

mencement of our century, the newly rising party, called pietists, began to devote themselves particularly to the interpretation of the Bible, because they considered it as necessary, and certainly not without reason, to revive a zeal for the study of it, which had become very greatly diminished. But, unhappily, this party brought rather too much enthusiasm and too little learning to this subject, and thus would necessarily impart to their method of interpretation a peculiar character. This consisted in pressing each word of the text, until every idea, which by mere possibility it might contain according to its etymology, was forced out; for, by this operation, the "prægnantes sensus scripturae," to use their own language, and the holy emphasis of its expressions, which had heretofore been neglected, could alone be received in all their fullness.

Had this been done according to a reasonable method, some real gain might perhaps have resulted; but from that which was generally pursued, any advantage could, in the nature of things, but very seldom be obtained; and, in truth, the effect must often have been injurious. These expositors might have endeavoured, and sometimes with the hope of a very happy result, to determine the whole extent and the full emphasis of an idea involved in any word or turn of expression from the general or particular usage of language in the Bible, from which alone confident conclusions could be drawn. But, instead of this, they generally adhered merely to the etymological or grammatical connection, from which they deduced the strangest conclusions; without reflecting, that, in a multitude of cases, the conventional, and the particular usage of the sacred writers, could not have been so accurately directed either by etymology or grammar.

If, for example, the apostles, by a Hebraism, had used *en* instead of *dia*, if they had written, "in the name of Jesus," instead of "through the name of Jesus;" a peculiar emphasis was supposed to be in the particle *en*, expressly intended by the apostle, because, if this were not the case, he could as well have employed the word *dia*. When St. Paul says of Christ that he is *hyper*usque, (Phil. ii. 9.) the term must express much more than the idea of Christ's exaltation in general, for otherwise the apostle would not have added force to the verb *hupso* by compounding it with the preposition *hyper*. But that the first assistance is nothing but a Hebraism, and that with respect to the other, it was a very common usage with the Greeks, to employ such compound words interchangeably with the simple,* and in the very same sense with them, these sticklers for emphatic phraseology would by no means allow, because such a concession would completely demolish the whole foundation of their emphasis. This extravagant trifling could not long continue, and indeed it would scarcely have lasted to the middle of our own age, had it not been for a time assisted by the countenance of some men, who in other respects were very reasonable and deservedly esteemed, as, for instance, the pious and learned Bengel. Yet this system was the sooner dissipated, when some other divines of decided reputation, as Ernesti, announced themselves in opposition to it.

VII. Through the efforts of these men, and especially of the last named scholar, hermeneutics came in the end to the form in which it is at present; or rather, it received the principal characteristics of which it may now boast.

It may with propriety be said of it, that, in the present day, by means of a nicer and more fundamental knowledge, it can acquire much greater certainty respecting the grammatical sense of scripture, and by means of more enlarged literary investigations, can throw much clearer light on the historical sense than formerly; that, at the same time, it has laid aside the prejudice, which had previously restrained it from paying sufficient attention to the spirit of the age for which these writings were immediately intended; and that, in fine, it has seized and applied this same spirit in a degree far beyond what could possibly have been done in its earliest periods.

It may therefore be given as the distinguishing characteristic of the interpretation

of our own time, that it proceeds on the principle that each sacred writer thinks and speaks according to the spirit of his age, and consequently must be explained according to that spirit.* This may also without hesitation be given as its chief advantage; although it cannot at the same time be denied, that this principle has been occasionally carried too far, and that consequently injurious effects have now and then resulted. Such effects are principally to be apprehended, from the facility with which it might so often be erroneously assumed, that the sacred writers, in many of their declarations, in which the older theology and positive doctrines, have been governed merely by views of their own age. It may also be a more unfavourable circumstance, that no settled principles have yet been agreed on, whereby to define the bounds of this accommodating method of interpretation, although the subject had been warmly discussed for twenty years, when Semler gave new life to the excitement in relation to the scriptural doctrine respecting demons, and began by his "æconomium dicendi genus" to explain it away. But notwithstanding this, we may probably anticipate more benefit hereafter, than we need fear disadvantage. It was not altogether unnatural that interpretation, in the first joy that it experienced in being freed from the fetters of doctrinal divinity which it had so long carried, should, with the feelings which this must excite, have gone somewhat further than necessity or propriety justified; but, for this very reason, it may be hoped with the more probability, that in time it will of itself become right; and then even doctrinal divinity will undoubtedly derive the greatest advantages.—*Dr. G. J. Planck; translated by Dr. S. H. Turner.*

Biography.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES OF THE REV. BARTHOLOMEW WESLEY, AND OF THE REV. JOHN WESLEY, HIS SON; GREAT-GRANDFATHER, AND GRANDFATHER OF THE LATE REV. JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY: BY THE REV. W. BEAL.

"Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world." What we were accustomed to term nature, providence, and grace, are but the development of these known purposes, and the manifestation of God. As these declare unto us "invisible things," must it not be equally the duty and the privilege of men to behold the Divine Being therein? Creation is the declaration of God; the disclosure of those plans which previously existed in His infinitely wise and benevolent mind; for "in his book they were written, when as yet there were none of them;" and these in material substances, constitute an important part of that temple in which the Creator ever lives, acts, and should be adored. Men who thus regard visible things, will not contemplate merely so much brute matter, and variously combined substances; but forms by and in which are brought to the senses and mind, the previously existing patterns and plans wherein the "back parts" of God are disclosed.

"He who made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." These "appointments and bounds" imply both plan and design; or what we are accustomed to term Providence. This important word ideally stands for prevision or foresight, and provision or supply. In the special endowments of men, and their disposal as to time, place, and circumstances, for the work appointed them to do, is not the development of plan very apparent? Especially in connexion with the purpose of God in Christ and the Christian church, "which is his body, the fulness" and the manifestation "of him who filleth all in all."

From Eden to Calvary; for the period when it was said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature;" to this hour, Christianity has been, and is, the great work and manifestation of God, and especially of his only-begotten Son; "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

The agents employed have been created and formed by him. They have greatly differed as to distinguishing qualifications, but have all contributed in the way of heaven to the same end. As mighty operations, though unnoticed in one season, prepare the earth for the flowers and fruits of the next, so good men, comparatively unheeded and forgotten, have been chosen instruments in the hand of God to prepare his way.

In the agents by which Christianity was successfully made known, and has been continued in the world, amidst the "confusion" and efforts of men, who resolved to set out the Gospel from the earth, as a "pernicious and pestilent superstition," divine Providence is strikingly apparent. In the estimation of the world, they were "base, weak, and as such despised;" but they brought to nought things that were. The immediate successors of the Apostles were vessels of honour, prepared and meet for the Master's use, whether they are contemplated as ministers, or as apologists. Such also were the witnesses clothed in sackcloth, who prophesied when the gold had become dim, and the most fine gold was changed. To the same end, and by the same Providence, the wars, purposes, and inventions of men were made to praise God;—the Crusades, for example, and the fall of Constantinople; these events led to the dispersion of valuable knowledge in western Europe,—the rise, also, of the Florentine school in the house of Medici and the great change in letters to which this led;—the invention, at this moment, of printing, and the rapid multiplication of books;—the building of St. Peter's;—the work of Petzel,—all, led the way to Luther, Melancthon, and the Reformation; by which, as from death, the church arose in her might.

The honoured names of the most conspicuous actors in this important event have been deservedly handed down to posterity, and long may they be remembered by men! But there were others equally worthy, who laboured, suffered, and prepared the way for their more distinguished successors, of whom but little is recorded and known. How scanty, for example, are the memorials which have been transmitted to us, of that Deacon who, A. D. 680, on his return from Mahometan captivity, was hospitably received at Mananalis, in the north of Syria, by Constantine, another Christian in suffering. In the morning, when about to depart, the only way in which the Deacon could reward his kind host was, by the gift of a copy of the holy Scriptures. This became to Constantine an invaluable gift, and precious seed. He searched the Scriptures, and they became the power of God to his salvation. The blessing he had found, he began to make known to his neighbours, and with great effect. As the Epistles of Paul were highly valued by this good man, and affectionately commended to his hearers, Constantine and his followers were speedily known by the term Paulicians. Their enemies reported them to be Manichees; but Gibbon, though not their friend, declares, "The Paulicians sincerely condemned the memory and opinions of the Manichean sect." Mosheim states the same fact. They were severely persecuted, yet they grew and rapidly extended. From Asia Minor and the east of Europe, they were driven towards the west, and were known as Cathari, a word akin to our Puritans. Still driven by intolerance, their representatives fled to the glens near the Alps, and were proscribed on one side of those mountains as Vallenses or Waldenses, and on the other as Albigenses. From thence they were hunted to the caverns of the Alps, &c., where, as if wolves and not men, they were the jest of their enemies as Tartarans. Still regarded and pursued as reptiles who should be trodden under foot, they fled wherever they could find a refuge. In France their designation was Trasserands, from their employ, and "the poor men of Lyons." Among these persecuted fugitives, and remnants of early churches, under different names, whom Bossuet acknowledges as "the theological, if not the natural, descendants of the Paulicians of Armenia," the Protestants of those ages, the flock and church of Christ was permanently found. It would be no difficult task, to attempt to connect the gift of one solitary copy of God's word by a suffering Deacon to Constantine, with the light that dawned on Wickliffe, Huss, and Luther, and which led to the Reformation. Yet the Deacon and the Paulicians, are but

little known; and, where known, generally it has been but to be dishonoured.

Luther, and his noble associates, stand before us in glowing repute. Yet how few have heard of John de Wessala, and John Wesselus (at the latter is not the former name latinised) of Groningen, who was once known and honoured as the "forerunner of Luther!" Wesselus was born A. D. 1410, travelled in the east, became Doctor in Divinity, and for the "truth," and died 1484. In his day, Wesselus was so celebrated, as to be known as the "light of the world," but that which the most distinguished men, was his preparation, by his works and sufferings, of the way for Luther. By this great man some of the works of Wesselus were edited, and he greatly commended him for his learning and worth. By the kindness of Luther, principally if not only, the name of Wesselus has been preserved from perishing; yet assuredly the church owes that more very much, and should cherish his memory, who could be truly spoken of as the forerunner of the great Saxon Reformer. One other fact in reference to Wesselus may be noticed. At the elevation of Sixtus the IV. to the Papal throne, he had Wesselus ask at his hands some gift. He modestly expressed his wish and prayer, that the pontificate might be to its possessor a great personal and public good. "That," said Sixtus, "is my care: ask something for yourself." "Then, holy father," replied Wesselus, "my request is that from your library you would grant me a copy of the Scriptures." "That," said the Pope, "you shall have; but, foolish man, why do you ask a bishopric, or something of that sort?" The answer was, "Because I do not want such things." Like the late John Wesley, he was *Amicus libri*, "a man of one book."

The Reformation, though attended with mighty changes, did not accomplish all that might have been expected, nor long maintain its vigour. With all their faults, we are greatly indebted to the Puritans, and the noble band of the Nonconformists, for the preservation of the leading doctrines of the Reformation in Britain. But the children of these men renounced the faith, and departed from the spirit of their fathers. What is known as Methodism (a term by which the religion of Nonconformist Ministers was also known; Mr. Sandcock of Tavistock, in his notice of Richard Saunders, A. M., who was rejected from Kentsbeer, Devon, and who died at Exeter, reports that he was one of those who were at that time called *New Methodists*) has during the last century effected a great change in Britain, the direct and indirect operations of which are mighty in our churches; and from us and America, to the most distant parts of the earth. This "second reformation" has placed the name of the late Rev. John Wesley very prominently before the world. "The Centenary of Wesleyan Methodism," by our respected President, directs more especially the Wesleyan body to those names and labours in which they should ever glorify God. But there were other Wesleys, in whom also God should be honoured; less distinguished, yet not to be forgotten. By the world they were dishonoured; but as men of learning and worth, as Christian Ministers, distinguished by piety, the most exemplary patience, and resignation in circumstances of great suffering, they are worthy of lasting remembrance. The writer is favoured by being called to put together some fragments of the elder Wesleys, which he has carefully gleaned; that of these good men a permanent record may be found in the Wesleyan Magazine.

The Wesleys, it is stated by Dr. Clarke, believed their progenitors came from Saxony. Whether the Wessala, and Wesselus of Groningen, will give any countenance to this opinion, is a question freely left to the judgment of the reader. That the etymon of the family name is found in the Saxon language, has more of certainty. *Leigh, Leigh, Lea, and L-y*, have their common origin in the Saxon *Leag*; which implies "the extensive unploughed field," "the untilled pasture;" where

"The lowing herds wind slowly o'er the lea."
Thus, when the property of Ecclesiastics, was known as Bishops' or Abbots' *Leigh*. When found in an elevated situation, High-Leigh is the designation. If the direction was west, when compared with some other place, then Westleugh, Westlea, or Westley is the name. In the rural history of our country, places of these or similar

* The remark of Dr. Planck, that "it was a very common usage with the Greeks, to employ compound words interchangeably with the simple," is by no means necessarily applicable to the word *hyper*. The *hyper* is evidently intensive, and the compound term expresses great elevation, agreeably to our own terms, "highly exalted;" the same as *hyper*, or, but more, emphatic.—*Robinson's Lexicon, from Wald's Classics.*

* The reader is requested to keep in mind the limitations already laid down, in order to qualify the application of this principle.—77.
If the author had lived to the present time, he would have seen his anticipations realized. Indeed the extravagant and licentious wildness of some among the late German commentators, in the heyday of their wildness, has even been suggested.—77.