

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS SELF-INTERPRETED.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS UPON THE METHOD OF STRUCTURAL DISPLAYS.

IN the matter of Biblical aids little attention has been paid to the method of structural displays of the sacred text itself. Indeed, this department of literary enterprise is one of the few now unoccupied, which, if rightly utilised, would much promote the intelligent study of the Word and the more profitable use of commentaries and similar helps. The ordinary procedure with Bible readers is not productive of the highest results, and inevitably limits the horizon of truth. To take a cogently if not closely reasoned treatise as a collection of isolated texts, and to pore over voluminous notes upon single verses without remembering that such single verses are an integral part of an organic whole, is, to say the least, far from a natural, wise, or satisfactory course: still it is frequently adopted.

Of all styles of writing none seems more to demand an entirely different treatment from this than the Pauline Letters. Here, so speak, we must not linger examining the details in the valley before first viewing the landscape from the summit, and discerning the relation between the various parts and their harmony with the whole scene. In a word, the logical reasoning and spiritual train of thought must be grasped in order to obtain a clear understanding of the epistolary portions of the New Testament, whether viewed in their separate parts or as an entire whole.

Of the several analyses furnished by competent hands, few fail to serve useful purposes; yet none have proved themselves generally acceptable, while sometimes they are regarded as bewildering rather than enlightening. The reason for this is not far to seek. Too many writers, whether consciously or not, seem to start out with the erroneous notion that either an Epistle was written from a fixed plan, or if not, yet by