

## THE EXEGESIS OF THE SCHOOLMEN.

IT is my object in these Papers to furnish some estimate as to the value of the Exegesis of the Schoolmen. In the brief space which I shall allow myself it may be impossible to give even a general view of the whole subject, or to mention all the names of those who worked in this field. But I hope to sketch with some completeness of outline the *predominant characteristics* of those long centuries of Scriptural study. My objects in doing this will appear as we proceed. If it be a law

“As certain as the throne of Zeus”

that

“Our days are heritors of days gone by,”

we may be sure that the exegesis of five or six hundred years has not passed away without leaving deep traces of its existence in our modern systems of Biblical interpretation.

The Greek word *σχολαστικὸς* first occurs in a letter of Theophrastus.<sup>1</sup> In Latin it is first found in Petronius.<sup>2</sup> In the Middle Ages it was applied to the teachers and learners in the universities, and it entirely lost the grotesque associations of eccentric abstractedness and pedantic erudition by which it is surrounded in the *Ἀστεῖα* or *Facetia*, wrongly attributed to the authorship of the Neo-Platonist Hierocles.

The technical use of the word to describe the great thinkers and writers of the mediæval Church arose as

<sup>1</sup> *Apud Diog. Laert.*, v. 50.

<sup>2</sup> *Petron., Satyr.*, 6.

follows. By the close of the fourth century after Christ Christianity was firmly established throughout the limits of the Roman Empire. The world in general, resigning the exercise of all independent thought as regards religion, submitted itself with more and more passivity to the authority of Bishops, Fathers, Councils, and theologians. Then the floods of Northern and Eastern barbarians—Goths, Vandals, Sarmatians, Gepidæ, Alani, Heruli, Huns, Suevi, Saxons, Burgundians—burst in, wave after wave, upon the West. It was natural that learning should all but perish in the storm.<sup>1</sup> “Woe to our days,” exclaims Geoffrey of Tours, in the prelude to his History of the Franks, “for the pursuit of letters has perished from among us.” The most fertile and eloquent moralist of his age was Gregory the Great († 604); and hearing that Didier, Archbishop of Vienna, had attempted to restore schools and teach grammar, the chief theologian of his age wrote, almost in the words which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Jack Cade<sup>2</sup>—“Sine verecundiâ memorare non possumus fraternitatem tuam Grammaticam quibusdam exponere! . . . Quam grave nefandumque!”<sup>3</sup> Fortunatus, a poetic Bishop of this period,<sup>4</sup> even confessed that he had not only not read the great Greeks, but not even the chief Fathers, and that many in his day said that it was no time to be writing dissertations on Scripture.

It was after an epoch which was thus “the most ignorant, the darkest, the most barbarous which France had ever seen,” that the Emperor Karl, rightly named the Great, seeing that learning still existed in Italy, wished to revive

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Lit. de France*, vol. ii. p. 8, seqq.

<sup>2</sup> *Henry VI.*, Part II. Act iv. sc. 7. “Thou hast most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm, in erecting a grammar school. It will be proved to thy face, that thou hast men about thee that usually talk of a noun, and a verb; and such abominable words as no Christian ear can endure to hear.”

<sup>3</sup> *Greg. Magn., Epp.* xi. 54. See Hauréau, *Hist. de la Philos. Scholat.*, pp. 1-16.

<sup>4</sup> He died about A.D. 609.

it in France also. About the year 787 he addressed to his Bishops the circular letter which Ampère calls "the constituent charter of modern thought." He summoned Alcuin of York to help him in this noble task, and schools began to arise in many places. In these schools the teaching was devoted to the *trivium*, the three arts of Grammar, Rhetoric, and Dialectic; and the *quadrivium*, or the four sciences of Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy. These together were regarded as the "Seven Liberal Arts."

The teachers, writers, and leading thinkers trained on this system are those whom we now denote by the name of "the Schoolmen."<sup>1</sup> The period of the Schoolmen lasted, roughly speaking, from A.D. 800 to A.D. 1500—that is, over a period of no less than seven centuries.

Hauréau, one of the best historians of the scholastic philosophy, divides the age of scholasticism into two periods: (1) From Alcuin to the end of the twelfth century. (2) From Alexander of Hales († 1245) to John Gerson († 1429). Ueberweg, in his learned "History of Philosophy," adopts a nearly similar division, namely, (1) From the semi-independence of thought shewn by John Scotus Erigena († circ. 880) and the accommodation of Aristotelian logic and Neo-Platonic philosophemes to the doctrine of the Church, down to the beginning of the thirteenth century. (2) From Alexander of Hales († 1245) and the complete amalgamation of Aristotelianism with Catholicism, down to the Renaissance.

With Scholasticism, however, as a system of philosophy, and even as a system of formal theology, we are only indirectly concerned. We shall here consider the Schoolmen solely in the light of *Expositors*, and shall be able to do so without entering into any history of the disputes between Aristotelians and Neo-Platonists, Nominalists and Realists, or Thomists and Scotists. For the history of scholastic

<sup>1</sup> Or, as in our 13th Article, "the school authors."

interpretation it is more important to note in due time the different schools of Dialecticians and Mystics, though the greatest of Dialecticians shew the marked influence of mysticism, and the greatest Mystics were unable to shake themselves entirely free from dialectic formalism and subtle speculation.

For our purpose, therefore, the division adopted by Triebchovius in his fierce assault on Scholasticism,<sup>1</sup> or by Diestel, in his *Geschichte des Alten Testaments*, will be more convenient. Triebchovius divides the scholastic period into three epochs—(1) the first, from its commencement down to Albertus Magnus, † 1280; (2) the second, from the time of St. Thomas and St. Bonaventura down to Durandus, † 1296; (3) the third, from Durandus down to the Reformation. Diestel considers the exegesis of these centuries under the two heads of—

1. The Dark Ages, A.D. 600–1100.
2. The Papal Supremacy, A.D. 1100–1517.

(i.) In the earlier part of the Dark Ages the Church was occupied in endeavouring to convert the heathen and to bring them into allegiance to the chair of St. Peter. During these centuries—the seventh and eighth—there was very little exegesis. When anything which could be so called began, it had degenerated into the merest compilation. It was the age of glosses and catenæ—the mere “sediments,” as Merx calls them, “of Patristic exposition.” The Fathers at this period are seldom named even in the margin. The interpretations, such as they are, are glossatory and homiletic, mixed up with dialectic definitions and impossible inquiries. The glossators exercise a certain cleverness in weaving together their selections, but they shew a complete absence of apprehension as to what exe-

<sup>1</sup> Triebchovius, *De Doctoribus Scholasticis atque corruptâ per eos divinarum humanarumque rerum scientia*. 1665. The Abbé Glaire calls this pamphlet “fruit de l'enthousiasme et d'une haine aveugle.”

gesis—according to all modern conceptions—really is, and of the functions which it should endeavour to perform.

Indeed, these glosses are hardly to be reckoned as exegesis at all, so far as the idea of exegesis involves any originality. They are the mere “glimmering and decays” of genuine interpretation. Avowedly secondhand and slavishly dependent, they exclude as needless and even as undesirable the vigour of independent thought. Even the research which they display is very limited. They profess to be derived from the Fathers, but they are really drawn from very few of them.<sup>1</sup> Those Greek Fathers only are used whose works existed in a Latin translation, and the list of Fathers who might be quoted with applause and safety was traditionally limited. Thus Origen was very little consulted, and the great scholars of Antioch—even such men as Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodoret—who were among the ablest of all ancient commentators, were almost totally neglected. Compilation, to a greater or less extent, prevailed alike throughout the Eastern and Western Churches for many centuries, and consequently there was no progress. The slumbrous repetition of very fallible opinions, the abject prostration of the intellect at the feet of fellow-mortals of no special greatness and of very limited knowledge, was a fatal hindrance to the development of profound religious thought.

In the Greek Church, Procopius of Gaza,<sup>2</sup> in the sixth century, seems to have set the fashion of variorum commentaries. Bishop Aretas, in his Apocalyptic Commentary, followed Cyril, and his predecessor, Bishop Andreas. Niketas and Euthymius Zigabenus, in the eleventh century, wrote catenæ, which, in the case of the latter, were mainly drawn from St. Chrysostom. Theophylact, though a man

<sup>1</sup> See Klausen, *Hermeneutik*, § 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ernesti has written a monograph, *De Procopii Gaz. Commentariis*. See too Fabricius, *Bibl. Græc.*, vii. 727.

of ability and independence, must, as Cardinal Bellarmine says, be mainly regarded as "Chrysostomi abbreviator."

In the Latin Church BEDE († 735) tells us that all his life he had been a student of the Fathers, and in his *Hexæmeron* he announces that his plan is "to cull" from the writings of Basil, Ambrose, and Augustine "as from the most delightful fields of a flowering Paradise what might seem to suffice for the needs of the weaker." He also made large use of Jerome. Alcuin († 804), as a commentator on *Ecclesiastes*, only writes, as it were "a breviary from the works of the Holy Fathers, and especially from St. Jerome." His book on *Genesis* is entirely drawn from Jerome and Gregory the Great. In other commentaries he tells us that he "confines himself as much as possible to the very words of Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory, and Bede, lest he should seem presumptuous or express anything contrary to the meaning of the Fathers." When Gisla and Rectruda, the two daughters of Charlemagne, wrote to entreat Alcuin to furnish them with a commentary on St. John, they said, as though it were a matter of course, "*Venerabiles sanctorum Patrum pande sensus. Collige multorum margaritas.*" RABANUS MAURUS († 856) derives his commentary from fourteen of the Fathers. PASCHASIUS RABERTUS († 865), Remigius, Hervæus Dolensis, Claudius of Turin, Haymo of Halberstadt, Christian Druthmar, Anselm of Laon and a multitude of other writers follow in the same facile and unfruitful path. Notker Balbulus, a monk of St. Gall († 912) wrote a treatise "on the Interpreters of Scripture," and so completely had exegesis dwindled into the multiplication of common-place books of extracts, that he cautions all writers against abandoning the authority of "the Fathers;" approves of the proverb,—

"Si Augustinus adest sufficit ipse tibi;"

and lays down the rule, "In St. Matthew let Jerome

suffice for you; in St. Mark, the follower (pedissequus) of St. Matthew, let Bede the follower of Jerome suffice." In the letter to Hugo, *De modo et ordine legendi Scripturas Sacras* (circ. 1170), the best aids to Scripture are said to be Isidore's Etymologies, Jerome's Monasticon, the Glossa, the Quæstiones and *De Civitate Dei*, of Augustine, and the *Candela* of Girlandus, which was a selection of opinions from Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, and Gregory. Now any one who knows anything at all about Patristic exegesis knows that, although it has a greatness and value of its own, it still teems with the gravest errors—errors as to fact, errors as to translation, errors as to history, errors as to interpretation, fundamental errors of principle. In the glosses and catenæ these errors are very rarely, if ever, corrected; no new sources of knowledge are opened; no fresh facts are brought to bear; no principles are amended. In such an age there could be nothing which could be called advance. Yet Fabricius says that there were hundreds of different catenæ in the Royal Library of France, and they continued to be written long after the age of progress had at least dawned. Even ALBERTUS MAGNUS, as a commentator, cannot claim any higher rank than that of an epitomist; and the laborious *Catena* of St. Thomas Aquinas on the four Gospels—the celebrated *Catena Aurea* as it was afterwards called—is confessedly a compilation from eighty authors. These authors—especially Augustine, Hilary, Origen, Chrysostom, Rabanus, Remigius, Bede, Alcuin, Anselm—could not have been condensed and woven together without that "masterly and architectonic skill" which Cardinal Newman attributes to the Angelic Doctor, yet the catena adds little or nothing to what was previously known. St. Thomas had studied Augustine so thoroughly that it was the common proverb of the schools that, had the doctrine of metempsychosis been true, the soul of Augustine must have migrated into that of St.

Thomas.<sup>1</sup> Similarly it was the glory of Hugo of St. Victor to be known as "the tongue of Augustine." Claudius of Turin calls Augustine "a pen of the Trinity, a tongue of the Holy Ghost, a mortal man but a heavenly angel." The main exegetical work at which the Schoolmen aimed was not to originate, but to compile and to reproduce. And yet, as Bacon points out, their writings, so far from being brief and compact, were expanded "into large commentaries, or into commonplaces and titles, which grew to be more vast than the original writings," so that "their volumes are greater much than the writings of the Fathers. And," he adds, "this course of sums and commentaries is that which doth infallibly make the body of sciences more immense in quantity and more base in substance."<sup>2</sup>

(ii.) The glosses were of two kinds, distinguished as *continuous* or *ordinary*, and *interlinear*.

The most celebrated gloss of this epoch was that compiled by WALAFRID STRABO, about the middle of the 9th century. He was a Benedictine monk of the Abbey of Fulda, and a pupil of Rabanus Maurus. He subsequently became Abbot of Reichenau. His gloss upon the whole Bible was derived exclusively from the writings of the Fathers, and for six centuries "enjoyed the authority of an oracle."<sup>3</sup> It was doubtless, as Erasmus says, constantly increased by subsequent additions.<sup>4</sup> PETER LOMBARD, the Master of the Sentences, briefly refers to it as *auctoritas*—"The Authority says"—a reference which was regarded as being no less decisive than the *Ἀὐτὸς ἔφα* of the ancient Pythagoreans. It was sometimes called "The Tongue of Scripture." St. Thomas Aquinas not only quotes it constantly, but even sometimes explains it as reverently as if it were the text of Scripture itself. Similarly Albertus

<sup>1</sup> Sixt. Senensis, *Bibl.*, iv. 308.

<sup>2</sup> *Advancement of Learning*, ii.

<sup>3</sup> On the various editions of this gloss see, *Hist. lit. de France*, vol. v. p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> Erasmus, *Dedicat. in paraphr.* 1 Ep. Petri.



Magnus, St. Thomas Aquinas, and others comment on the prologues of St. Jerome. There could hardly be a more striking proof of the decadence and non-progressiveness of Scriptural interpretation, than the immense prestige acquired by this collection of patristic extracts. For it is at the best a heterogeneous collection of quotations, made with very little judgment and guided by no clear principle. It passes over numberless real difficulties *sicco pede*, after the fashion of editors in all ages who

“ Each dark passage shun  
And hold their farthing candle to the sun.”

It creates numberless difficulties which it does nothing to solve. It abandons the literal sense for all kinds of fantastic and allegoric meanings, of no value in themselves, and which have no real bearing on the elucidation of the text. Luther, in the days when he was still in the Augustinian Monastery at Erfurt (till 1508), used only the *Glossa Ordinaria*, and had a prejudice even against the Postils of Nicolas of Lyra. The *Glossa interlinearis* was by ANSELM OF LAON († 1117). Being written between the lines of the text it was necessarily very brief. Instead of explaining obscure passages it often furnishes mystic senses which are purely arbitrary, and its etymologies are as puerile as they ever must be in an age to which comparative philology was entirely unknown.

(iii.) By way of passing illustration, let me quote one or two specimens of the exegesis of this age. Here is the note of the *Glossa Ordinaria* on Gen. ix. 13. “The Rainbow has two colours, blue and fiery, which indicate the two judgments of the world; one, which is past, by water; the other, by fire, which we believe will come at the end of the world. For which reason the blue colour is outside, the fire inside”! RABANUS MAURUS quotes Gen. xlix. 12. “His teeth shall be white with milk” as an Allegory of the

*Apostles* (!) because they cut away men from errors, and as it were by devouring them transfer them into the body of Christ! HAYMO OF HALBERSTADT wrote a commentary on the Psalms. Erasmus, who edited this commentary in 1533, calls him "a spiritual bee who culled from the most flowery meadows of all the ancients," and characterises his commentary as "pious, brief, and lucid." Yet here is his comment on the first Psalm: "The common subject of the whole work is Christ, understood in three ways; *i.e.*, according to his Divinity, according to his Humanity, according to his Body. But that which is inserted about contrary things, that is impious demons, is not inserted as belonging to the chief subject, but as subservient to it. He treats this subject thus; he shews the power of the Divinity, the perfection of the Humanity of Christ, the universality of the holiness of his members, the conversion of sinners, etc." Can anything be more misleading and untenable than this, when offered as *genuine interpretation*? CHRISTIAN DRUTHMAR (about 860) shews himself far superior to most of the compilers of his age in independence, knowledge, and good sense. Yet in commenting on "*Liber generationis Jesu Christi*," he thinks it necessary in a prolix and otiose way to tell us that "*liber*" does not only mean "a book," but also "free," and "the bark of a tree!" And in the Lord's Prayer he derives "*panis*" from  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$  "all."

(iv.) Few works of serious-minded men are absolutely valueless, though they may be rendered nugatory by the errors and limitations of the age to which they belong. The glosses were in many respects highly valuable and useful. Their homiletic appeals, their moral reflexions, even their interpretations of passages which were not beset by various difficulties were important in proportion to the knowledge, piety, and acumen of the Fathers from which they were derived. It was interesting and instructive to see what the ancient Doctors of the Church had said, in an age when it

was not only burdensome but impossible to consult a multitude of volumes. The opinions thus brought together throw some light on the history of the Church. Passages are sometimes preserved from authors whose works are now lost. On the other hand we must bear in mind that the compilers were liable to be constantly misled by the use of works absolutely and even deplorably spurious; that they thus sometimes attribute to various Fathers views which they never held;<sup>1</sup> that the fragments which they congregate are not only torn from their context, but often mutilated, interpolated, and misunderstood;<sup>2</sup> that conclusions are given without the reasons which alone would have rendered them interesting; and that sentences are sometimes constructed which are an injudicious mosaic of irreconcilable opinions.<sup>3</sup> The Glossæ and Catenæ must always have their value for literature and history, and may claim such importance as belongs to the actual opinions which they preserve, but seeing that they contain nothing which had not already been said otherwise, and better, they *added* nothing to the due understanding of the "oracles of God."<sup>4</sup> The first commentator of the Middle Ages who shews some independence, and marks some advance, is RUPERT OF DEUTZ († 1135). Honorius of Autun, in his book *De Scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis*, says, that "illuminated by vision from the Holy Spirit, he expounded almost the whole of Scripture in an excellent style." In the preface to his Commentary on St. John, Rupert has the boldness to say that "the great

<sup>1</sup> See Elster, *De Med. Ævi Theolog. Exeget.*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> "Tumultuario studio, hinc atque hinc consarcinatis glossematis." Erasm. on 2 Cor. xi. 23; 1 Tim. ii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> See Budæus, *Isagoge*, p. 1422. Walsh, *Bibl. Theolog.*, vol. iv. pp. 192-400.

<sup>4</sup> Even John of Salisbury († 1180) says in his *Metalogicus* (ii. 7): "Compilant omnium opiniones, et illa quæ etiam a vilissimis dicta vel scripta sunt ab inopia iudicii scribunt et referunt; proponunt enim omnia quia nesciunt præferre meliora. Tanta est opinionum et oppositionum congeries ut vix ipsi nota possunt esse auctori. Recte autem dicuntur oppositiones, quia melioribus studiis opponuntur, obstant enim profectui."

Augustine has, like a mighty eagle, winged his way through the deep mysteries in this Gospel. We shall press forward in the same direction, but not in his traces. While he soars over the lofty mountain-tops, we shall linger about the low roots, and seek to reach the little twigs of the Evangelic letter which are near the earth, and were left by him for humble spirits. . . . If, however, any one will say" (the objection is eminently characteristic of the age) "we have enough of what has been already discovered and written by better, holy, and learned men; it is impermissible, and even audacious, to burden readers to satiety with a multitude of commentaries by adding to those which have been written by the Catholic Fathers,—my answer is, the earthly realm of the Holy Spirit is of wide circuit, and a common blessing to all who know Christ. The right to handle Scripture can be denied to no one, provided he be in accord with the faith. Who shall grudge if, when the fathers who have gone before have dug one or two springs in that realm, the sons who follow dig more by the exertion of their own strength?"

"That strain I heard was of a higher mood!"

(v.) The claim of right to independent investigation is still but timidly whispered, but yet there are not many passages of the Schoolmen in which we find even this limited effort after originality. Neither Abelard indeed, nor Roger Bacon, nor Nicolas of Lyra, were like the man who—

"Would not with too a peremptory tone,  
Assert the nose upon his face his own."

Yet, with few exceptions, even the ablest and most original of the Schoolmen scarcely venture to leave the trodden ground of what they supposed to be Patristic unanimity, without something of an alarmed apology. The days were yet far distant when Milton could say in his haughty manner, "I will not now enter into the labyrinth of

Councils and Fathers, an entangled wood which the Papist loves to fight in,"<sup>1</sup> or that "many Fathers discover more heresies than they will refute, and that oft for heresy which is the truer opinion;" or that he "dares to be known to think our sage and serious poet Spenser to be a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas,"<sup>2</sup> or that it is wrong "to dote upon immeasurable, innumerable, and therefore unnecessary and unmerciful volumes, choosing rather to err with the specious name of the Fathers, than to take a sound truth at the hands of a plain upright man that hath all his days been diligently reading the Holy Scriptures."<sup>3</sup>

(vi.) Nothing could be farther from my intention than to speak with disrespect, still less with scorn, of the laborious and holy men who in those ages of comparative ignorance and severe trial did their best to make known the word of God. The praise of diligence, of reverence, of ingenuity rightly belongs to them; and their limitations, their mistakes, the confined range of their knowledge, the extreme timidity of their opinions, their superstitious reverence for the Fathers, their shrinking from the independent examination of truth, their total abnegation of the right of free judgment,<sup>4</sup> their preconceived determination to judge Scripture by the dogmas which they brought to it, and not to discover from Scripture what dogmas were really true,—were in each instance the *vitia temporum non hominum*. It would be idle and false to say that, except in the way of secondhand compilation, their diligence added anything fresh to the understanding of Scripture. It would be idle and false to deny that they did much to stereotype immemo-

<sup>1</sup> Milton, *Of True Religion, ad init.*

<sup>2</sup> Milton's *Areopagitica*.

<sup>3</sup> Milton, *Reformation in England*.

<sup>4</sup> "The sense of Scripture," says Gerson, "is to be judged as the Church, governed and inspired by the Holy Spirit, has determined, and not as each man chooses to interpret." Similar sentences might be quoted from the Schoolmen by scores.

rial prejudices, and to block up the avenues which might have led to clearer and fuller knowledge.<sup>1</sup> But they did what they could. They did all that was possible during the theological tyranny of an oppressive system which benumbed all independent religious thought as with the touch of a torpedo. The judgment of Alphonse de Castro, that they "sold trifles from A.D. 300 to the rise of better studies at the Reformation,"<sup>2</sup> may be too harsh; and at any rate they honestly believed their *nugæ* to be of priceless value. If we are entitled to pass an opinion, and an unfavourable opinion, on the writings of such men as Walafrid Strabo and Anselm of Laon, we can yet respect and honour those pious and learned writers, and we only judge their compilations, because we can speak with the knowledge and authority derived from ages of freedom and advancing knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

If it be asked, of what use it is to unbury methods of exegesis which have long become fossil, and to call attention to principles of interpretation which are as extinct as the mammoth, the answers are obvious.

(1) In the first place, *Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto*. Everything which bears on the history of the human mind ought to have for us an imperishable interest, and few things are more important to the history of Europe and of civilization than the views taken of Scripture, and the doctrines deduced from it during the Middle Ages. In these we have the key to no little of the religious feelings which prevailed for centuries among millions of Christians.

(2) Further than this—all enlightenment, and above all

<sup>1</sup> "Wrong," it has been said, "when long tolerated, puts on the airs of abstract right."

<sup>2</sup> Alphonse de Castro (Archbishop of Compostello, † 1558), *Adv. Hær.*, i. 4; quoted by Tribechovius.

<sup>3</sup> "Antiquity deserveth that reverence that men should make a stand thereupon and discover what is the best way; but when the discovery is well taken then to make progression. . . . Antiquitas sæculi juventus mundi." Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*.

religious enlightenment, is as gradual as the dawn. The vitality of erroneous principles is an amazing and a melancholy phenomenon. If ever the History of Exegesis shall be adequately written, it will shew that the follies and aberrations of the Rabbis were due to principles which continued to germinate in the Jewish schools of Alexandria, in the Christian schools of Alexandria, in the later Latin Fathers, and throughout the Middle Ages. The same principles—the same in essence, though springing up in slightly-marked varieties—were still potent for injury in the writings of the Reformers, of the Puritans, and of multitudes of modern Churchmen. The seven rules of Tichonius are, as a whole, not a whit more rational than the seven rules of Hillel, or the thirteen of Rabbi Ishmael; and yet they may claim to have originated many of the rules still in vogue, which are no less unfruitful. Hence in one of the most recent commentaries published in England, and not yet concluded, we are doomed to find remarks so exegetically grotesque, as that “the coats given to Adam and Eve were probably differentiated so that Eve’s was in some respects different from Adam’s to avoid any confusion of sex;” that the Israelites drank no strong drink in the desert because “the pure water of the stricken rock followed them all the way;” that the “time-defying habiliments” of the Israelites are “a type of imputed righteousness;” that the body of Moses was preserved from corruption, that it might reappear at the Transfiguration; that hence we may learn that the moral conduct of men has power to modify the laws of nature; and that in the rumination and cloven hoofs of the clean animals we may see a type of the “thoughtfulness” and “religious steadfastness” which should characterise the people of God! What can we say of such exegesis as this, except that its genesis is traceable, by direct affiliation, sometimes from the Rabbis, sometimes from the most fanciful of the Patristic allegorizers,

sometimes from the fancies of morbid mediæval ascetics, always from purely arbitrary principles ; and, in each case, not from those sources at first hand, but only through their influences reflected and refracted through the opaque media of centuries of ignorance? There are very recent commentaries which are held in high esteem, and which yet, so far as exegetic *principles* are concerned, seem to have gained nothing from that outburst of fresh light which has enabled us to understand Scripture better during the last century than in the eighteen centuries which precede it. If I can shew that the very roots of scholastic exposition were more or less diseased, it may be more easy in due time to pluck up the perpetual undergrowth which keeps springing from the subterranean fibres with which those roots have filled the soil. If it be admitted that certain tendencies of the scholastic commentators led to nothing but error, the proof may have its value for the legions of commentators who are springing up to-day. We have yet to exorcise not a few of the hermeneutic errors which, under the protection of antiquity, still wander like ghosts out of the midnight of mediæval theology, and have not been startled by the cock-crow of a more enlightened day.<sup>1</sup> In the spirit—though not according to the letter, and still less in the bitter mood—of the old satirist, I may say :—

*“Experiar quid concedatur in illis,  
Quorum Flaminia legitur cinis atque Latina.”*

F. W. FARRAR,

<sup>1</sup> See Merz, *Eine Rede*.