

than is consistent with the spirit of it. In the midst of all our other concerns, we shall still make religion the centre of our hopes, and the consummation of our wishes. An ordinary mechanic devotes more of his time to the labour of his hands, than to any other concern; but it is not his laborious employment that interests his heart; it is his desire of procuring subsistence, and of warding off the inconveniences of want.

Finally, let each of us examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith or not; let us prove our own selves; let us not shrink from the severest test to which conscience and the word of God can put us. If we be indeed found sincere, after thus searching our hearts, our faith will grow more firm, and our consolations more steady. Or if it appear that we have been hitherto deceiving and being deceived, (awful idea!) we shall at least have an opportunity of once more lifting up our eyes for mercy, and of reading our danger in our sin, not in our punishment. But we hope better things, and things which accompany salvation. Having fled from the wrath to come, and laid hold on eternal life, we rejoice in the prospect of meeting together at the great day, when we shall have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Then, brought out of much tribulation, and redeemed from every nation, and tongue, and people, his elect shall be gathered, he shall give up the kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all in all. Alas! the voice of individual praise is weak and feeble; but how will our hearts swell with adoration and delight, when, while we are praising Him, He shall receive, from millions of hemges, and millions of worlds, the same incense!—*Rev. R. Hall.*

#### REALITY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

If we consider the conduct of the disciples of Christ, we are naturally led to inquire how a change so extraordinary came suddenly to take place in their characters. A few days ago, they were meanly cowardly, and with the exception of a few women, and one in whom love was more mighty than fear, they had all, when there existed no pressing personal danger, abandoned their Master in his extremity of sorrow and shame. But now that they are actually in the most imminent peril of liberty and life, they are fearless, intrepid, and resolute, almost beyond parallel. They despise danger, they have no fear, though ignominy and death impend over them. They are willing to endure all risks, and to submit to all privations. Their very nature is no longer the same. From being timid, suspicious, hesitating fishermen, they have at once become the undaunted, confident, eloquent, impassioned preachers of a new religion. How then has all this occurred? Is it sufficient to say, that, having stolen the body of Jesus, and being fully aware of the falsehood of his pretensions, they have resolved to commence a course of personal fraud and imposture? O, no; this is not the bearing of vanity. A young unpledged liar is always a coward. It requires a very long course of sin to enable a man even to appear bold in his vices, especially when the punishments of the law are hanging over his head. Let those who are familiar with criminal courts say, whether it be possible for a body of men newly conversant with stratagems and crimes, not to afford at the bar, by their want of nerve, an indication of their real characters. This supposition, therefore, will not account for the hardihood of the Apostles. But if we admit that they had again seen, beaming with love, that face which had before been defiled with spitting, and pale in death; that they had looked on those eyes, lighted up with immortal radiance, which had been glazed in mortal agony; that they had heard that voice, in calm and lofty intonation, which had uttered the cry of unspeakable sorrow on the cross; that they had touched the hands warm with life, through which the nails had passed, and felt the beating pulses of tenderness through that side which had been pierced with the cruel spear; if they knew that their Master, revered and beloved as he was by them during his humiliation upon earth, was now adored by hosts of angels upon the throne of God in heaven; that, in short, God had demonstrated his infinite regard towards him by the stupendous miracle of the resurrection from the dead; if they had witnessed, and if they knew all this, they might well be dauntless. This was indeed enough to inspire the most dejected, to inflame the most cold, and

to nerve the most timid; and this, in fact, is the only way in which we can rationally account for this change upon these otherwise low, incredulous, and fainting spirits. Accordingly, we find their testimony throughout characterized by the utmost harmony, boldness, and perseverance. Upwards of five hundred persons united in affirming, that they had actually seen the risen Saviour; and in this they steadily and openly persisted. No one among them was ever found to him at any thing or doubt upon the subject. The first publication of the fact was made in Jerusalem, almost immediately after its alleged occurrence, and made too in the presence of those who were most fully qualified to detect the fraud, had any fraud existed, and whose reputation was involved in its exposure. The same doctrine did the disciples preach every where. Neither the acuteness of the Greek, nor the malignity of the Jews, produced the slightest effect upon their testimony. In maintaining and proclaiming this fact, they were exposed to every sort of scrutiny, to persecution of every kind, and to death in its most fearful forms. But they were nothing dismayed. Onward they proceeded in their great enterprise. In the city, and in the desert, in the synagogue, and in the courts of justice; among the philosophers of Athens, and the barbarians of Scythia, in the company of believers, and at the place of mortal agony; never wearied, never faulting, never ashamed, this everlasting theme of their ministry was poured forth, till hundreds of thousands had heard and believed.

The man who is willing to die for his faith, cannot be a deceiver; and there were thousands who were not only willing to die, but who actually did die, for their belief and their testimony of the resurrection of Christ; and these, some of the most virtuous men that the world ever saw. Nor were the martyrs to this truth from the simple and the illiterate alone, but also from the acute, the educated, the philosophic, the eloquent, and even from among the persecutors themselves. Let it not be forgotten that the illustrious writer from whom we have selected our text\* was none other than Saul of Tarsus, the shrewd and cultivated, but ferocious and ruthless, persecutor. Fully acquainted, as he was, with the evidence for and against the resurrection, strongly prejudiced against Christianity, pledged to oppose it, and to run its professors, with all his interests involved in his adherence to Judaism; such, nevertheless, was the power of the truth, that he became the most forcible and successful preacher of the religion he once dishonoured. Was he deceived? His native acuteness, and his virulent hatred to Christianity, rendered that impossible. Was he then a deceiver? That is equally inconceivable, since he was utterly without motive to become so. No, he could not have been either mistaken himself, or disposed to delude others. But truth is great, and will prevail; and while the name and history of Saul of Tarsus remain,—and remain they will to the end of the world,—there will need no other evidence that "Jesus Christ our Lord was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."—*Rev. R. Treffry, jun.*

#### Biblical Literature.

##### HISTORY OF HERMENEUTICS.

THE history of this branch of knowledge, and of the manner in which it has been treated from the earliest ages, may very well be compressed in a short compass. But this is not the case with its literature, which is exceedingly rich. Still, a preliminary sketch of its history, although short, will be of use in order to facilitate a choice among the principal literary works belonging to this department.

The history of hermeneutics may most suitably be divided into seven periods of time, which, although of very unequal lengths, are yet distinguished by principles of interpretation peculiar to each, or at least by appropriate methods of exposition very observably varying from the others. The characteristic traits of these methods and of these principles, impress upon the exegetical works which we have of each of these periods, such marks of discrimination, not to be misunderstood, that with regard to most of them, it is unnecessary to inquire

after any other marks in order to ascertain the time to which they belong.

I. In the first two centuries it was hardly possible for the church to have any other principles of exposition than those which the early Christians had in part brought over with them from Judaism, and in part received from the Jews. These Christians who were properly Jewish could have no other; and those who were converted to Christianity from Heathenism could not think of originating others for themselves, for as, along with the Christian religion they received the holy scriptures of the Jews, it was natural that they should consider it as incumbent on them to receive also the principles, according to which they had hitherto been explained by the Jews and their teachers. These principles are very well known. They amount to this: that although the words of scripture are to be explained according to the usage of language, yet frequently their grammatical sense is the least important, and that almost all that they contain is allegory, or type, or prophecy.

Many circumstances conspired to encourage the early fathers, who were possessed of some learning, to adopt this extraordinary method of interpretation. They saw that even the Apostle Paul, in some of his epistles, where he was obliged to contend with Jewish Christians, had availed himself of it, as, for instance, in that to the Galatians, and thus they considered themselves as sufficiently authorized, not attending to the peculiar circumstances in which the apostle was placed, and to the particular object which he had in view. They were themselves incompetent to discover a better method of interpretation, because the greatest part of them were altogether unacquainted with the Hebrew language. But what principally recommended this method to them was, that, in contending with the opponents of Christianity among the Jews, they were able to derive from it most important advantage for their opinions. By the aid which it afforded they were able to point out to the Jews, a multitude of prophecies in the Old Testament relating to Christ, the literal accomplishment of which could be shown without any trouble, to illustrate a multitude of types in it, the corresponding antitypes to which were to be found without difficulty in his history. It was therefore no wonder, that Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and Clement of Alexandria, were so much captivated by this mode of exposition, as not only not to observe how insecure, unsteady, and deceptive it is, but to find in it their chief advantage.

II. But, in the commencement of the third century, a happier period for hermeneutics was introduced by Origen, not so much by giving his contemporaries rules for an improved interpretation, as by exhibiting to them an example of improvement. It was, of course, impossible even for Origen at once to break loose from the old allegorical method of interpretation. His acuteness and perspicacity pointed out to him in the Bible frequent allegories and types, which no man before him had discovered. He also sometimes intentionally availed himself of this allegorical method of interpretation, in order to oppose with the more effect certain crude opinions of his age, founded on an interpretation entirely literal; as, for example, the gross representation of a resurrection of the flesh and an earthly reign of Christ during a thousand years, which in the second century was extensively prevalent.\* Some of his pupils and admirers afterwards carried this point still further; and hence it was, that, subsequently, when errors and heresies began to be discovered in the writings of this most extraordinary man, he was subjected to the reproach of having been the inventor, or at least the greatest promoter of the allegorizing system of interpretation.

But this reproach is in a high degree unmerited. If even Origen could not altogether free himself from the tendency of his age, yet it was this very man, who often enough and pointedly enough insisted, that interpretation should always be founded on the grammatical sense of the words; that in ascertaining this sense, the usage of language should always first be consulted;

\* The author refers to the opinions of the early millenniumists that, preparatory to the earthly reign of Christ, there should be a resurrection of the bodies of the saints, with all their ordinary properties and propensities, fitting them for the enjoyment of corporeal delights. The reader may see proof of this opinion having been entertained, in Whitty's "Treatise of the true Millennium," Chap. 3, sec. 19, at the end of his commentary on the New Testament, Ed. London, 1227—79.

and that, until this can afford no suitable meaning, entirely corresponding with the connection and views of the writer, or in unison with his declarations as elsewhere expressed, no allegorical, typical, or spiritual signification can properly be resorted to. He it was, who pointed out to his contemporaries the method of correcting the grammatical and historical sense of scripture with a typical and allegorical one; a method which undoubtedly was afterwards much abused. By these means he taught them most impressively that acquaintance with language and with history is necessary in every case in order to secure a correct interpretation, and by these means alone did he perform a service with regard to hermeneutics, which entitled him to the thanks of all succeeding ages.

III. In the period immediately subsequent to that of Origen, the effects of his example became very evident; for in the fourth century interpretation assumed a form greatly improved. This state of things was chiefly owing to the fact, that now there were more interpreters, who had formed their taste by an acquaintance with the works of the old Greek and Roman authors, and they were not able entirely to keep out of view, the effect which the study of them produced on their mental character, however willingly they would often have done so, in commenting on the Bible. This was the case with Eusebius, Chrysostom, Theodoret of Mopsuestia, Isidore of Pelusium, and Theodoret, among the Greek interpreters of the fourth and fifth centuries, and with Jerome, Augustin, Pelagius and Cassian among the Latins. It is true, that in these authors we do often enough meet with the allegorical and mystical expositions; but it is at the same time impossible not to perceive, that they were influenced by a feeling, which always brought them back again to a more intelligent method of interpretation.

Many of them, as Chrysostom, Theodoret and Augustin, felt also, that it was sometimes necessary to lay down, as the ground of grammatical interpretation, a particular usage of language belonging to the sacred writers; they had even an indistinct impression that the particular spirit of the age of these writers must be regarded; and they were not afraid in many cases to proceed upon the supposition, that by a judicious accommodation they had occasionally come down even to the erroneous views of their own time.

We not unfrequently find, therefore, in the exegetical works of these fathers, interpretations of the most excellent and striking character, and it is to be ascribed to two causes only that they are not to be found there in greater abundance. The one is, their very great want of acquaintance with the spirit of the old languages of the east, a defect, which must have a most injurious influence on their interpretations not only of the Old Testament, but also of the New. The other cause is to be found in the unhappy controversies, which were carried on during those periods, in such vexatious number, and with such scandalous warmth. In these cases, it became too much the practice, to allow themselves to modify their interpretation according to the convenience of the polemics; that is to say, to explain the Bible in such a manner as was best adapted to advance the interest of the various opinions which they defended. Even the best and most acute writers among the fathers of those times, as Theodoret of Mopsuestia, (for the polemic authors, Jerome and Augustin, are quite out of the question,) could not entirely guard against the fault of sometimes finding in the Bible merely what would serve to support their opinions, and of finding it there simply because they required it for that purpose: an evil, which in the following ages became still worse.

IV. It may be said with truth, that the whole period from the seventh to the sixteenth century was destitute of hermeneutics, merely for this reason, that it was by the polemics of the times completely subjected to the yoke of doctrinal divinity. The truths, which it was thought proper to find in the Bible, were now brought into a system, which the church by her authority and influence had frequently declared to be the only true one. No man therefore ventured to find any thing further in the Bible, which was not adapted to this system, and still less any thing which stood in opposition to it.