSSIONAL REVISION.¹

OUR brethren in America cannot sufficiently realize to what an extent they have excited the interest of the Dutch Calvinists by their efforts to reach a revision of their ecclesiastical symbols. There are three causes to which this interest is due. First of all, the remembrance of the ever-memorable fact that the first Reformed Christians to set foot on American soil embarked for the New World from the Netherlands. On this account, Dutch Calvinists still feel a most intimate bond of sympathy with the Reformed in America, and thank God for each token of brotherly affection by which the latter country has so repeatedly strengthened this deep-rooted attachment. In the second place, the Dutch Calvinists have hailed with great enthusiasm the development of American church-life, as called forth by the principle of a *Free Church*, and emulate their brethren in America in their strenuous efforts to make this only true principle victorious in the Old World as well. To which must be thirdly added, that the Dutch Calvinists fully share the conviction of their American brethren, that the symbols of the sixteenth century were the product of a battle of spirits somewhat different from that in which the church is engaged at present, and cannot, consequently, inspire us with the same enthusiasm with which they stirred the race of our fathers. For such reasons, we feel ourselves closely allied with

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V. THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE IN THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGES AT THE SEMINARY.

OUR Form of Government provides that "the Presbytery shall try" each candidate for licensure "as to his knowledge of . . . the original languages of the Holy Scriptures."¹ This paper will assume the propriety of this requirement. The importance which the church attaches to it is well known. It is manifest from the fact that in her seminaries she has at much cost provided for adequate instruction both in Hebrew and Greek. It is signalized by the fact that she has refused to admit to her ministry pious and able men, because they have failed to comply with this requirement. It seems fair to infer from the stress laid upon the study of the original languages of Scripture that the church sees some important end to be secured by this means. It will be the purpose of this paper to consider, first, what is the object of this requirement? and, second, what is the true method of attaining this object?

I. First, then, let us inquire: What is the *object* of the study of the Bible in the original languages in our seminaries? A correct answer to this question is important for the church which lays down the requirement, for her candidates upon whom it is laid, and for her teachers who are charged with the responsibility of giving it practical effect. Such an answer is essential to the professor, in order that he may intelligently shape his course of instruction. It is essential to the candidate, in order that there may be harmony of aim and effort between himself and his instructors, and in order that, having a definite end clearly before his mind, he may bend all of his energies to the attainment of it. It is essential to the church, in order that she may judge intelligently of the competency of her teachers and the soundness of their methods, and of the fidelity and success of her candidates. Every valid reason that exists for retaining this provision in our standards demands that it be complied with, according to its true intent and purpose.

¹ Chap. VI., Sec. VI., Par. 4.

Shams are not only utterly inefficacious, but essentially hurtful, and, we add it with all reverence, hateful to God as well as man. To keep this provision out of the last named odious category and make it practically effective, there ought to be, and must be, harmony of effort between Presbyteries, teachers, and candidates. And in order to harmony of effort, there must be harmony of aim. It would give a powerful impetus to these studies in the seminary, if the students felt that there was hearty accord between their Presbyteries and their professors as to the nature and importance of the end to be attained and the methods of attaining. It is obvious, however, that if, for any reason, they come to believe that the examination upon these studies in Presbytery will be of a perfunctory character, their preparation for this examination is likely to be of the same character.

If the present paper succeeds in bringing this matter in any considerable degree before the mind of the church, if it should lead to an interchange of views among the brethren, upon the question it handles, its aim will have been accomplished, at least in part. The present writer cannot, and does not, expect that his own views will at once command general assent. And while he himself holds them with some confidence, he submits them for the consideration and criticism of his brethren with much diffidence.

The question raised, then, is not, What is the use of studying the Bible in the original tongues in the seminary? This would lead us naturally to an attempt to defend the requirement made in our standards. But while we heartily believe in the wisdom of the requirement in most cases, and hope that our discussion will tend to establish its wisdom, such is not the main or direct object at which we aim. Our question is, What is the object to be accomplished by studying the Bible in the original tongues at the seminary? Let us press our inquiry somewhat into details.

1. First, then, *is the Bible to be so studied purely as a means of grace?* That a study of the originals may prove a gracious discipline to the average seminary student we are prepared to admit. Moral earnestness, conscientiousness, fixedness of purpose, are no mean basis for a ministerial character. These must all be called into play, if good work is done in Hebrew and Greek. Patience, too, some

would even say long suffering, may find exercise. And humility, that flower of the graces, which is, we regret to say, a tardy and feeble growth in some of the young brethren, may also be cultivated. But it will be observed that the gracious effects here are produced, not directly by the truths of Scripture, but by the effort to push through the originals and get at these truths. We are prepared, however, to go further, and admit that the Bible, when read in the originals, may and ought to be more efficient as a means of grace than when read in any version. This is simply saying that the light of divine truth will, like other light, produce the most powerful results when there is nothing to obscure or refract it. Every version, no matter how faithful and felicitous, must to some extent obscure or refract. But here, again, it will be seen that for the Bible in the originals to be a means of grace, one must be at least acquainted, and we would be disposed to say familiarly acquainted, with the originals. This condition does not hold in the case of seminary students.

There are those who affect to feel, and doubtless do feel, a kind of shudder at what they are pleased to regard as the atmosphere of chilly intellectualism and mouldy scholasticism which invests our seminaries. They deplore the fact that Bible study at the seminary does not minister to the spirituality of the students. Now, without pretending to deny that there may be room for such complaints, and being ready, for one, to hail with delight any feasible remedy that may even be growled out, we wish to call attention pointedly to the scope of this provision of our standards. We may have failed to grasp its intent ourselves, and are open to light; but when we consider the meagre attainments in Greek and utter ignorance of Hebrew with which most of our students begin their seminary course, we cannot persuade ourselves that the study of the Bible *in the originals*, as required by the standards, was designed to minister, at least *in primo actu*, to their "spiritual nourishment and growth in grace." That would look too much like turning sucking lambs in upon a stubble-field for pasture. The judicious reader, as a matter of course, will not press this comparison to the disparagement either of the students or the original languages.

2. *Is the object of this requirement to secure, upon the part of our candidates, an extensive and thorough acquaintance with the contents of Scripture?*

Much is said about the fact that seminary students in leaving the seminary know so little about their Bibles. Here, again, there may be, and doubtless is, ground for the complaint. Investigation might show that parents who neglect the religious instruction of their sons, pastors who do little or nothing to stimulate Bible-study among their people, and even Presbyteries, who too often ignore the Bible itself in their examinations, would be called upon to share the odium arising from this state of affairs with the seminaries, upon which it is generally saddled. Be this as it may, it does not concern our present inquiry—which relates exclusively to the object of that clause of the constitution now under consideration. Does this aim at securing an extensive and thorough familiarity with the contents of the Bible during a three years' seminary course? Hardly. The student's time during the first year is taken up, so far as his Hebrew is concerned, in learning the forms and getting something of a vocabulary. It requires five lessons a week, and honest work at that, to do even this. Then there is the syntax to be mastered, which is no mean or insignificant matter. There are about 1400 pages in his Hebrew Bible. If he were to read it over once during his seminary course, starting with the beginning of his second year and reading steadily every day, including Sunday, he would have to average about three pages of Hebrew a day. We do not mean to say that an ambitious and diligent student might not do this, but when done it would not involve a thorough acquaintance with the contents even of the Old Testament. Such an acquaintance cannot be got by one reading. Then, too, seminary students have other studies besides the Hebrew and Greek.

We do not mean, even remotely, to underestimate the importance of a knowledge of the contents of the Bible as a part of ministerial education. On the contrary, in our humble judgment, its importance cannot be overestimated; but we insist that this is not the object aimed at in this clause of our standards. It says nothing about a knowledge of the contents of the Bible, but speaks

solely of a "knowledge of the original language of the Holy Scriptures."

3. *Is its object, then, to turn out yearly a lot of accomplished scholars from her seminaries?* The Presbyterian Church, in her standards, and in the *in these* utterances of her courts, lays much stress upon scholarship. Her theories on this point, in fact, are admirable, and as most of us are familiar with her practice also, it will be unnecessary to stop for the comparison. In the light of her theories, then, we are prepared to admit that one of the ends aimed at ultimately in this provision, and others, is accomplished scholarship. Accomplished scholarship, however, is a slow growth. It requires time, and a good deal of it, to secure so magnificent a result. A three years' course in a seminary, embracing the labors of all the professors, is all too short a time to transform "callow collegians" into accomplished scholars. Occasionally, a student comes to the seminary who "knows it all" at his entrance. But his professors regard it as "a work of necessity and mercy" to keep him from leaving the institution in such a frame of mind.

If these, then, are not, and, from the nature of the case, cannot be the ends sought to be accomplished, by requiring of candidates a knowledge of the original tongues of the Bible, what is that end?

We answer, first, *that it is, at least, possible that the study of Hebrew and Greek is prescribed as a means of mental discipline.* The Presbyterian Church, as intimated above, has always laid stress upon an educated ministry, and we hope that she always may. Now, education properly understood, is such a disciplining of the mental faculties as develops them, brings them into full and free play, and gives their possessor control of them. We must confess that we do not belong to the number of those who seem to think that these results are only attainable through the study of Hebrew and Greek. But we do heartily and firmly believe that for one who is to be a minister there is no means of mental discipline that is better, nor any single means that is quite so good as a study of the Scriptures in the original languages. We shall not indulge in comparisons, but ask a single question. It is this: What faculty of the mind is not

called into play in the study of Hebrew and Greek? Take, for instance, the perceptive faculty, at least so far as it operates through the sense of sight. What finer discipline could it have than is furnished by *Dāgēsh-lene* and *Dāgēsh-forte*, silent and medial *S° wā*, the movement of the tone under the influence of *Wāw Consecutive*, the distinction between $\bar{\tau}$ (=ā) and $\bar{\tau}$ (=ō) and a dozen other constantly recurring features of Hebrew etymology? A student must learn to “see straight” and to see quickly before he can so much as pronounce the Hebrew words. This again demands close attention and entire concentration of the mind upon the matter in hand—an attention and concentration which, if even momentarily relaxed, will precipitate him into blunders. The conservative faculty, or memory, with its next of kin, the reproductive and representative faculties, are no mean endowments. A tenacious, truthful memory is an inestimable boon. The ability to draw upon its stores at will, and with confidence, makes its treasures practically available. And right royal is the power that enables one to re-present the material furnished by memory in its original form, or having reārranged and wrought it over to re-present it in new forms. All see that memory comes into constant play, and so of the reproductive faculty. But some will be incredulous of the assertion that the imagination, using the word in its noblest sense, has any scope in the study of Greek and Hebrew etymology and syntax. But such is the fact. No student can understand why the optative has dropped almost into “innocuous desuetude” in the New Testament, or the force of *Wāw Consecutive* with the Perfect in the Old Testament, without calling to his assistance what has been happily termed the “Historical Imagination.” To appreciate these, or a dozen other constructions, he must, by a vigorous effort, represent to himself the historical circumstances and mental habitudes which gave them birth. And what is true in the sphere of etymology and syntax is true in a far higher degree in the study of words. Greek and Hebrew words are not mere curious combinations of strange characters, to be heartlessly “committed to memory,” as we say. No wonder that the memory declines to be burdened with such lumber. But Greek and Hebrew words are not such dead things

as this. They are living things; they have a history, a genealogy. If we want to know them, we will have to go back and see when they were born, who their parents were, and in what society they grew up. Some of them wear badges of distinction, and are very exclusive as to their society. Some bear the brand of Cain. Some of them are learned, and even speak several languages. They are versed in history, poetry, ethics, philosophy, folk-lore, and much else that is curious and valuable. Some of them are vigorous, lusty, hearty fellows, and others are weak and decrepit. Some make us laugh, others make us cry. Some make our souls glow with honest pride, and others make us blush. Still others make us knit our brows and think. They know their rights, and their mysterious, majestic, magic power, and they utterly decline to put themselves and their treasures at the disposal of every brainless tramp who, perforce, makes a fool's journey through the republic of letters. In a word, the man who cannot, or will not, be at the pains to live, at least in imagination, where they were born and bred, and to follow them through their vicissitudes, will never see their faces, but simply their quaint habitations. He may know them as *φωναί*, or as *ρήματα*, possibly as mischievous and misleading *μύθοι*, but never in their true character as *λόγοι*. Without the aid of the historical imagination, he may study Greek and Hebrew until he is gray-headed, and he will be simply learning his letters.

What is true of the languages as a discipline for the faculties already mentioned, is true of them as a discipline for the elaborative and regulative faculties, for the faculty of relations and the reason or common sense. We cannot enter fully into the argument here. Possibly a question will answer as well, or better than a syllogism. Well, then, if language—any language—all language, was, in the first instance, bestowed by the Creator as a special endowment upon man, as alone of all the creatures gifted with “discourse of reason,” and so capable of using it; if it is the instrument by which reason effects her conquests, the storehouse in which she preserves her treasures; if it be, so to speak, the very body in which the invisible reason incarnates itself, then, how can language be studied without calling into play the highest faculties of the mind?

How can the subtle essence enshrined in Greek and Hebrew words be "translated" so that it shall not see death without calling into play reason's noblest powers? Impossible.

We are prepared, then, to concede that the study of the Bible in the originals may have been prescribed as a most appropriate means of mental discipline for those seeking the sacred ministry. But this could hardly have been the chief, much less the only, end of this requirement.

Second, *It is at least possible that another object may have been literary culture*, that is, tillage in the field of letters with an aim to securing an abundant harvest of goodly words. A preacher ought to be a thinker; but he must be a speaker. Hence he needs words. He, as few others, can appreciate the sentiment of the wise man, "A word in season, how good it is." Now, when we consider the great number of topics, familiar and unfamiliar, trite and novel, doctrinal and practical, some of them delicate and difficult, many of them invested with awful solemnity, which a minister must handle; when we consider the variety of circumstances under which he may be called upon to express himself, and the variety of tastes he has to meet, we perceive at once that, if he is to have a word in season to meet all these exigencies, he must be, or become, a master of words. Mark the terms—a master of words. He must have at his command a copious vocabulary from which to select, he must have a nice appreciation of the force of each word and its fitness for a given service, that his selection may be with discrimination; and he must have his words well in hand that his selection may be prompt. If the preacher be a man whose ideas are few, he needs words—that he may secure for his intellectual progeny at least the same sort of attention that the rich father of a plain and not very brilliant daughter seeks to secure for her by a tasteful and varied wardrobe. If he be a man of vigorous thought, he still needs words. For a noble thought ill expressed in mean language, like a sweet and handsome woman in a dowdy misfit dress, forfeits in a measure the regal power which of right belongs to it, and may even become an object of ridicule to the less discerning. If there is—and who can doubt that there is?—"a fatal force and imposture in words," then the preacher should be a master of

words that he may be able to expose the fallacy underlying many a glittering sophism.

Now, in what other way can this mastery over words be so readily secured by our candidates for the ministry as by a study of the Bible in the originals? Does some one say, by a study of the English Version, which is still "a well of English pure and undefiled"? We are not an enemy to the introduction of the study of the English Bible in the seminary. We believe that it has rights there that ought to be recognized. We do not share the fear that, if admitted, it will prove an ugly rival to the study of the Bible in the originals, and finally supplant it altogether. On the contrary, we hope that, if it be properly taught, taught by one competent to teach it, that is, by one who knows and loves the original languages of Scripture, it will prove a stimulus to the more thorough study of Hebrew and Greek. But it ought to be distinctly understood, both by those who urge the introduction of the English Bible into our seminaries, and the students who may hope to find in it a sop for conscience and a pillow for indolence, that it never can take the place of a study of the originals, either as a mental discipline or a means of literary culture. We speak now only to the last of these matters, namely, that of literary culture. What is the English Bible? It is a translation of the Scriptures from the Hebrew and Greek into the English. Translation implies a careful survey and comparison of all the English words by which a given Hebrew or Greek word in a given context might be represented. It implies more, namely, a discriminating selection of the word which, in the judgment of the translators, is the nearest equivalent of the word in the original. But it implies more, namely, the *rejection* of all the words that have been before the mind of the translator except *one*. The student of the English Bible gets this *one*, and *loses all the rest*. Is that all? No. For he loses that part of the force of this one that is only discernible by comparing it with all the rest. Is that all? No. For he loses all the literary culture that comes from the mental habit and act of comparison. A translation is a result. But translation is a process, and here is a case where the process may be of nearly, if not equally, as much importance as the result. The use of

words, like that of tools, is best acquired *by using them*. I master somebody else's translation, and I get a great benefit. But the man who made it has the benefit of the result, plus the benefit of the process, and is just so much better off than I. But is this all? No. For the one who has merely the translation, loses that element in the original word which was untranslatable. Is this all? No. For the original word itself represents an act of comparison and judgment which led to its selection from a group of words that came under the mind's eye of the original writer. And so it goes. Even from this brief statement—and we have merely touched the possibilities of the argument—it appears at once that to talk of putting the student of the English Bible and the student of the originals upon the same footing as to opportunities for literary culture is simply preposterous. Passing from the relative, we might notice the intrinsic merits of a study of Hebrew and Greek as a means of literary culture, but our limits forbid. Enough, however, has been said at least to justify the statement, that a possible end aimed at by the requirement before us may have been *literary culture*. But surely even this was not the only, or the chief end.

Third, *We can conceive, again, that its object may have been to start our ministers upon their career with at least a modicum of competent Biblical scholarship, and to lay the foundation and furnish the means and incentive for future accomplished Biblical scholarship*. Certainly such scholarship is needed in the church. Never was it more needed than it is to-day. It is demanded by the nature of the questions that are thrust upon us. It is demanded by fairness to those whose ecclesiastical life may be involved in the decision of these questions. It is demanded by the honor of those who, under the solemnities of an oath, may sit in judgment upon their brethren in connection with these questions. It is demanded in the interest of Christ's church and truth, for if the decisions of our church courts are to carry with them any weight, the public must recognize the fact that those composing these courts are fully qualified to pass upon these questions. It would be well if we could all see clearly that many of these questions cannot be decided upon any abstract, *a priori* principles, for the simple reason

that they are naked questions of fact; and even when they run into the sphere of theory, they still ground themselves upon mere questions of fact. The question as to how many rings Saturn has cannot be decided on abstract principles—it is a question of fact. Moreover, these are questions which cannot be decided by majority votes; for facts are not dependent for their existence upon majorities, and they stubbornly decline to bow to the will of majorities, no matter how formidable or how venerable. The call for Biblical scholarship is the more imperative, because the facts in question in many cases lie embedded in Greek and Hebrew words and constructions. They are facts the knowledge of which implies, and the appreciation of which demands, linguistic scholarship. Now, let no one suppose that we have digressed, or intend to digress from the matter immediately in hand. We have called attention thus at length to the situation that actually confronts our sister church, and may, in the near future, confront us, with a view to emphasizing the need of *Biblical* scholarship among our ministers, and also with a view to confirming our position as to the object of the provision requiring of candidates a knowledge of the original languages of Scripture. Certainly there is nothing strained in the interpretation that regards it as framed with reference, at least in part, to just such situations as the present.

But we desire the careful attention of the reader to the manner in which we have attempted to guard our statement here, as to the quality, and especially as to the *quantity*, of the scholarship contemplated.

It is idle to expect our seminaries to turn out men equal in Biblical scholarship to those who are graduated at German Universities. Take Princeton, or Auburn, even, with their superior equipment, and how different are the conditions which obtain between them and the Biblical department of a German University. Our seminaries have no Lyceum work behind them. Our students are not specialists, giving their whole time to Hebrew or Greek. And, more than this, many of them are but youths, with their intellectual gristle hardly at all developed. And even our professors are at a disadvantage, because where we have three men teaching Hebrew and Greek and their cognates, and in addition instructing

in exegesis, and introduction general and special, the German University has a specialist at work in each of these departments.

The expectation that the professors in these departments should cover, or the students compass the whole field of Biblical inquiry, is utterly unreasonable. Many of the questions generally regarded as falling under the department of Biblical literature might with greater propriety be referred to that of apologetics. To expect a professor of Old Testament Literature to equip his students on leaving the seminary to shine in the Pentateuchal controversy, or that which wages about the books of Isaiah and Zechariah, to say nothing of a dozen others, is to expect impossibilities, as every one knows whose judgment on such matters is worth stating. The very most that can be done in these fields is to give the student some general view of them, and of the principles that ought to guide him when he enters upon an examination of them. If the day ever comes, as we hope it may, when there shall be a demand for post graduate courses in this department, then there will be the opportunity for more thorough investigation of these, in some aspects, important questions.

What has been said in regard to Pentateuchal analysis, is true, also, in a large measure, of Special Introduction. This is a subject of prime importance, a subject upon which every minister should seek to be informed, for it bears directly and immediately upon his understanding of the books of the Bible as to their specific contents, to say nothing of their interconnection. But there are many questions in Special Introduction which cannot be even glanced at in a seminary course. To go over these questions in a hasty, superficial manner, in the way of mere dogmatic statement, is either to disturb a student's mind with unnecessary doubts, or hopelessly to vitiate his mental habits, and give him a most undesirable sense of "carnal security," which is liable to be rudely dispelled at any time. And, on the other hand, to go into these thoroughly is simply impossible, for lack of time. Any one who fancies that they can be satisfactorily discussed in a brief compass is abundantly refuted by the mere *mass* of the literature which they have evoked. And, what is even more embarrassing, these questions, if intelligently studied, like those before mentioned, re-

quire a knowledge of the original languages, which our students do not possess until they draw near the hour for graduation. And if the professor persists in entering into these fields, what will become of the "knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek" required by the standards? The end is likely to be that the students "will know nothing," neither Hebrew and Greek, nor the problems of higher criticism "as they ought to know it."

Not to dwell too long upon this point, the most that students ought to expect, or Presbyteries to demand, is a thorough grounding in the fundamentals; and by the fundamentals we mean etymology, syntax, vocabulary, synonyms, peculiarities of style and diction in a given author, and the like. Certain it is that the man who knows these things has complied with the requirement of the book in the letter, for, at least in a measure, he has a knowledge of Hebrew and Greek. And the man who is at fault in these matters not only knows no Hebrew and Greek, but is unprepared to grapple with the matters for the proper understanding of which such knowledge is essential.

Some may imagine that three years is too much time to devote to the acquisition of the fundamentals as thus outlined. We occasionally see astonishing statements of what can be done, in Hebrew, for instance, in a year by the use of certain methods. Now, after some experience, personal as well as professional, and after some observation, we are constrained to regard such statements as, to borrow the language of a certain school of writers, "highly idealized and sublimated." Harper's method in Hebrew and Greek is in our judgment the very best. And after having used it ourselves, and having seen the master teacher who originated it use it, we feel safe in saying that the average seminary student is doing well who, during his first term, gets a working knowledge of Hebrew etymology and a vocabulary of from four hundred to five hundred words. His next term is well spent if he perfects, in some measure, his knowledge of the etymology, gets something of a knowledge of syntax, and runs his vocabulary up to one thousand or twelve hundred words. During his third term he will find his hands full, if he gets a firm grip upon his syntax, synonyms and some peculiarities of style and diction. Of course, some ac-

count must be taken in estimating the justice of this statement of the exegetical work proper which, during the last two years is carried on *puri passu* with the study of the language. The case is but little different when we come to the Greek. Let the explanation be what it may, the fact is that nine out of ten of our students come to the seminary with a wholly inadequate knowledge of the fundamentals of Greek etymology, the merest smattering of Greek syntax, and almost no vocabulary. Those who are best grounded in these rudiments will probably feel least surprise at this statement; for their own experience will have taught them that a thorough acquaintance even with these first principles can only be had at the cost of much time and much mental sweat. The student who, on leaving the seminary, will, in translating his Greek Testament, instinctively distinguish between the Imperfect and Aorist, the Aorist and Perfect, the Aorist Imperative and the Present or Perfect Imperative; the student who instinctively feels the difference between $\acute{\omicron}\nu$ and $\mu\eta$, between $\acute{\omicron}\nu\tau\acute{\epsilon}$. . . $\acute{\omicron}\nu\tau\acute{\epsilon}$ and $\acute{\omicron}\nu\delta\epsilon$. . . $\acute{\omicron}\nu\delta\epsilon$, between $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ and $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$, and many other constructions that cannot be even alluded to here, has not been wasting his time—so far as acquiring a knowledge of the Greek is concerned. And “he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near.” The man who has even this modicum has, *quoad hoc*, more scholarship than the authors of our noble Version of 1611, and their attainments in Greek were by no means despicable.

But over against the limitation of which we have been speaking, we desire to place another. If a modicum of scholarship (we speak in this paper always, and only, of Biblical scholarship, and even of that in a somewhat restricted sense) is the most that can be reasonably demanded, *competent* scholarship is the least. Our meaning will, in a measure, be made plain by one or two negative statements. It is no evidence of competent scholarship that a student should be able to read, to the edification of his Presbytery, the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis, or the first few verses of the first chapter of John's gospel. Such an examination may furnish the material for a very feeble joke, but it furnishes no evidence whatever of the scholarship of the Presbytery, and no test whatever of that of the candidate. Its only, its natural, its neces-

sary, its rightful effect is to lead intelligent elders to discredit the necessity of the study of the Hebrew and Greek, and to clamour for a *thorough* study of the Bible, in some form, even if it be in English. So long as this standard of scholarship exists in the Presbyteries, it will be next to impossible to inspire seminary students with a sense of the vast importance of the study of the original languages of Scripture. The Presbyteries, which, by their representatives in the General Assemblies, magnify the importance of these languages, ought to have a care lest, by their examinations, they bring them into utter disrepute, not to say contempt, for here, also, "actions speak louder than words." Competent scholarship, as now used, is a somewhat relative term. The student, to have competent scholarship, must know, and be prepared to appreciate, the ordinary linguistic questions which are raised by the scholarship of his own day. If that scholarship is much occupied with grammatical questions, he should know what these questions are, and how they are to be handled. If it deals with matters of diction and style, he should be posted as to the fact, and have some familiarity with the subjects. We would suggest as a brief test of competent scholarship in the New Testament, that a student should be able to read intelligently, appreciatively, and discriminatingly Ellicott's superb *critical* Commentaries upon the Pauline Epistles. A similar test for the Old Testament would be the ability to read in the same way the Commentaries of Delitzsch, on Isaiah and the Psalms.

But important as is competent scholarship, it is not, in our humble judgment, the only, or the chief end aimed at in the requirements we are considering. Mental discipline, literary culture, and competent scholarship, neither singly nor combined, furnish this end. They are, in fact, themselves but means to the attainment of the higher end that is contemplated. *The chief end of this requirement is, unless we are greatly mistaken, that our candidates may be prepared to expound the Scriptures in and from the originals.*

The reader will please notice the last five words. They are often wholly ignored, and almost always relegated to the background when this subject is up for discussion. This department is so habitually styled the Chair of Exegesis, or of Old and New

Testament Literature, that one important end for which it was instituted is generally overlooked.

Exegesis is a comprehensive term. According to Dr. Briggs, it includes grammatical interpretation, logical and rhetorical interpretation, historical interpretation, comparative interpretation, doctrinal interpretation, and, last but not least, practical interpretation. Now, if our position is correct, the main object of this specific provision of our constitution is to secure proficiency in *grammatical interpretation*, using the word grammatical in its wide sense. In saying this, we do not design unduly to exalt it, or to imply that the other branches of interpretation are relatively of less importance. The reverse of the last position is, in our judgment, true. For, as the end is of more importance than the means, so, to pass by others, logical, doctrinal, and practical interpretation are of more intrinsic value than mere grammatical interpretation, in itself considered. That, however, is not the question. It may be that the ultimate general end of the provision is to secure ability in logical, doctrinal, and practical interpretation. Our contention, however, is that its immediate, specific end is to render our candidates proficient in *grammatical* interpretation, still using the word grammatical in its large sense.

We argue this, first, from the express language of the Book. It explicitly distinguishes between the examination of the candidate "as to his knowledge of . . . the original languages of Holy Scripture"¹ and the "exegesis, or critical exercise, in which the candidate shall give a specimen of his taste and judgment in sacred criticism, presenting an explication of the *original text*, stating *its* connection, illustrating *its* force and beauties, removing *its* difficulties, and solving any important questions which *it* may present."² The italics in the clause last cited are ours. They are introduced to show that even in that part of trial which many would regard, and possibly properly, as embracing much more than grammatical exegesis—even in that, *grammatical* exegesis, as distinguished from logical, doctrinal, and practical, is thrown prominently to the front. To begin with, the paper is styled a "*critical exercise*." It is expected to deal throughout with the "*origi-*

¹ Form of Government, Chap. VI., Sec. VI., Par. 4.

² *Ibid.*

nal text." Its aim is to exhibit the student's acquaintance with the connective particles—those joints of discourse—of the *original*, the verbal beauties of the *original*, the lexical, etymological, syntactical, rhetorical, and other difficulties of the *original*. Now, if all this is not designed to give *grammatical* interpretation a place, if not *the* place, of chief importance, language is very misleading. But whatever may be true of this latter requirement, there is no room to doubt the intent of the former. It deals exclusively with the Hebrew and Greek. It deals with them, as for its purpose, in the same category with Latin. Whatever may be its ulterior object, the only fair conclusion is that its immediate, specific object is to ground candidates in *grammatical* interpretation.

We argue the same again from what the Confession says of the Scriptures in the originals. Its words are: "The Old Testament *in Hebrew* . . . and the New Testament *in Greek* . . . being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; *so as in all controversies of religion the church is finally to appeal UNTO THEM.*"¹ But how is such an appeal to be made? We answer, primarily and necessarily by grammatical interpretation. Logical, historical and comparative interpretation may come in after it has opened the door. But it, and it alone, has the key to the situation. It can open and none can shut, or shut and none can open. Now, if this be the position occupied by the originals, and this the relation which grammatical interpretation sustains to an intelligent appeal to them, then, surely, the church which holds these views may be expected to emphasize the matter of grammatical interpretation in the training of her candidates.

We crave pardon for arguing this point at length. But it constitutes the very heart of the subject we are trying, and shall try, to present for the consideration of our brethren. It is a point to which we wish not a cold assent, but which we desire to see become a powerful and operative conviction. It is a point upon which we want to secure the hearty coöperation of every candidate and every Presbytery. It is a point the importance of which it is hard to exaggerate. It is a point the magnitude of which is

¹ Confession of Faith, Chap. I., Sec. VIII.

emphasized by the discussions now agitating the theological world. And yet it is a position against which many students recalcitrate most vigorously and bitterly, and in reference to which, in some cases, this recalcitrancy, if not actually encouraged, is certainly not discountenanced by those who ought to be wiser.

The reason for this state of things, at least so far as students are concerned, is not far to find. It lies largely at least in such considerations as these: the impetuosity of youth is eager for results, and impatient of processes, especially if tedious and prolonged. But grammatical interpretation demands just such processes, and only yields her results to those who comply with her demands. Again, the results of logical, doctrinal and practical interpretation are more immediately and obviously valuable and available than those of grammatical interpretation. The true value of the results furnished by the latter only appear gradually. Then, too, logical, doctrinal and practical interpretation, while they furnish the professor the best opportunity for self-display, do not necessarily demand of the student much more than mental receptivity. This exactly suits the *vis inertiae*, which is so powerful in most men. On the contrary, grammatical interpretation is apt to lead students to underrate the ability and originality of the professor, and cause them to look upon him as a kind of blind mole nosing around among mouldy roots. Not only so, but it *necessitates* on their part a vigorous use of their own faculties. For the results of grammatical interpretation cannot be acquired by any otiose absorption. Other considerations might be adduced. But those given sufficiently illuminate the reason for the distaste which so many students feel for this kind of work.

Now in view of this state of things, and especially in view of the fact that some who sit "in the council of the elders" are inclined to sympathize with the students in this matter, it may not be amiss further to emphasize the importance of grammatical interpretation in the seminary work.

We remark, then, *First*, That unless one acquires the ability for this kind of work, and the habit of approaching the originals from this standpoint at the seminary, he is not likely to acquire it after he leaves.

Second, Without grammatical interpretation there is, and can be no scholarship; there is, and can be no secure ground for an appeal to the originals. "If the borrower is servant to the lender," then the man who merely borrows for an occasion some one else's translation, or exegesis of a passage, must of necessity take a position of dependence and inferiority.

Third, Grammatical interpretation, and that alone, can furnish the material and open the way for logical, doctrinal, and practical interpretation. Logic has no power to force her, nor any subtleties to illude her. She says to that proud science, "Thus far mayest thou go and no further." Rhetoric has no wings to escape her, nor any garlands with which to bribe her. Her magic touch reveals the glory of the promises, and enables the threatenings of Scripture to utter their awful voice. No declaration of doctrine or duty has any validity except as it bears the stamp of her approval. Grammatical interpretation may be, and is, servant of every other branch of interpretation, but by this very fact she makes good her title to be greatest of all.

Fourth, It may be very easy to assume an air of great superiority, and affect a certain arrogant compassion for those who waste their energies upon "grammatical minutiae." The initiated, however, know that this is, sometimes at least, the impotent effort of ignorance to conceal itself. The Greek article "is a little member," but "it boasteth great things." If any one questions this let him notice how often the interpretation of a passage is made or marred by the influence allowed the article. So $\epsilon\zeta$ is one of the least of the particles. But our Baptist brethren have found, sometimes to their sorrow, that $\epsilon\zeta$ is a slippery and treacherous something in the theory, to say nothing of the practice, of immersion, for it sometimes refuses to let them get to the water, and sometimes makes it difficult for them, when once in, to get out. Not only so, but this particle, insignificant though it seems, has given theologians pause in their attempts to decide between Calvinism and Arminianism. "Grammatical minutiae," indeed! Well, it ought to calm the feelings under this sneer to remember that several scores of the best scholars of England and America were not ashamed to give their unremitting toil for ten of the

best years of their lives to these matters. But enough upon this head. Having considered the true object of the study of the originals at the seminary, let us next notice briefly—

II. *The true method for accomplishing this object.* If we have succeeded in clearly and correctly defining the object to be attained, it ought not to take long to determine the true means for attaining it. We may safely say at the outstart, at least this much, that the method, whatever it may be, ought to be suited to secure—

1. *Mental discipline* We would include in this term the habit of accurate observation, and the power of mental concentration, as well as the cultivation of the reproductive, representative, elaborative, and regulative faculties.

2. *Literary culture.* This will involve, not only the ready command of a copious vocabulary, but more, a nice perception of the inherent force of words, and their fitness to express certain shades of thought. It will involve, in particular, an appreciation of the force of the particles, not merely as they affect the logical coherence of discourse, but also as they influence the freedom, smoothness and dignity of its movement. Nor should the hidden power that lies in the mere collocation of words be overlooked.

3. *Competent scholarship,* with its accompanying *ability to expound the Scriptures in the originals.* Now, we submit, that any method which is to secure these ends should embrace, or may well embrace, the following features:

1. Constant drill in the reading aloud of the words of the Hebrew and Greek text, together with constant drill in the writing and transliterating of the Hebrew and Greek characters in which these words are printed. This, to some, may savour of “minute micrology, or trifling acribology.” If so, we crave their patience. In our humble judgment, it is a matter of no mean importance. It would be hard to devise a better test of accuracy of observation, and the power of close attention, than this simple exercise furnishes. No student can read his Hebrew Bible with due regard to the vocalization, syllabication, and accent of its several words, without rigid attention. The evidence of habits of mental heedlessness afforded by the manner in which some students attempt to pronounce

a few verses of Hebrew correctly, would be grotesque were it not appalling; we say appalling, for, let heedlessness once become fixed as a habit of the mind, and it is liable to intrude itself into every sermon. But the drill we now propose does more than secure habits of accurate observation and attention. It furnishes one of the most useful means for obtaining a working acquaintance with the originals, and is an indispensable means to their mastery. Could any one ever hope to be a master of English until he could, at least, read the printed characters of the language with unhesitating ease? And have we forgotten how long it took, how much labor it cost, to secure this easy-going familiarity with our mother-tongue? What is true of English here is just as true of Hebrew and Greek. It is more true of them, for they are not dinged in our ears constantly by every one that accosts us, as was the English.

2. It should include a thorough mastery and constant application of the principles of etymology and syntax. The reader will pardon us for asking his attention to the language used. A general acquaintance with etymology is one thing, a thorough mastery of it quite another. And so a mere memorizing of principles of syntax is one thing, and an intelligent appreciation of their force quite another. In both instances, it is the latter that is to be secured. The student must not only recognize a form, but know its history and its cognate forms. He must not only know that *μή* is used with participles, but why it is so used. He must not only know the meaning of *ἐκ*, *ὑπό*, *παρά*, *ἀπό* individually, but relatively to each other, and their derived meanings in relation to that which is primary. Nor is it enough even to have a correct theoretical knowledge of these matters. This knowledge must be constantly applied. Thus only can the scholarly instinct be awakened, and developed into a habit. Thus only can the student acquire that facility in the use of the principles which will make them of practical value. Lectures on anatomy, indispensable as they may be in their place, need to be supplemented by practice in the dissecting-room, in order that one may become a skilled surgeon. It is not enough for him to be told what is to be done, and how it is to be done, he must take the knife in his own hand and do it, or try to do it. So it is in the study of language. It

is time lost, so far as the real end to be attained is concerned, for a professor to hurry over passage after passage, chapter after chapter, book after book, making learned grammatical comments as he sweeps splendidly along. Facility in grammatical exegesis cannot be acquired in any such way. The student must be encouraged and required to get a hold upon its principles, and apply them for himself. It is idle to say that this work is presupposed, at least so far as Greek is concerned, in a seminary course. It is enough to say that this, not unlike some other presuppositions, is not well founded. Nine out of ten of our seminary students have not the requisite *information* in regard to these matters, to say nothing of the ability to use their knowledge with discriminating facility. And for one, the writer feels no surprise at this, and no inclination to reflect severely upon the training given in these departments in our colleges. As a rule, college students cannot give the time, and do not possess the mental maturity which is absolutely necessary to the thorough mastery of these topics. It is idle to complain that this work is toilsome, tedious, repulsive to the average mind. We might reply that it need not, and should not be so, but the sufficient answer is, that it is indispensable. It is indispensable, if the study of Hebrew and Greek is to be a source of mental discipline. Not only so, but the mastery of etymology and syntax lays the only foundation for grammatical interpretation, as this lays the foundation for every other species of interpretation. Without a mastery of these, translation is guess-work and competent scholarship an impossibility.

3. No one will be surprised when we add constant translation as another element of the method we are seeking. We trust that the assent will be as ready when we say that there should not only be translation from Hebrew and Greek into English, but *vice versa* from English into Hebrew and Greek. If it were only as a drill for the memory this exercise would be worth all the pains it costs the student. But it is far more. Its relation to the *mastery* of the original languages, and to mental discipline is too obvious to require extended comment. It involves a continual process of comparison and selection. This again involves the repeated canvassing of the material which the student has been accumulating.

Its importance has long since been recognized by those who teach the languages in our colleges and universities, and is being more and more recognized in our seminaries. The main emphasis, however, in the work of translation must of course be laid upon translating the Hebrew and Greek into English. This work, if it is to minister to the ends in view, must not only involve a constant reference to the principles of syntax, but also a painstaking and discriminating study of words. Certainly there can be but little literary culture, little mental discipline, little scholarship, little ability to expound the originals without this careful study of words. It is not enough that the professor delivered learned disquisitions upon these points. The student himself must be taught to go through the processes by which the professor reaches results. The student must be encouraged to resolve words into their original elements—to trace each element back to its primary meaning, and to compare cognates from the same primal root, with a view to ascertaining the different shade of meaning expressed by each. He must be encouraged to study the *usus loquendi* of different writers and periods. This all takes time, much time. Often the results are apparently small. But in no other way can scholarly habits be formed and fixed. In no other way can a scholarly translation be produced. If this is a weariness to the flesh, it is infinitely more wearisome to reproduce a feeble, awkward imitation of the authorized or revised version by a sheer effort of verbal memory and call this translation. Such so-called translations are brutal shams. They crucify the English and originals alike. They insult the intelligence. They deaden conscience, they outrage God's glorious Word. No wonder that students who condescend to this style of work should come to feel a sickening contempt for it. It is a tax upon their patience, a burden upon their conscience, a shame to their manhood for which there is no compensation. But be it observed, that this is the result, not of studying, but of trifling with, merely pretending to study the originals. Important as is this method of translation, valuable as are the results which it yields, it should not be allowed to exclude another. We refer now to the rapid reading of extended consecutive portions of Scripture in the originals. This will give general familiarity with the orig-

inals; it will give a vocabulary; if persisted in, it will familiarize the student with the style of the different writers of Scripture; and, though this does not fall properly within the scope of the present discussion, it will give the general outline of the logical development of the several books of the Bible. If wisely conducted this work will not be a drain upon the student's time. The professor will here supply the words to the student as he reads.

4. Constant drill in the memorizing of consecutive portions of the Hebrew and Greek text. This is not merely nor chiefly to cultivate the verbal memory, or to secure a vocabulary. These important ends will be accomplished, and so good results secured. But what is of equal, if not greater importance, is that this is the best way to make the Hebrew and Greek feel at home in one's mind, and one's mind to feel at home in the Greek and Hebrew. If it is important for the eye, the ear and the tongue, to be upon terms of familiarity with the Greek and Hebrew, it is no less important for the mind to be upon the same footing. It wants to see, with the eye of the body shut, each word standing out before it clothed in its own individuality. Not only so, it needs to have them march in orderly array before it, and to put them through their evolutions until it has them well at command. Thus, and thus only, can it best learn their "several" and their "joint powers."

5. We may add finally, that there should be constant exercise in logical analysis to evidence and develop the student's knowledge of the force of the particles. The relation of this to the ends sought is sufficiently obvious. It is hard to overstate the amount of attention the particles demand and deserve. They are numerous and constantly recurring. The same particle will have several distinct shades of meaning. They are to discourse, not only what joints and sinews are to the body, but what coloring and tone are to a picture. The proper study of them calls into play the highest powers of the mind—yes, and all the finer sensibilities of the heart. The student who masters them is in a fair way to become himself a master of style. The relation which a knowledge of the particles sustains to scholarship and grammatical interpretation is too obvious to require comment.

Now the writer ventures to think that any method that em-

braces these features will secure the end for which the originals are studied in the seminary, and any method which overlooks any one of them will so far fail in securing that end. The following facts, however, should not be overlooked :

1. This method will demand severe application upon the part of the student. This ought not to surprise any one, nor ought it in the least to discredit the method—*nulla palma sine pulvere*. Those who are unwilling, or for any reason unable to endure hard study, should study their Bible in their mother tongue and adjust the matter as best they can with their Presbyteries and their consciences.

2. The method as outlined above gives the place of chief prominence to grammatical interpretation. It does not by any means exclude attention to other branches of interpretation. On the contrary, it opens the way for them, and constantly calls them into use. It gives all needed opportunity for a rigid drill in the principles of exegesis. But for all this it does centre attention upon grammatical interpretation. Surely this cannot be urged against it as an objection. The man who understands the principles of architecture, who has a knowledge of building materials and access to them, who knows how to temper mortar, to keep a corner square and a wall plumb, can, with the proper assistance, in the way of bricklayers, hod-carriers, etc., erect any kind of structure that may be needed. So the student well grounded in the principles of exegesis, if skilled in grammatical interpretation, may hope, with the aid of lexicons, grammars and commentaries, to build up or to defend, as the case may be, a sound system of theology.

3. But again, this method, while requiring much labor, will take the student over but little ground, except in the way of "Sight Reading." This is sometimes disappointing to students. They are apt at first to regard the results as disproportioned to the effort. Whereas, in a sense, the true measure of the results is the effort. Not only so, but it would be a mistake to judge a miner's progress by taking a horizontal measure of the mouth of the mine. The true measure here is the depth of the shaft, or better still, what comes out of it.

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