

# The Wesleyan.

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"WISDOM IS THE PRINCIPAL THING; THEREFORE GET WISDOM."

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## Theology.

POETRY

It is easy for superficial and contracted thinkers and for bigoted and dogmatic spirits to denounce every doctrine and practice, differing from their standard, as stupid and absurd, and to ascribe them to wilful perversity of heart and understanding. It is easy to dogmatize, but difficult to prove. Any one can talk, but every one cannot impartially and comprehensively examine the nature and causes of existing phenomena. He is a poor philosopher and a worse divine who arrogates perfection or exclusive truth and excellence to himself or his party, and in the face of multiplied and well-known facts denounces all others as schismatics and errorists, as mean and contemptible. Men of this stamp would make as zealous Mussulim or Papist as Protestants, were they only suitably educated. "Whatever is with us is right" appears to be the quintessence of their wisdom. They only need the facilities of the dark ages and adequate civil power to "examine" their opponents by strangling and scourging. We instinctively recoil from latitudinarianism; but we thoroughly shudder at selfishness and bigotry. Truth dashes Bigotry from her emporium as embodied hatred and ill-will, while she scowls upon Latitudinarianism as the negation of all excellence and drives it from her presence. Any one can cry "the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we, and heathens all beside;" just as did the narrow-minded Jews of old. When Paul proclaimed himself divinely commissioned to go "far hence unto the Gentiles" with the offer of salvation, those self-sufficient Jews vociferated "Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live." Paul, therefore, sinned in going "hence" from the very personifications and paragons of all religious excellence; but to go to the Gentile "dogs" and give them the children's bread, to extend equal privileges and blessings to those contemptible "gentiles," who wore out of the visible Church, un-circumcised and unwashed, was such a condemnation of error, heresy, and schism, in the estimation of the Jews, as aroused their strongest contempt and abhorrence and made them thirst for the apostle's blood. "Away with such a fellow" cried the Jews, "away with such schismatics and sinners," explain their modern successors. "It is not fit that he should live," said those blind boasters and persecutors; "it is not fit that such schismatics should be in the slightest degree aided or encouraged," say their modern kinsmen and brethren. And as the Jews pertinaciously insisted on the Gentiles absolutely and invariably conforming to all Jewish rites, ceremonies and regulations, so do their fac-similes in this day urge the same claims and make the same demands. We might run the parallel farther, but it is not necessary. It is obvious that the same bigotry reigns in the one class as in the other. In the first, the spirit of persecution was rampant and raging, because it had scope and facility for operation; in the second, the same spirit is existent, but latent, because circumscribed and guarded. In both, the same intolerance lays claim to the same conscientiousness, uprightness, zeal for God, and sincerity. "I verily think with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," I most conscientiously and religiously opposed Christ and his people, said the once turbulent, bigoted, pharisaic "chief of sinners" and "I verily think with myself that I ought to withhold support from every form of religion but my own, and steadfastly discountenance it" is the language of every self-sufficient bigoted religionist of modern days. Now, whether such a spirit as this obtains among Papists or Protestants, Arminians or Calvinists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, or Independ-

ents, you detest and despise it, and shall never show it quarter. How does it look beside the spirit and language of our adorable Redeemer, who is love itself—"Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us, and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, verily I say unto you, forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us. It looks like darkness contrasted with light, hatred with love, and hell with heaven. No man, under its influence, is capable of impartial and enlightened enquiry, he cannot love truth for its own sake, and pursue and embrace it, whatever be the cost or consequence. Influenced by such a spirit, he looks through a discoloured and deceptive medium, every thing appears to him with one false hue, he neglects or perverts whatever seems adverse to his own personal or sectarian interests, he shrinks from a thorough investigation of every evidence and of every side, he employs erroneous standards, and it may be, erroneous principles of ratiocination; and whatever he cannot answer he contemptuously disregards, or pronounces it unscientific, despicable, or absurd.

Description and ridicule are the weapons with which bigotry should be assailed and overthrown. "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit."

## REGENERATION INSTANTANEOUS

There is not the least doubt but regeneration is accomplished in a moment. For there is no delay in the transition from death to life. No person can be said to be regenerated, so long as he is in the state of spiritual death; but in the instant he begins to live, he is born again. "Wherefore no intermediate state, between the regenerate and unregenerate, can be imagined so much as in thought, for one is either dead or alive; has either the spirit of the flesh and the world, or the Spirit of God actuating him, is either in the state of grace or in the state of malediction, either the child of God or of the devil, either in the way to salvation or damnation. There neither is nor can be any medium here. The Holy Scripture divides all mankind into two classes—"sheep and goats," Matt. xxv. 2, 3; and compares their goings to two ways, whereof the one, which is broad, leads to destruction; the other, which is narrow, to life, Matt. vii. 13, 14, and there is no one who does not tread in one or other of these ways.—Witsius.

## FAITH.

We want that faith which outstrips the speed of ages, which seizes on the imperishable and apprehends the infinite, which leans upon the arm, or grasps the mantle, of omnipotence, which brings the distant near, and turns the invisible into a present substance, which gives swift wings to hope and swifter to devotion, strengthens the hands for labour, braves the nerve for endurance, and dilates the heart with emotions, the very germs and pledges of our immortality, which rears us up from the dust of human frailty, to become princes and prevail with God,—and teaches us, while halting and wearied in the contest, still to retain our hold and say—"I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me,"—although it is an angel's might with which we struggle, and an angel's pimon that is half-unwinded, and already spreading to the wind.—Rev. R. S. M'All, LL. D.

## Biblical Literature.

### RULES OF INTERPRETATION.

#### CHAP. III.

Other means to assist in finding the sense of words besides the usus loquendi.

#### Concluded.

12. Etymology an uncertain guide. The fluctuating use of words, which prevails in

every language, gives rise to frequent changes in their meaning. There are but few words in any language, which always maintain their radical and primary meaning. Great care is therefore necessary in the interpreter, to guard against rash etymological exegesis, which is often very fallacious. Etymology often belongs rather to the history of language, than to the illustration of its present meaning, and rarely does it exhibit any thing more than a specious illustration.

13. Expressions which convey a similar meaning are to be compared, although in respect to etymology they may differ. That analogy is particularly useful to an interpreter, which leads him not only to compare similar words and phrases, and so cast light from the one upon the other, but also to compare expressions, which, though dissimilar in respect to etymology, are employed to designate the same idea.

14. Foundation of analogy in all languages. No one can doubt that men are affected in nearly the same way by objects of sense. Hence, those who speak of the same objects perceived and contemplated in the same manner, although they may use language that differs in respect to etymology, yet must be supposed to have meant the same thing; and on this account, the one may be explained by the other. (Morus, p. 178. xx.)

Men are physically and mentally affected in the same manner, by very many objects; and of course, it may be presumed that they entertain and mean to express the same ideas concerning these objects, however various their language may be. Besides, modes of expression are often communicated from one people to another. Of the use to be made of these facts, the following section treats.

15. Use of the above general principle. In general this principle is of great extent, and of much use to the interpreter in judging of the meaning of tropical language, and in avoiding fictitious emphasis. Accordingly, we had it resorted to now and then by good interpreters, with great profit. But it needs much and accurate knowledge of many tongues to use it discreetly; whence it is not to be wondered at that its use is not very common among interpreters.

The following general cautions, on the subject of comparing words and languages with each other, may be of some utility. (1.) The meaning in each or any language is not to be resolved into the authority of lexicons, but that of good writers. (2.) Words, phrases, tropes, &c., of any ancient language are to be judged of by the rules of judging among those who spoke that language, and not by those which prevail in modern times, and have originated from different habits and tastes. (3.) Guard against drawing conclusions as to the meaning of words in the same or different languages, from fanciful etymology, similarity or metathesis of letters, &c. (4.) When the sense of words can be ascertained in any particular language by the ordinary means, other languages, even kindred ones, should not be resorted to, except for the purpose of increased illustration or confirmation. (5.) Take good care that real similitude exists, whenever comparison is made.

16. Interpretation by appeal to the nature of things, the common sense, views, and feelings of men, &c. We must also resort to the nature of things, and the analogy of the sentiment which a writer is inculcating, that we may find the true meaning of his words, and not attribute to them more nor less than he did. Every writer, spontaneously or from education, feels that his readers must understand what he is saying, so that there is no danger of misapprehension. It happens not unfrequently, that on this account he uses language which is not altogether accurate, if it be judged of by the rules of logical precision. Of this nature are catachresis, hyperbole, hypallage,

and those phrases which assert generally what is true of only a part, or of some particular kind. These and other like modes of speech are introduced by vulgar custom into every language, especially into the oriental ones. They abound in poetry and oratory. Nor is there any particular reason that a writer should take special pains to avoid them. It is necessary, therefore in these cases, to have recourse, for the sake of interpretation, to the nature of things, (a) to innate conceptions, common sense, and the plain elements of knowledge, (b) Moreover, we must avoid urging mere verbal criticism too far, or introducing far-fetched etymologies, or hastily concluding that the expression of the author is faulty. Language is made by prevailing usage; nor can that be faulty language, which agrees with the usage of those who are well skilled in it. Wherefore grammatical anomalies are not only free from fault when predominant usage sanctions them, but they become a part of the language, so that one who departs from them may be said to write inaccurately.

(a) E. g. the mind is inflamed; in interpreting which expression we resort to the nature of the mind, to show that the sense of inflamed must be tropical. So when the sun is said to rise, go down, &c.; God to ascend, descend, &c., we resort to the real nature of the subjects in question, in order to explain the language. So in explaining prophetic language, if the event prophesied have come to pass, we resort to the history of the event, to cast light on the language which predicts it.

(b) E. g. pluck out thy right eye; cut off thy right hand. In construing this, our views of the worth of life, and of our members, our views of duty as to the preservation of life and usefulness, and our knowledge of the nature of the Christian religion in general, all conspire to lead us to reject the literal exposition, and to give the words a tropical sense. So when Christ tells his disciples to salute no one by the way, &c.; and in like manner, in innumerable other cases.

As to the various figures of speech mentioned in the section above, can it be doubted whether they occur in the Scriptures? Catachresis is the use of a word so as to attribute to a thing what cannot be really and actually predicated of it. When the heavens then are said to listen; the floods to clap their hands; the hills to skip; the trees of the forest to exult; what is this but catachresis of the boldest kind? Hyperbole signifies a thing beyond its real greatness. When the Saviour says, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, which is afterwards explained as simply meaning, How hardly shall they that have riches be saved, was not his language hyperbole? Hypallage means a change of appropriate language for unappropriate. E. g. Luke i. 54. his mouth and his tongue, anechothis. The student, however, must not be content with a meagre note on this great subject. Let him peruse and re-peruse Lovth's Lectures on Hebrew poetry, where the nature, design, and extent of figurative language in the Scriptures, is better unfolded than in any other book of which I have any knowledge. Comp also Glassii, Philol. Sac. ed. Dabii, Vol. II. (Morus, pp. 185—191.)

In regard to that usage, by which the whole is put for a part, and a part for the whole; it is by no means infrequent in the Scriptures. How often do we meet with *pas* or *pantes*, when only a large or considerable number is intended. On the other hand, a part is put as the representative of the whole, in very many passages, e. g. Ps. viii. 7, 8, Rom. viii. 33, 39. Surely do not mean to say that the things which he particularizes, are the only things which are unable to separate us from the love of Christ. He means to say, that nothing whatever can effect a separation. In all such cases, the extent, the nature of the subject, and scope of the discourse, must determine the latitude in which the words are to be taken.

Especially must common sense, as Ernesti says, be applied to in the interpretation of parables, allegories, and all kinds of figurative language, proverbial expressions, &c. Every writer addresses himself to the common sense of his fellow men.