

portant than all other sciences put together, as they concern our salvation and eternal welfare. Those of us who are preachers of the Gospel are under a heavy obligation if we mean to be faithful to our high calling to gather all the knowledge that we can regarding the languages in which the books of the Old and of the New Testament were originally written. It behooves every Christian minister to keep his exegetical armor clear and burnished through all his years, and to prevent the rust of indolence or inattention from creeping and gathering over it. In the face of the vast accumulation of learned commentaries the preacher is wise who consults the Hebrew or Greek text in which the subject of his discourses was written. It becomes him to be sure that he is interpreting correctly the argument or statement of the inspired writer whose words he undertakes to expound, and that he is not imposing on the sacred text a meaning which is altogether foreign to it. It is impossible to tell the number of sermons that have been written upon the reply which King Agrippa made to Paul: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." The Sinaitic MS. has removed every doubt regarding the incorrectness of that reading; the words in question ought to be rendered: "Lightly, on an insufficient ground, you persuade yourself that you have made me a Christian." The translation of the received version of the Bible did violence to the clear meaning of the Greek words "en oligo kai en megalō," where they were rendered "almost and altogether," whereas their correct meaning is as Alford indicates: "I could wish to God that whether with ease or difficulty (on my part) not only thou, but all who hear me to-day might become such as I am, except only these bonds." The sentiment which runs through the words "almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," however beautiful it may be from a certain point of view, in itself, is not a correct rendering of the answer which Agrippa made to Paul, having, as he, the king, had, no intention of becoming a Christian, at that time at any rate. The incorrect translation of the reply of King Agrippa is sufficient of itself to indicate how necessary it always is for those who undertake to preach the Gospel to cultivate the study of exegesis, and to resolve to maintain a continuous acquaintance with Hebrew and with Greek, with the languages in which the Word of God was originally written.

I have already in this paper exceeded the limits which were prescribed to me. Let me remark that the elaborate and learned books on the Bible which are appearing in our time make a constant demand on the studious application of our ministers, if they desire, as they naturally do, to have even an imperfect knowledge of the wide and diversified

progress which Biblical learning in all its forms is making in our day. At the end of his commentary on the Book of Revelation, Dean Alford, whose critical learning all ministers must admire, who are conversant with his Commentary on the Greek New Testament, thus writes with commendable candor and humility: "With this my labor of eighteen years is herewith completed; my prayer is and shall be that in the stir and labor of men over God's Word, to which these volumes have been a humble contribution, others may arise and teach whose labors may be so far better than mine that this book and its writer may ere long be utterly forgotten."

I cannot linger to enumerate the various commentaries which have been published in recent years, designed as they are to impart the best results of modern learning in a form that is adapted for various classes of readers. To the Bible a selection of helps is frequently appended wherein useful information of different kinds is given for the purpose of making the various references and allusions in the Word of God more intelligible and beneficial. Assistance in various forms is afforded for enabling the scholars who attend the Sunday-school to understand the lessons that are taught more easily and correctly. There is a danger and perhaps a grave danger that amid the wide profusion of Biblical literature the attention of young and old among the students of the Bible is the danger of being turned away from the direct study of the Bible itself. Among the many wise opinions of Luther, this statement deserves a place of honor: "It is the attribute of the Holy Scriptures that it interprets itself by passages and places which belong together, and can only be understood by the rule of faith. Every word should be allowed to stand in its natural meaning, and that should not be abandoned unless faith forces us to it." The pious scholar will always be acting wisely who collates the texts of Scripture that bear on any doctrine for himself, and who endeavors to increase his knowledge of the Will and Word of God by the careful and prayerful study of the Bible. And when all has been said, that can be cheerfully and thankfully said, in praise of all the learning which is brought to bear on the correct interpretation of the Word of God through all its books, let it not be forgotten that for the child who is still in the morning of his days, and of his knowledge of the Bible, as well as for him who has studied much and long, the various commentaries which the ripest human learning has produced, it will be always well and wise to bring his mind and soul and spirit into direct and loving contact often and always with the Word of God itself, pure and undefiled, which is able to make us wise unto salvation.

Effect of Reputation on Character.

Reputation helps to make character. To be continually telling a boy that he is a bad boy is more likely to make him worse than better. To give a class the reputation of being the "worst class in school," and to keep noising it abroad, is not likely to raise the moral tone or discipline of the class. A man who has served out a term in prison for crime finds it hard to show himself trustworthy, because nobody trusts him. His reputation as an ex-prisoner clings to him, and, unless he is exceptionally strong of will, reform seems hopeless to him, and he sinks back to the level to which his bad reputation has been depreciating him. As the character of others depends largely upon their reputation, we should be careful how we handle that reputation.—S. S. Times.

Laborers.

As laborers set in a vineyard
Are we set in life's field,
To plant and to garner the harvest
Our future shall yield.

And never since harvests were ripened,
Or laborers born,
Hav' emen gathered figs of the thistle,
Or grapes of the thorn!

Even he who has faithfully scattered
Clean seed in the ground,
Has seen, when the green blade was growing,
Tares of evil abound.

Our labor ends not with the planting,
Sure watch must we keep,
For the enemy sows in the night-time
While husbandmen sleep.

And sins, all unsought and unbidden,
Take root in the mind;
As the weeds grow, to choke up the blossoms
Chance-sown by the wind.

But no good crop, our hands never planted,
Doth Providence send;
Nor doth which we planted have increase
Till we water and tend.

By our fruits, whether good, whether evil,
At last are we shown;
And he who has nothing to gather,
By his lack shall be known.

And no useless creature escapeth
His righteous reward;
For the tree or the soul that is barren
Is cursed of the Lord!

—Phoebe Cary.

The Grace of Human Kindness.

The grace of human kindness, bestowed through words and deeds, is no doubt a very valuable and effective aid to the divine Word in winning men to Christ. It is also true that the devil gains most of his converts by pleasing favors, and no one would walk in his ways but for the fact that he makes them such pleasant places with the good and pleasant things of this life. Moral: Before we trust or follow any one because he is kind, let us see to it that he is "all right" in other respects.—The Lutheran.

Death is a great mystery, but it leads to a greater mystery—the mystery of eternal life.