With respects of the author

THE

RIGHT INTERPRETATION

OF

THE SACRED SCRIPTURES:

THE

HELPS AND THE HINDRANCES.

AN

INAUGURAL DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT ANDOVER, SEPT. 1, 1852.

BY

C. E. STOWE,
Professor of Sacred Literature in the Theological Seminary.

From the Bibliotheca Sacra for January, 1853.

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DISCOURSE.

The intellectual activity of the last fifty years has scarcely been equalled, never surpassed, in any other half century of the world's history. It has busied itself in every department of human thought; theology and sacred science have been as much the subject of it as chemistry and astronomy, and it ought not to have been, it could not have been otherwise. The Andover Theological Seminary, the earliest of its kind in existence, was projected at the commencement of this period; and was specially designed by Providence to accomplish a specific work indispensably necessary just at this stage of the world's progress, a mission which it has successfully fulfilled and is still fulfilling.

Notwithstanding the great practical advantages, in many important respects, of pursuing the study of theology with a settled pastor, it is absolutely certain that the great missionary enterprises of the age, and the intellectual excitement and culture necessary to meet the multiform and active infidelity of the period, never could have been provided for without the ample resources, the extended associations, the large combinations, the friendly collisions, the permanent relationships of well endowed and numerously attended theological schools. Such an institution was a necessity of the age, and was so proved by the numerous imitations to which this first example of the kind so speedily gave origin.

The science of theology was zealously pursued and well understood in New England at that time; but the science of Biblical interpretation had been little attended to for several generations; there was almost nothing of it to be found; but few ministers were in the habit of reading even the Greek Testament, and as to the Hebrew, without which the New Testament Greek cannot be understood, probably not one minister in a hundred could read readily a single verse of the Old Testament in the original. In the science of Biblical interpretation, and in the sphere of missionary activity, this institution found its appropriate providential pioneer-work. The men who first occupied

the posts of instruction, were singularly adapted to both these branches of spiritual labor; they were the men for the time and for the work. He who for nearly forty years was the incumbent of the professorship of Sacred Literature here, was emphatically the man for his business. Unquenchable zeal, untiring industry, unwavering self-reliance, unflinching boldness, transparent honesty and a determined will carried him through all the difficulties which beset his way and gave him as secure and permanent a triumph as ever a frail mortal enjoyed. So far as the nations which speak the English language are concerned, he made the department, created its resources, excited the taste for the study, and furnished the means for grutifying it. And this was not done without suspicion and hostility and severe opposition even from good men, whose sphere of vision was rather limited.

The influence of his labors will continue to be felt long after the labors themselves shall have become mere matters of history. The influence already seen is immense. The intellectual culture of the ministry, especially in the linguistic and critical departments, is a hundred fold above what it was when he began; the practical efficiency of the ministry has advanced in almost an equal proportion, and I have no evidence that the former generations were, as a general fact, more *filled with the spirit* than the present.

Not the least among the great services which Professor Stuart rendered to the cause of sacred learning, was the bringing to the knowledge of his countrymen the great Biblical critics of continental Europe, such as Michaelis, Eichhorn, Jahn, Rosenmüller, Gesenius, De Wette, and others, whose profound learning, earnest investigations, iron diligence and general fairness, introduced a new era in sacred science, and probably caused the original languages of the Old and New Testament to be better understood than they have been at any other time since they ceased to be vernacular. Whether they had generally in themselves experienced the power of that religion whose documents they so successfully elucidated, may well be doubted; but as grammarians, as lexicographers, as verbal and historical critics, they occupy the very first rank. Used with proper discrimination, their works are of unspeakable value, nor can they be dispensed with in this branch of study. They are sober writers, if not regenerate in the evangelical sense; and as Balaam, whose fault it was to love the wages of unrighteousness, did, in spite of himself, bear a true message from God to Balak, so these men, allowing that they were worldly men and unregenerate, did learn and teach very many things in regard to God's written word, which it is of the high-

est importance for the Christian minister to know. Their credit has been much marred in public estimation by the fact that, in their own country, they have been succeeded by a host of critics of the ultra-Hegelian or Tübingen school, who, with all their learning and high pretensions, by their extravagant, groundless hypotheses, their contempt of all the laws of evidence and rules of logic, by their gross irreverence and obvious destitution of the religious sentiment, make themselves well-nigh worthless in philology, while in theology we must pronounce them impious. It may be sufficient to mention, as specimens of this class, the names of David Strauss and Bruno Bauer; while the more respectable names of F. C. Baur and A. F. Gfrörer are scarcely less to be dreaded.

All the ground which has actually been gained thus far, by every means, must be sedulously maintained; much yet remains to be done by the faithful student of sacred learning; and to this still remaining work let us address ourselves with a zeal and energy and disinterestedness worthy of those who have preceded us, who have opened the way for us, and who are now entered into their rest. It is as true now as it was in the days of the Puritan Robinson, that *God hath yet more light to break forth from this Holy Word;* and while the church is faithful to study that word, this light will continue to increase till the time of the end.

It is said that we must understand the Bible by the same means by which we understand any other book; that the Bible must be interpreted by the common laws of language, just as every other book must be interpreted. This statement may convey a great, fundamental, practical truth — or it may enwrap an error which shrivels the spirit, kills the soul, and denies God — either, according to the application which is made of the words.

It is plain enough, from the very nature of the case, that if God gives to any of his creatures a revelation, oral or written, it must be given in some language to which they are accustomed, which they can understand, as they understand other lnnguages that they speak and read. Otherwise, it is no revelation to them; they still need another to let them into the mysteries of the first; and if this explanatory revelation be not in the common speech, there must be still another and another and another, till you come at last to one which is given in the common style of verbal communication — and this last one is in fact *the only revelation* made to those who receive the communications; and God is he who does the last thing first, when the doing of the last supersedes the necessity of all the rest.

All this is obvious from the very nature of the case; and when we turn to the matter of fact as it really exists on the pages of the Bible, we find all this and much more than this of the same kind, to be true of the revelation therein presented to us. Revelation, as it stands in the Bible, is given, not only in the common language of the generations to which it was addressed, but also in the peculiar style and manner of each one of the persons originally chosen to be the channels of the revelation; the style essentially changing, not only with each different generation, but with each different person, however near to or remote from his coworkers in time and place — the same diversities appearing in the same manner as among an equal number of any other writers, who give utterance to their own thoughts merely, without suggestions from the Divine Mind. In the language and style of the different books of the Bible, the influence of each writer's own peculiar genius and temperament, his education, the incidents of his life, his employments, the circumstances by which he was surrounded, the society, the scenery, the climate with which he was familiar, is all just as obvious and as strongly marked as in the case of any writers whatever. Inspiration, though it be plenary and direct from the Almighty, removes none of these influences, touches them not; it lies back of them all, it sets them all in motion, but obliterates not, scarcely fades even, any of the peculiarities arising from them. As the Jewess Rebecca stood at the window of the tower, and described, in her own animated speech, to the wounded Ivanhoe, the exciting incidents of the battle which was raging outside the walls, so the holy seers in ecstatic vision witnessed things divine, and each in his own peculiar style and manner gave utterance to what he saw and felt, the divine afflatus exerting no other influence over his language than what was necessary to make the description accurate.

In Isaiah we see a self-possessed, mighty, sublime Hebrew mind, with a thorough Hebrew education, using language and imagery derived from the scenery, the sacred books, and the historical incidents of the Hebrew land and nation; in Ezekiel, a Hebrew education acting on a Hebrew mind, excitable, enthusiastic, aerial, fanciful, overflowing with imagery derived from the wild scenery and brilliant, coruscating skies of the country of the captivity, along the banks of the great northern river Chebar; in Daniel, still a Hebrew mind, but of different structure from either of the preceding, and a Hebrew education too, but superadded to it all the Chaldee culture, and an imagination shaped, vivified, populated by the luxu-

rious courts, the gorgeous palaces, the gigantic sculptures of the barbaric capitals, Babylon and Shushan and Ecbatana. The modern traveller now visiting the stupendous ruins of the ancient cities of the East, sees at the present day the book of Daniel, as to its most striking peculiarities, all reproduced, as it were, before his eyes.

Such is the language and style of the Biblical writers, even under the influence of the highest and most direct action of inspiration, that is, the prophetic. How clearly, then, must the like influences be seen in the argumentative, the didactic, the historic portions of the sacred record!

There is, then, a great, a fundamental, a practical truth in the statement, that we must understand the Bible by the same means by which we understand any other book — that the Bible must be interpreted by the common laws of language, just as every other book must be interpreted.

And yet, taking this statement in a one-sided aspect, and not recognizing the great peculiarity of the Bible as God's living word, these same words enwrap a wretched, pernicious error.

The volume which we call the Bible, though written by parts, in ages and climes widely remote, in languages diverse, and by writers, in many instances, of no personal intimacy with each other, is not a bundle of disconnected tracts, without harmony, concert or design. Many minds and many hands throughout many ages were employed to produce the volume; but there was one superintending spirit, and one continuous plan through the whole. The actual author of the Bible throughout is One; it is He *who knoweth the end from the beginning, who is the same yesterday and to-day and forever.* If the book gives a true account of itself, when the sacred penman put down the first chapter of Genesis, the Divine Spirit saw clearly the last chapter of Revelation, and all the intermediate parts, *which in continuance were fashioned*, came together at the proper time and in the right place, with at least as much of plan and contrivance and previous design, as were manifest when the different pieces of Soloman's temple, which received their perfect finish in the forest and the quarry, were put together in the city of the great king, with not one unfitting joint or uncomely protuberance, yet without noise of axe or hammer. He who denies or will not recognize this fact, can never interpret the Bible aright, however closely in his interpretations he may adhere to the common laws of language. Here is an element, an important, an all-pervading, an essential element, for which the

common laws of language make no provision, because there is nothing else like it in the whole history of the human mind. A book is produced in the progress of some two thousand years, by some forty or fifty different writers, on every variety of subject, and in every variety of style, and yet, all unconciously, so far as the writers themselves were concerned, with one uniform purpose, with one identical object, never for a moment lost sight of from beginning to end, by the Divine Mind, the real author of the volume. Of course this great peculiarity must give rise to some peculiarities in interpretation, and, in some respects, the Bible must receive, at the hands of the expositor, a treatment different from that to which any other volume is entitled. Some of these peculiarities are the typical character of persons and things and acts in the Old Testament; the twofold, and, in some cases, manifold fulfilment of the prophecies, not a few of which, as Lord Bacon says, *being of the nature of their author, with whom a thousand years are as one day, are not fulfilled punctually and at once, but have springing and germinant accomplishment throughout many ages, though the height or fulness of them may refer to some one age*; that is, to the Messianic period, and to the person of the Messiah.

Not all the ridicule and misrepresentation of *rationalistic* interpretors, evangelical or otherwise; not all the extravagance and folly of allegorists and spiritualizers and double-sense men will ever deter the sound, bold, consistent Scriptural interpreter from a full recognition, and a distinct, open-handed use, in all his exegesis, of this great peculiarity of the Sacred Writings. By the common laws of language as applied to Scriptural exegesis, we come to the knowledge of this peculiarity of the Bible; by the common laws of language we are able to develope to others the principles on which it rests; and by the common laws of language we ascertain the passages which require the application of these principles and those which do not admit it. Nothing is left to the caprice or fancy of the interpreter, any more than in any other branch of interpretation; there is nothing conjectural, nothing uncertain; it all rests on a sound and solid basis of Scriptural exegesis. It is a principle which has been known and acted upon by the church in all ages of its existence; it is a principle constantly relied upon by the writers of the New Testament in their interpretation of the Old, and without it exegesis in many places is as barren as a heath in the desert, as well as forced, unnatural and untrue.

The truth on this subject was long since clearly seen, and is hap-

pily expressed in the following words, quoted from Nicholas de Lyra by Gieseler (K. G. v. 114, 115): Omnes expositiones mysticae praesupponunt sensum litteralem tanquam fundamentum: propter quod sicut aedificium declinans a fundamento disponitur ad ruinam, sic expositio mystica discrepans a sensu litterali reputanda est indecens et inepta. . . . Et ideo valentibus proficere in studio Sacrae Scripturae necessarium est incipere ab intellectu sensus litteralis: maxime cum ex solo sensu litterali et non ex mysticis possit argumentum fieri ad probationem vel declarationem alicujus dubii, secundum quod dicit Augustinus, etc.

It was from this author that Luther learned the art of sacred interpretation insomuch that it was said:

Si Lyra non lyrasset, Lutherus non saltasset.

The same words, interpreted by the same lexical and grammatical laws, give a very different impression to different minds in different subjective states. The dry, unimaginative reader may carefully peruse a poem of Milton's, parse every sentence by the strictest rules of English grammar, and give to each word its proper dictionary meaning, and yet nowhere find the ideas, which from almost every page break upon the mind of the poet, who has learned English from the same grammar and dictionary. The stream cannot rise higher than the fountain, and the mind can grasp no idea of which it has not the prototype within itself. Can an inhabitant of the tropics understand what is meant by a snow-storm? or a Laplander form any just conception of the luxuries of an orange-grove? Let both read the same descriptions of these objects, let both interpret the language of these descriptions by the same grammatical and lexical laws, and how different will be the impressions left on the two minds! When the Christian reads what Jesus said to Martha, *one thing is needful*, his own Christian consciousness teaches him that true religion, the love of Christ, is here meant as the one thing needful, and both grammar and lexicography sustain his position; but the rationalist Paulus, who has no Christian consciousness, in the proper sense of the term, can see in these words nothing more than a declaration from the intellectual and temperate Rabbi to the anxious woman cumbered about much serving, and eager to prepare a sumptuous entertainment for her beloved teacher, that *one dish is enough for supper* (Kom. N. T. II. 744), nor can grammar and lexicon alone prove the interpretation wrong.

Again, a man is not capable of finding in a book what he is sure

beforehand cannot exist there. The irreligious rationalist, however acute as a grammarian or learned as a lexicographer, is under an inability both natural and moral, in respect to the right and full interpretation of God's Word. For many of the ideas which God's Word expresses he has in his own mind no prototype; and, moreover, he is so sure beforehand that Moses and David and Isaiah and Daniel and other writers of the Old Testament could know nothing of the Christ of the New Testament, that no possible mode of expression, of which language is capable, in writings acknowledged to be theirs, can convey to his mind any idea of the kind. Is it not perfectly obvious, then, that the believer and the unbeliever may be equally well skilled in the laws of grammar and lexicography, and equally strict in their application of these laws to a given passage of the Old Testament, and yet come to widely different conclusions as to its meaning? They go from different starting points, they proceed on different principles; and their conclusions, therefore, though both admit and apply the same laws of language, are as different from each other, as are the effects of the same rays of light when passing through a colored and a colorless glass.

Rejecting, then, this great fact of the Divine authorship and unbroken harmony of the whole of the written Word, the principle of interpretation to which we have referred, though entirely correct in one view of it, becomes a pernicious error in another.

In a Christian view of the matter, everything in the Bible, even the most trivial narrative, is a word of God, a prophecy, which finds its fulfilment in the souls of men throughout all ages; and that, too, whether it belong to the patriarchal period of childlike simplicity, or the rude barbarism of the time of the Judges, or to any of the more intellectual and cultivated ages; and this was so designed by the Great Author, yet without any deviation from the language and manner and mode of thought appropriate to each period and person, and without any special care to preserve niceness of style or elegance of phrase. The manger in which the infant Saviour was laid, was a common thing which had been used for feeding cattle, and could be again so used, and not an ecclesiastical utensil, very artistically got up and very ceremoniously handled. There are two parts of revelation, the letter, which is the body, and the inspiration of the Almighty, which is the soul. It is in the form of a servant, and thus it dwells among us, yet full of grace and truth. What does God care for our ideas of the refined and the common, the great and the small? He who makes planets and moons and suns with a word, and furnishes and

carpets the earth, sees not the great difference which we see between the furniture of the cottage and that of the palace. If one chooses, he may see only the shell of revelation; or if he chooses, he may feel the spirit of the Eternal One breathing therefrom.

In certain respects we may truly say, that the whole Bible is one great poem, of which God is the author; the subject, the fall and the rising again, the ruin and the recovery of man, and the physical creation in immediate connection with man — and the several sacred writers, in the long succession of ages, were but God's amanuenses, whom he commanded to write for the instruction of men. Without the possession and the application of the poetic element and the religious sentiment, it is impossible to interpret the Bible richly and truly, even with all the learning which the best grammars and dictionaries can give; while, with the poetic element strongly developed and under the guidance of a pure and powerful religious sentiment, the general teachings of the Bible will be clearly apprehended, however erroneous may be the understanding of some particular words and phrases. In the final result, a Bunyan is a far more sure and instructive expositor than a Strauss or a Bauer, though the Puritan rhapsodist may make ten blunders in the exposition of the words of a particular text, where these Hegelian critics would make one; and all the extravagant allegorizing of old Bunyan, and his often absurd typology, is not one whit more extravagant and absurd (while at the same time it is vastly more pious and Christlike) than the bold, dashing, truth-defying hypotheses of these irreligious, ambitious theorizers.

The words of the Bible are not merely dictionary words, they are not even theological words merely, they are Divine words, *they are spirit and they are life;* and the philologian, and even the theologian, being merely such, and acting solely by the laws of their respective professions, may make, and often do make, the most murderous work with them. The Bible thought in the Bible phrase, is a glorious bird, instinct with joyous life, of beauteous plumage and thrilling note, soaring and glittering amid the rays of the morning sun, filling the atmosphere with heavenly music; and the dry, rationalistic philologist, the hard, unsympathizing theologian, he is the ornithologist with his gun and dissecting knife; he shoots the living bird, she falls to the ground motionless, voiceless, with plumage bereft of all the changeful brilliancy of color which depends on life; he takes his knife and skins the poor dead thing, and stretches the skin over a stick, and holding it up, exclaims with triumph: "There, see, I have analyzed

this; this is what it is when scientifically resolved, by a practised hand, into its original elements; behold the achievements of exegetical and theological science!" *Analyzed!* rather, *murdered, flayed, destroyed.*

Such, in general, are my impressions in regard to the Bible and its exposition, philological and theological; but in order to give a more full expression of my views, and to preclude misunderstanding, I would now describe, somewhat in detail, some of the principal HELPS AND HINDRANCES TO THE RIGHT INTERPRETATION OF GOD'S WRITTEN WORD.

I have no design or expectation of exhausting the subject in a single essay; my purpose is simply to give an outline sufficiently extensive to indicate my own position and my own practical course in respect to the noble science of SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATION, or BIBLICAL EXEGESIS.

I. HELPS.

(1) *Philology.* Under this term I include, for convenience sake, all which may properly belong to the mechanical and the external of a verbal revelation, oral and written. The letters of the alphabet (if the revelation be a written one), the words, the structure of sentences, the mataphors, the modes of expression, the customs, the geographical position, the climate, the physical productions, the history, must all be studied and known by the accomplished philologist. In proportion as the people to whom the revelation is given, is remote from us in time and place, and diverse in character and manners, so much the more essential are all these points to the ascertaining of the meaning of the revelation with sufficient clearness and fulness to be an authorized interpreter of it to others.

God's written Word has (as it must have, if it would accomplish the purpose for which it was given) this peculiarity; to the simple soul seeking simply salvation from it, its teachings essential for this purpose are all perfectly plain, and speak directly to the heart. In this respect, *It is all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.* At the same time, its full elucidation and defence, the opening of the great storehouses of its wealth, the teaching of it in its fulness to others, requires the most laborious research, the most extensive learning, a whole life devoted to this great duty; and for this purpose among others, God has set apart the ministry, to be wholly given to the work; and in this respect *the priest's lips should keep knowledge*, and the people *should seek the law at his mouth;*

for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts — and wo to the priest who is incompetent or unfaithful, and wo to the people who sustain and confide in such a priesthood!

As God, in making a revelation to any people, uses the language of that people, so he especially accommodates himself to their minds, habits and associations. His first object is to be understood *by them;* and through them to make himself understood by others.

The first and much the greater portion of the written revelation which we have, was made in the Hebrew language to the Hebrew people, a language and a people exceedingly remote and diverse from us in regard to almost everything which constitutes a language and a people. We have scarcely anything in common with them except a common humanity and the same Deity; a common depravity and the need of the same method of salvation; and it is precisely because we have these most important things in common with them, that the Bible on these topics is so plain and intelligible to the humble, believing, prayerful inquirer. We have the same sun and moon and stars; and yet we can scarcely be said to have the same heavens over our heads or the same earth beneath our feet; so different were their skies and fields and forests from ours. Instead of being like them in habits of life and modes of thought, our inner and outer life is as wholly unlike that of the ancient Hebrews, as a modern cotton factory is unlike Solomon's temple, and the difference is very much of the same kind.

All the circumstances and scenes of common, everyday life, which mould the thoughts and form the habits of the child, and thus make up the growth of the man, were as different among the Hebrews from what they are among us, as can well be conceived. In the application of science and art, for example, to the uses and conveniences of life, in contrast with our numerous facilities for journeying and transportation, the Hebrews knew nothing of a road (1 Sam. 27: 10) as we understand the word *road;* they had no idea of any such thing as a bridge, and there is but one instance in the whole Hebrew history of so great a convenience as a ferry boat, and that was in the latter part of the reign of their greatest king, and is alluded to as a luxury for the king's household (2 Sam. 19: 18). The distaff for spinning and the loom worked by hand were all the machinery they had for manufacturing cloth; of sugar and coffee and tea they had never heard; hair-combs and pocket-knifes and even pockets were quite unknown to them; wheelbarrows and threshing machines, steam-engines and carding machines and nail-factories they had never

formed an idea of; paper and quills and wafers they never used; and instead of our stereotype plates and power presses, striking off a whole Bible in two minutes, they had no way of making books but by a process which for facility and speed of writing was very much like engraving on copperplate or cutting letters in a tombstone. What could they have in common with our bustling, worldly, restless, business habits? or what have we in common with their contented, slow, quiet, contemplative walk along the earth? Their very language and their mode of using language was in almost everything the reverse of ours. Their primitive words are verbs instead of nouns, they gave names to actions before they gave names to things; their books begin where ours end, and when we read their writings we always seem to ourselves to be reading backwards; they wrote consonants only and had no use for vowels. What we express directly by a simple noun, they often designate by a picture, as for example, the pupil of the eye, because it always reflects a little image of the person looking into it, they call *the little man, the eye's daughter.* They loved to give utterance to their thoughts in symbols and in types, in allegories and parables and riddles, and all their literature abounds with expedients of this kind. But all such things are now quite estranged from our literature. We admit of no symbols into our daily life but bank-notes and coupons and evidences of debt; for types we have none except such as are wanted for printing; our allegories and parables are mainly the electioneering paragraphs in our newspapers, and instead of propounding riddles, we sharpen our wits by betting on elections.

How wholly unsymbolic, how exclusively utilitarian our mind is in contrast with the Hebrew, may be seen from the simple fact that we have displaced the cross from our church towers and put in its place a weathercock. The cross is of no particular use for our every-day, worldly business, and a weathercock is very convenient for showing the changes and direction of the wind; but viewed as symbols for a Christian church, how dignified and appropriate the one, how wretchedly inappropriate, what a satire upon Protestantism the other! With such unsymbolic, such anti-symbolic tendencies, no wonder the rationalist of modern times finds so much which to him is absurdity in the Hebrew symbols and types and allegories, and that he makes such wretched work of their interpretation. Should an old Hebrew of David's or Daniel's time just now drop down among us, look attentively on us and all our surroundings, and hear us, from our point of view, reading and expounding David's Hebrew Psalms or Daniel's

prophetic symbols, would he not wonder with unutterable wonder, what book we could have in hand, or rather, if he knew, would he not, according to the Hebrew practice, stop both his ears and run? (Acts 7: 57.)

These are but specimens of the Hebrew life, of the whole circle of Hebrew ideas and conceptions, in contrast with ours; and where is the point of contact between the Hebrew mind and ours? God gave this revelation, not only in the Hebrew language, but exactly in the sphere of the Hebrew life; and how can we understand this revelation so as to be qualified to interpret it to others, unless we understand the Hebrew language and the Hebrew life? And how can we *attain this knowledge without long, earnest, persevering study*? In other words, how can one be an interpreter of the Bible without being a philologian?

Some parts of revelation were given in the Chaldee language, a sister dialect of the Hebrew, and very much like it in every respect. The New Covenant was given in Greek; but a Greek which was formed by Hebrews, and which cannot be understood without a knowledge of Hebrew. In its letters and most of its words it is Greek, but Hebrew in almost everything else.

The interpreter of God's written Word, then, should be a philologian in these three languages, the Hebrew, the Chaldee and the Greek, especially the first, as the foundation of all the rest; he must be thoroughly acquainted with the Hebrew life, and the influences under which it was formed, and the whole circle of ideas in which it revolved; and this knowledge is an indispensable requisite to the full understanding of the revelation which God originally gave to the Hebrews. *The interpreter must be able to put himself in the* exact place where the Hebrew stood when God spake to him, if he would hear God's voice as the Hebrew heard it. This object can be accomplished only by severe and earnest and long-continued philological study; and for this there is, there can be no possible substitute; the interpreter must be, always and everywhere, a student, a philologian — and here is where the learned rationalist, though not a pious man, may be a great, an essential, an indispensable help to him.

Let the student always remember this: that there can be no safe exegesis of a difficult text without a *minute, accurate, searching, sure-footed grammatical analysis — a diligent delving to the deepest roots — a microscopic inspection of the finest ramifications of the language*; we never can know what the Bible *means* except by what the Bible *says*.

But it is not enough that the interpreter be a philologian merely, he must have other helps besides philology.

(2) *Logic.* The philologian without logical power makes but a superficial, unreliable, wordy interpreter. The good interpreter must understand the mind as well as the speech, the subjective as well as the objective, of his author. He must remember that man has a brain as well as a tongue, or with all his research he is like one digging for a spring of water in a heap of loose sand thrown together by the wind. Not a few of such interpreters we have, and with wondrous self-complacency do they bestow their tediousness on us, and were it ten times more than it is, still they would gladly bestow it all on us; for as the Scripture says: *a fool is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason;* and he who can render a reason, is the logician.

In regard to such writers as we have in the Bible, logical power with but limited philology goes truer and deeper than weak logic with extensive philology; as any one will readily see who will but take the pains to compare the loosely learned and non-religious Kuinoel on the Gospels with the terse, nervous, intensely religious John Calvin. Kuinoel, in many places, seems to know everything except what the writers of the Gospels were thinking of when they wrote; Calvin always knows just this and seems to know but little else. Which is the better interpreter? One man to interpret another must have a mind of his own, he must know the laws of mind, and understand how thought educes thought in logical sequence; and this knowledge must be constantly applied in the interpretation of writers who know both what they wish to say and how to say it.

Still, the strong logician should understand well the principles of philology, as applied to the writer he undertakes to interpret, or he will continually go astray. With all his logic he is like a strong man groping with a stick in the dark; here and there there is a stumbling-block or a pitfall which he fails to feel out; and in every such place he is sure to fall. His strength does not save him, it only makes his fall the harder. Still worse is it with him if he imagines there is but one form of logic in the world, and that his author, if he think and reason at all, must think and reason in the same line with himself. When the Scriptures speak of the coat of Christ, he thinks of the fashion of his own day and has no other idea of a coat; he will draw a very complete picture of the garment and call it Christ's, though it has not the remotest resemblance to the original. He is as much out of the way as the Dutch painter, who represents Abraham

pursuing the confederate kings with his trained servants carrying muskets and pistols. As a pregnant illustration of this, read such works as Owen on the Hebrews, or Macknight on the Epistles. Able books in their way and showing no small amount of intellectual acumen and industrious scholarship, but how many things they think of, how many arguments they have, how much meaning they find in Paul, at which the apostle himself would be astonished with great astonishment if he knew it were attributed to him! The same is true of some of the purest and strongest of our New England writers. If Moses and Isaiah and David and John and Paul had been natives of New England, habituated to the New England modes of thought, educated in New England colleges and settled ministers over New England parishes, these expositions of our excellent fathers would have been very correct; but as matters are, they in many cases rather project themselves than expound the sacred writers. Dr. Burton, in his proof-texts for the Taste Scheme, has the most comforting conviction that the apostle Paul was to the full of the same philosophy with himself; and Dr. Emmons, in his Scriptural proofs of the Exercise Scheme, has the most unflinching assurance that the apostle Paul was clearly and heartily an exerciser; but I suspect the apostle would be greatly surprised to learn that he was either the one or the other, and as much confounded if the question were put to him which he was, as if he were asked whether he were a Lockeian or a Coleridgeite. Those questions were not up in his day, nor did the apostle's reasoning run on those lines. You might as well start the question whether he journeyed from Miletus to Jerusalem on a railroad or in a steamboat; and adduce long and learned arguments in favor of one of these hypotheses and against the other. It is not any one form of scholastic logic that the Biblical interpreter needs; nor any one scheme of mental philosophy regularly drawn out. But he needs the universal logic of strong common sense, for this is the kind of logic always and everywhere used by the writers of the Bible.

Worst of all, then, as applied to the interpretation of the Bible, is the nineteenth century jargon of continental Europe, which its votaries dignify with the name of philosophy, and by it sweep into nonexistence the Bible and the soul and God and all objective reality. Very felicitously have the self-styled philosophers and critics and theologians of this school been depicted by a recent English poet, who speaks of the land where

"Where Hegel taught, to his profit and fame,
That something and nothing were one and the same;
The absolute difference never a jot being
'Twixt having and not having, being and not being,
But wisely declined to extend his notion
To the finite relations of thalers and groschen.

* * * * * * *

Where Strauss shall teach you how martyrs died
For a moral idea personified,
A myth and a symbol, which vulgar sense
Received for historic evidence.
Where Bauer can prove that true theology
Is special and general anthropology,
And *the* essence of worship is only to find
The realized God in the human mind.
Where Feurbach shows how religion began
From the deified feelings and wants of man,
And the Deity owned by the mind reflective,
Is human consciousness made objective.
Presbyters, bend,
Bishops, attend;
The Bible's a myth from beginning to end.

* * * * * * *

We worship *the* Absolute-Infinite,
The Universe-Ego, the Plenary-Void,
The Subject-Object identified,
The great Nothing-Something, the Being-Thought,
That mouldeth the mass of Chaotic Naught,
Whose beginning unended and end unbegun
Is the One that is All, and the All that is One.
Hail Light with Darkness joined!
Thou Potent Impotence!
Thou Quantitative Point
Of all Indifference!
Great Non-Existence, passing into Being,
Thou two-fold Pole of the Electric One,
Thou Lawless Law, thou Seer all Unseeing,
Thou Process, ever doing, never done!
Thou Positive Negation!
Negative Affirmation!
Thou great Totality of everything
That never is, but ever doth become,
Thee do we sing,
The Pantheist's King,
With ceaseless bug, bug, bug, and endless hum, hum, hum."

Of all the perverters of God's truth, who have lived since the days of the Gnostics, these ultra-Hegelian and Tübingen critics are unquestionably the most extravagant — the worst. They carry their own

refutation with them; they are in themselves a complete *reductio ad absurdum*. Like a locomotive engine off the track, they have run their science completely into the ground, dashing and overturning everything in their way. Their extravagance and impiety have produced a strong reaction in the best minds of their own land, so that many now sympathize with the historian Niebuhr, who said in regard to the education of his son, "he shall be taught that the ancients had only an imperfect knowledge of the true God, and that these gods were overthrown when Christ came into the world." "He shall believe in the letter of the Old and New Testaments, and I shall *nurture in him from his infancy a firm faith in all that I have lost, or feel uncertain about.*" Let not this impious extravagance, already become effete and about to be cast off in the land of its birth, be introduced into our country as a new and all-comprehensive philosophy, fitted to solve all mysteries, and by excess of darkness make universal light, as the extreme of cold produces the phenomena of a burn.

As philology is not enough without logic, so logic is not sufficient without philology; and in addition to both, a third quality is indispensable, and that is *sympathy*, a strong, living sympathy with the writers whom you undertake to interpret.

(3) *Sympathy.* Where one mind completely and strongly sympathizes with another, a mutual understanding is perfectly easy; there is an air-line telegraph between them, and there is no need of constructing roads around the mountains and building bridges over the rivers to bring them into communication with each other. But where there is no sympathy, there is constant misapprehension, difficulties everywhere occur, and they are not easy to be surmounted. As soon as one obstacle is overcome, another immediately stands behind it, and so continually

> "Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise."

If the unsympathizing expositor imagines there are no difficulties, if he thinks himself proceeding smoothly and easily along, it is a certain proof that he has wholly mistaken his way and is going entirely wrong. The sympathizing interpreter sees his author's meaning almost instinctively, with even a moderate help from grammar and dictionary; while all the grammars and dictionaries in the world can never make an unsympathizing mind a good commentator.

Herein lies Luther's great and crowning excellence as a translator and expositor, — his perfect sympathy with the Biblical writers. He had a vast amount of that peculiar Shakspearian power of throwing

himself into the exact position of the men whom he would represent, of being for the time the very persons whom he describes; and of reproducing, in his own living, glowing words, the very heart and soul of the writers whom he is explaining. His interpretations are as much superior to those of the mere philologist, as the daguerreotype portrait, painted directly by the rays of the sun, is superior to the Silhouette profile made only of white and black paper.

Here is manifest the great mistake of those who would shut us up to one single mode of interpretation, and turn away their faces with contempt from any form of Biblical exegesis which is not run in the mould of the dry philological criticism of the modern German school. They see no element of correct Biblical science in the glowing Christ-love of the church fathers; in the acute discriminations of the schoolmen; in the elevated, martyr-like sympathy of the great reformers; in the deep, strong, earnest theology of the Puritans; in the fervid, fertile, poetic piety of the mystics; and yet for each of these elements there are, in the deep mines of the Scriptures, rich veins, which can be successfully wrought in no other spirit, by no other instruments than just these. The letter is good, in its place it is essential; but the letter alone is not enough; by itself it killeth, and the old maxim is true: *Qui haeret in litera haeret in cortice.*

The devil in his temptations urged Christ to feed on bread, implying that nothing else than bread could sustain life; but Christ in reply adduces the Scriptural declaration: *It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* But these word-critics, more close than Satan was, instead of allowing us bread, would compel us to feed on husks, husks only, always husks; as if we were prodigal sons, tending the swine of foreigners, instead of being regenerated children, feasting at our own father's table.

When I see presented to us, as Scriptural commentaries, folio disquisitions on this and that Greek particle in the New Testament, or this and that Hebrew particle in the Old Testament, proceeding from a mind which was never married to a heart, the work of men who never loved Christ, who never had a religious emotion, who can have no points of sympathy with the writers of the New Testament, I think of the waiter who imagines he has provided a sumptuous feast when he has covered the table with scoured, burnished, empty dishes. We need the dishes, it is true; and the cleaner and the more polished they are, the more agreeable is the table; but the feast is not furnished till there is something in the dishes which can be eaten; nor

is the Bible interpreted by all the array of learning which can be brought to bear upon it, unless, in addition to the learning, there be heart and feeling in the interpretation.

(4) *Faith.* There is truth in the words of Anselm: *Qui non crediderit, non experietur; et qui expertus non fuerit, non intelligit.* For the full understanding of the Scriptures there must be *faith*, and that not the mere faculty of believing, but the true, Scriptural, saving faith; that faith which *is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; that faith which worketh by love, and purifieth the heart, and overcometh the world.* This faith is the only inlet by which spiritual truth, deep and full, can pass into the soul; and the religious, the spiritual meaning of the Bible, is the ultimate, the true meaning; and how can one who has never received this meaning into his own mind, communicate it to the mind of another?

Faith begins where knowledge ends, and the larger and more important portion of the Bible is addressed to faith. The Bible, besides the direct and definite instructions which it affords, gives us also wavy outlines, dim foreshadowings of that which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived* — of that which is too high for mortal speech, too glorious for mortal thought — and the man who has no faith, encounters, in all this, nothing but a dark, disagreeable, blinding fog; while to the eye of faith, it is all illumined by the rays of the sun below the horizon, spreading abroad the gorgeous panorama of a New England cloud-scene, and exciting the emotions which heaven will excite, if not presenting to the sight the well defined and exact pictures of the heavenly objects themselves.

The poor blind eye of the unbelieving interpreter sees nothing of all this; his poor dull ear hears nothing of it; and by dint of constant hammering he can in due time make a class of Christian youth as blind and as dull as himself; and then he thinks he has made them critics, accurate commentators, who can always tell what they mean. To be sure they can always tell what they mean, but what is their meaning good for after they have told it? So the beggar can carry all his property over his shoulder in a wallet, but is that a distinction to be proud of? A man who carries only copper, can always make exact change, and yet, with many large pockets all stuffed and heavy, and with great jingle and ostentation of coin, he can buy very little of anything that is worth the having. What Christian student has not felt this in poring over the ponderous tomes of those unbelieving word-critics, who spin out volumes on μεν and δέ, on και and ⸗! True, we must investigate the meaning of all

these particles, if we would become skilful and efficient interpreters of the Bible; but to suppose that the true interpretation of the Bible does not go infinitely above and beyond all these verbal investigations, there is the fatal mistake.

The great advantage which our rationalistic writers boast of, is, definite knowledge; they can see all that they believe, they can take in all its meies and bounds; but *faith* (say they), *faith, as you call it, has neither boundary nor definiteness.* This is just the advantage which the petty German prince, with a territory a mile and a half square, has over queen Victoria. He can stand on the stoop of his lowly *Schloss*, and take in his whole dominion at a glance; while the British queen may ascend to the highest turret of her loftiest castle, and strain her vision to the utmost, without reaching in any direction the boundary of her dominion. This advantage, my poor, unbelieving friend, I envy you not; nay rather, I am sorry for you, and heartily wish that you might have in the Bible such an empire as I have. With what I see in this glorious Bible of mine, I cannot confine myself to the jail-yard limits of your exegesis; nor do I think that any advantage to truth or righteousness would be gained by so doing. I see a door, which to you does not exist, and it opens into heaven; and if it does not open wide enough to show me distinctly the forms of the heavenly objects, or if my eye is not strong enough to seize the definite outline in all that blaze of glory, yet where you see nothing but a blue sky and the pale twinkling stars, which you can look upon and count without one burst of excitement, I have glimpses of a glory too dazzling for mortal sight, so that I tremble and dare not behold, and cannot describe it, and can only call upon others to look and see for themselves, and admire and adore with me.

(5) *The Holy Ghost.* I love to give the old idea in the old phrase. The idea is as old as Christianity itself, and the phrase is coeval with the use of the English language in theology. It is as true now as it was in the Apostle's time, that *the natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit; they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned; and the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God.* Nor are these words to be dephlogisticated, or turned aside, as if they had either no direct meaning at all, or a meaning applicable only to the apostolic period. They express a great, a constant, an unvarying truth, which lies deep in human nature; and from the application of which man has never been exempt since the first apostasy.

The human soul by sin is broken off from its God, and it is never reunited to its parent stock till the Spirit of God descends upon it and draws it back to the source whence it fell. While alienated, it cannot understand God or the things of God. Can an eagle understand a poem, or a lion the architecture of a church? True, there is a difference in the two cases, for the eagle and the lion have no constitutional capabilities of the kind supposed; but man has all the constitutional powers with which he was created. His original nature is not annihilated; it is buried deep under the ruins of the fall, and never emerges till called up by that voice, which, at some future day, *all, who are in their graves, shall hear and shall come forth.*

Hence the necessity of a Divine illumination at every step of our Christian course; hence the need of having the words of revelation quickened and brightened by the rays of the sun of righteousness beaming upon them from our own illuminated souls. It is a necessity which never ceases; and no man can rightly interpret the Word without the continued illumination of the Spirit; *no man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost.* Without this Spirit there can be no large *sympathy* with the Word, no real *faith* in it; and consequently, no hearty, practical knowledge of it, however much of philology or of logic there may be.

II. Hindrances.

(1) *Partisanship.* It is the characteristic of *a man* to have definite and decided opinions; and, whenever occasion calls for it, to give a full and unequivocal expression of them. But attachment to party is sometimes stronger than attachment to opinion. When a man is so in love with his own opinions that he is not willing to allow a fair and legitimate scope to the arguments which may be brought against them, or so enslaved to the interests of his party that the Scriptures themselves must always be made to subserve those interests, he is no longer a safe interpreter of God's Word. His eye is no longer single; the light that is in him is becoming darkness. He acts, silently, unconsciously, perhaps, on the principle boldly and openly avowed by Jerome:

Aliud esse *γυμναστικῶς* scribere, aliud *δογματικῶς*. In priori vagam esse disputationem, et adversariis respondentem nunc haec nunc illa proponere, argumentari ut libet, aliud loqui, aliud agere, panem ut dicitur ostendere, lapidem tenere. In sequenti autem aperta fons, et, ut ita dicam, ingenuitas necessaria est. Epist. 30 (al. 50) ad Pammach.

John Cassian, Coll. XVII. Ille (Deus) tamen intimam cordis inspirans pietatem, non verborum sonum, sed vatum dijudicat voluntatis, quia finis et affectus considerandus ut perpetrantis: quo potuerunt quidam, ut supra dictum est, etiam per mendacium (Rahab, Jos. II.) justificari, et alii per veritatis assertionem perpetuae mortis incurrere (Delila, Jud. XVI.).

He is not willing to think as the Bible does, but the Bible must think as he does. He is always ready to take it for granted, to assume it as a thing beyond all dispute or question, that there is perfect agreement between him and the Bible, however great the discrepancy between the Bible and him. If any one differs from him, he calls it departing from the Bible, because he has put himself in the place of the Bible; and if he can find no text to sustain his position, it is to the general scope and tenor of the Scriptures that he appeals; as the Long Parliament, by a legislative fiction, used the king's authority to levy war against the king's person. When you see a man resorting to the *whole scope and tenor*, you may be sure it is because he has no specific text in his favor; he cannot fight by daylight, and so runs into the fog.

The partisan has the faculty of proving *aliquid ab aliquo;* as the papal writers, cardinals and popes themselves in the middle ages, gave Scriptural warrant to the papal organization by the text of the two witnesses in Rev. 11: 3, which two witnesses were the pope and cardinals; by the greater light which God made to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night (Gen. 1: 16), which greater light was the pope and lesser light the emperor; by the apostolic declaration here are two swords (Luke 22: 38), which two swords are the spiritual and the temporal power, and Christ said *these are enough*, and said not they are too many; the Apostle said there is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God (Rom. 13: 1), but the pope is a power, and therefore he is of God; God said to the prophet, behold I have this day set thee over nations and kingdoms (Jer. 1: 10), and therefore the spiritual is above the temporal power; and inasmuch as the Apostle affirms that he who is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man (1 Cor. 2: 15); therefore to a certainty the laity are under the jurisdiction of the clergy, and the clergy are exempt from the jurisdiction of the laity. (Gieseler, IV. 202–4. V. 97.)

Again, of one text, the partisan will insist upon a close literal interpretation, because it makes for him; of another text he insists upon a loose, figurative interpretation, because the latter is against him.

In regard to the first his language is, *the Bible says so;* but in regard to the second his phrase is, *the Bible cannot mean so.* Why not? Because if it did *mean so*, the Bible would not mean as he does, and that is never in any case to be allowed. Thus Nestorius, in his zeal against calling the virgin Mary the mother of God, says: "Paul was a liar then, when, speaking of the deity of Christ, he says he was *without mother;*" but in the very same verse, in the very words immediately preceding, the text says he was *without father* also. The Deity was without a *human* parent on either side, Nestorius would say; but does the text have any reference whatever to the subject of the underived deity of Christ? (Gieseler, II. 139.)

The partisan never interprets consistently, throughout, on any well considered, general principles of interpretation, but proceeds, sometimes on one principle and sometimes on another, just to suit the purpose of his present argument. He must have more than one string to his bow, and generally he must have a separate string for each separate arrow; for, if he has not, he can seldom shoot without wounding himself.

(2) *Narrowness.* There is a certain narrowness of thought, more amiable, disinterested and honest than partisanship, yet scarcely less prejudicial to the interests of a sound interpretation of Scripture. Accidental associations influence the mind like logical connections; because the Duke of Wellington was lean and had a large nose, therefore leanness and nasal magnitude must be essential to military greatness.

The Roman Catholics prayed for the dead, and therefore our Puritan fathers were averse to prayers at funerals, and often their dead were buried without this religious service. The Episcopalians read the Scriptures and repeated the Lord's Prayer in their religious service, and therefore our Puritan fathers would do neither; and it was one of the great heresies of the Brattle Street Church in the year 1700, that the minister was permitted and even expected to read the Scriptures and repeat the Lord's Prayer as a part of the public worship.

If the interpreter cannot rise above the narrowness of his own time and clique, God's Word in many places will be to him a sealed book or worse; and he will use and abuse texts with an amazing latitude of exegesis. Thus Luke 16: 3, *the Lord commended the unjust steward*, has been used to prove that the God of the Old Testament is not a good God; and Luke 2: 36. Titus 2: 3, 4, *Anna the prophetess*, and *the aged women teach the young women*, have been

used to prove that women have a right to preach in public as well as men. (Gieseler, IV. 622, 598.)

(3) *Faithlessness.* Much of the Bible is addressed to faith, and he who has no faith, has neither eye nor ear for some of the most important portions of Scripture. He lacks the inward organ to take hold on the outward object. As the poet Goethe very appropriately and beautifully says:

Wär' unser Aug' nicht sonnenhaft,
Wie möchten wir die Son' erblicken?
Und wär' in uns nicht Gotteskraft,
Wie möcht uns Göttliches entzücken?

The unbeliever can never be a full and reliable interpreter of the Bible. He may write dictionaries and grammars and critical disquisitions, perhaps very good ones, very useful in their way; but in all this he does no more towards interpreting God's Word, than he who blows the bellows does towards playing the organ. Without the wind there can be no music; but yet the wind is not the music. To interpret the Bible rightly we must begin with the letter, but not stop there. *The letter alone killeth*, and without a Scriptural faith, there is no *spirit* to *make alive*. The hosts of unbelieving critics are somewhat like the industrious Zoophites, who build up the immense coral reefs in the ocean; but they never cover them with verdure, or overspread them with life and song — this all comes from another and a higher source. The Word of God is not a rock or a skeleton, but a living, growing, fruit-bearing plant; yet it grows not, neither yields fruit, unless placed in the bright, warm sunshine of a living faith. Otherwise, it is but a root out of dry ground, having neither form nor comeliness, and exciting no desire. It is true that the skilful irreligious exegete can sometimes give profitable expositions of even the most religious portions of the Bible; but it is mainly as one born deaf and dumb may be brought to articulate, by a labored imitation of the mode of expressing sensations, which he has never felt and can form no idea of.

(5) *Wickedness.* Wickedness in one's own life and heart, or connivance with the wickedness of a surrounding world, disqualifies one to be a sound interpreter of God's Word. *If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness, and if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!* How many false interpretations have been insisted upon from generation to generation; what a load of lying exegesis now presses like an incubus upon the church, out

of deference to the wicked practices of an ungodly world! This is not all deliberate, wilful, conscious falsification, but a corrupt inclination warps the intellect, distorts the mental vision.

Christ never expected wicked men, remaining such, to receive his word. *How can ye believe which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only?* The testimony of devils in his favor he peremptorily rejected, and bade them hold their peace. He would have such as they were stand away from his word, and not even commend it, lest they should pollute it.

The greediness with which some ministers of the Gospel seize upon and promulgate eulogies on religion pronounced by great bad men, shows a state of feeling marvellously unlike Christ's. That faith must be lame indeed that needs such crutches. If they felt like their Master, they would be pained rather than pleased by eulogies from such a source. The wicked man may see that religion is good for society, and the most ennobling interest of the individual; but in its depths and fruits he knows nothing of it, and touching it with his impure hands is but soiling and not sustaining it. It needs no such support. Let religion be *poor*, so that we be *pure;* for the slightest touch of worldly pollution, however respectful and loving to appearance, puts her in a false position. The man who wishes to commend religion, let him be religious; that is the best commendation which he can give, or which religion can accept.

Scriptural interpretation, to be true, must be unworldly; and never, while the thought of wickedness is in the interpreter's heart, or the stain of wickedness is on his life, or a hankering for the praise of wicked men is in his soul, can his interpretations be relied upon. He may sometimes be in the right, but he is sure to be often in the wrong, and he is always untrustworthy.

(5) *Laziness and shallowness.* There are sometimes, even in ecclesiastical men, two very inconsistent principles contending for mastery, to wit, indolence and the love of notoriety, self-indulgence and a desire for influence. It is easier to gain notoriety and influence by superficial show, vapid declamation and confident assertion, in respect to the teachings of Scripture, than by hard, persevering, conscientious study of the original text. It is easier to hammer out tinsel than to dig into the gold-mine. Every ear can catch a sound, but there are few who can justly appreciate a thorough investigation. If a man has an inclination to shun or abridge labor, a disposition to blow up soap-bubbles and call them cherubim with a flaming sword, he is a very poor interpreter of God's Word. Yet how many such we have, and how people are imposed upon!

Piety, even the true and heartfelt, cannot stand in the place of philology, any more than philology can stand in the place of piety; and for a man to neglect philology under pretext of piety, is as if he should refuse to use his feet because he pretends to have angels' wings. Surely such

"Can neither fly nor go."

The laborious, conscientious and faithful student of God's Word may be, and often is, assailed with the cry of heresy by those who have not Greek enough to know the etymology, nor English enough to know the meaning, of the word; and by their heartless unscrupulousness and ceaseless noise, they may for a while gain an advantage over him in the public mind. But let him not be anxious nor impatient; fogs must clear away as the day advances, and frogs cannot croak when the sun shines. Let him be careful *never to be a heretic*, and all the exertions of those whose ignorance fills them with alarm, or whose enviousness excites them to activity, can never make him long *seem* to be one.

Who, then, is the good Bible interpreter? The good Bible interpreter is the thorough philologist, the strong logician, the sound theologian. He is endowed with the rare gift of common sense, he has a rich poetic temperament, and an intense sympathy with the Bible writers. He has a large heart and an expansive intellect, superior to the unfairness of partisanship and the narrowness of prejudice. He is humble in his own eyes, and not puffed up with a conceit of his own attainments; he is willing to learn from every quarter, and has sense enough to know that there is no quarter from which he cannot learn something. He who despises antiquity, or he who idolizes antiquity; he who loves whatever is modern, or he who hates whatever is modern; he who contemns the foreign and adores the home, or he who contemns the home and adores the foreign; he who is in any respect one-sided or unbalanced, cannot be the good interpreter. The good interpreter must love his work, and love and sympathize with his pupils, and love the souls of men; and above all must he love his God and Saviour with an all-absorbing, an unquenchable love. He must be a man of deep piety, of glowing faith, and in the continuous enjoyment of the presence and aid of the Holy Ghost. And with all this he must have the gift of expressing his thoughts in a clear, condensed, energetic style; for it is a correct judgment of that great master of Biblical interpretation, John Calvin, *precipuam interpretis virtutem in perspicua brevitate esse positam.*

And what is this Bible, which we must take so much pains to interpret?

It is God's word to man, and it is just like God and God's works, and very unlike man and man's works. It is like the country compared with a city; like the mountain compared with a palace; like the sun and clouds compared with a picture; like the forest and prairie compared with an artificial conservatory. It has its hard places and rough places and dark places, such as cultivated man in his fastidiousness seeks to avoid, but such as everywhere abound in the works of God. It is many times rustic, and homely, and blunt, quite regardless of nicety and often not at all genteel; yet always in exact keeping, and abounding in heights of sublimity and depths of pathos and exquisiteness of beauty and richness of instruction, such as no human compositions have ever reached. It is a rude collection of miscellaneous fragments, the remains of widely distant ages, thrown together apparently without order or connection, yet found by religious experience to be most happily and carefully adjusted to each other and forming a complete, systematic whole; as the rocks which compose the crust of the earth seem to the uninitiated a mass of confusion, deformity and waste, while the scientific eye sees that they are perfectly crystallized and systematically arranged and nicely adjusted, without a blunder or a mistake. As are the Alps and Himmalehs and Andes to the crystal palace, or the Pantheon or the Roman St. Peter's, so is the Bible to the most finished products of human genius.

All the knowledge which we have, or can have, in our present state of existence, of the spiritual world, of eternity, must be derived from it; it is our light in darkness, our comfort in adversity, our support in death. All correct theology must come from it, all complete civilization must originate in it, all the good order of society must be sustained by it. It has given occasion to probably more than half of all the literary labor which has been performed in the world; and the very highest and happiest efforts of the human mind have been put forth under its influence. The more one studies it, the more intensely does he become interested in it; the more he learns from it, the more he sees beyond that is yet to be learned; and instead of ever exhausting it by the most earnest, the longest-continued and most successful research, the further he goes the further he has to go, while new beauties continue to develop on every side, and he never comes even to the beginning of the end. *Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to*

perfection? And the same question we may ask as to God's Word. How little even Christian men, the world over, yet know of what is in their Bibles! They are like the Indians and the Spaniards of California, who for ages had possession of those mountains and streams abounding with gold, without ever dreaming of the exhaustless veins of wealth which lay in their bosom.

In the opening of the rich mines of the Scripture, much has already been done, but very much more yet remains to be accomplished, especially in bringing the great and varied wealth of the Bible to the full comprehension of the common reader. The remark of the Puritan Robinson still holds true: *God hath yet much light to break forth from his holy word* — and happy is the man who can contribute in any degree to the breaking forth of this light. It is in the prosecution of this work that the honor and the power of the Andover Institution has been chiefly manifested, and her full share of this glorious work she must still continue to do. The earnest, large-hearted, determined, indefatigable, learned Stuart; the humble, richly gifted, deeply believing, laborious, scholar-like Edwards, have here labored most illustriously in this branch of sacred science; and it is with trembling diffidence and unfeigned self-distrust that I undertake to enter into their labors. I can only say that I love God's Word, that I have felt its power, and I trust in God's help; and all the time and all the thought and all the mind and all the heart, which He sees fit to give me, shall be most faithfully, assiduously, uninterruptedly devoted to this one grand work — the bringing forth of the light from God's holy Word; and may the blessed influences of this labor still continue to be seen in the ministry and the churches and the missions, which have been and are the chief glory of our land, the best hope of the world.

NOTE, *in reference to funeral services among our Puritan ancestors, referred to on p.* 56.

Not being able to find in books the information I wished for on this subject, I wrote a letter of inquiry to that learned and indefatigable antiquarian scholar, Rev. J. B. Felt, of Boston, stating my impression that the first instance of funeral prayers in Massachusetts was at the burial of Rev. Dr. Mayhew of Boston. The information

contained in Mr. Felt's reply to my letter is so accurate and curious, that I am sure my readers will be pleased to see it in full.

Boston, Nov. 3, 1852.

PROF. C. E. STOWE,

Dear Sir, — Yours of yesterday I have just taken from the Post Office.

As our fathers abstained from marrying with a ring and baptizing with marks of a cross, and from organs in their churches, lest such forms should bring them back to the Papacy, which they believed still lingered in the national Church of England, so, in all apparent probability, they abstained, for a long period, from offering prayer at funerals. Confirmatory of this was the example of the English Geneva Church, as described in 1641. They had the corpse carried to the grave and "the minister, if present, goes to the church and makes suitable remarks." In 1645, the Congregationalists of England had serious remarks at their funerals. Lechford, in 1641, observed as to Massachusetts: "At burials nothing is read nor any funeral sermon made, but all the neighborhood, or a good company of them, come together by tolling of the bell, and carry the dead solemnly to the grave, and there stand by him while he is buried. The ministers are most commonly present." From the fact, that Congregationalism was greatly promoted in England by the influence of New England ministers, either *viva voce* or by their writings, it is very likely that there was a mutual consent and action on both sides of the Atlantic, as to the offering of serious remarks at funerals, by or even before 1645. The first instance of prayer at a funeral, that I have met with, is recorded in Sewall's diary, and had reference to the Rev. William Adams of Dedham, 1685, when he was buried. A Boston Newspaper of 1730, has the subsequent remark: "Before carrying out the corpse (of Mrs. Sarah Byfield), a funeral prayer was made by one of the pastors of the Old church, which, though a custom in the country towns, is a singular instance in this place, but, it is wished, may prove a leading example to the general practice of so Christian and decent a custom." The instances here adduced carry back the practice of funeral prayers beyond the one you have mentioned.

Very respectfully yours,

JOSEPH B. FELT.