

constantly representing the good creatures of God, vegetable and animal, as transgressors of a law by which they are bound. And yet *no true physical law ever was, is, or can be broken*; while, to bring his organic kingdom under his quasi-moral law, he is obliged to endow his *flora* with will and his *fauna* with conscience; for the former are always "choosing," "meaning," etc., the latter, always doing wrong or right. Like Æsop, in short, he turns all his animals and plants into men and women, and sets them to talk to us, and, worst of all, to *preach at us*. Nevertheless, there is much in this book which is striking, original, suggestive, at once finely conceived and eloquently expressed—notably in the two chapters on Parasitism and Semi-Parasitism; much which will be most helpful to both cleric and laymen; and we strongly recommend our readers to peruse and judge it for themselves.

ALMONI PELONI.

THE REFORMERS AS EXPOSITORS.

I. ERASMUS.

IN previous papers I have endeavoured to give the thoughtful reader some means of estimating the value of the Scholastic Exegesis which prevailed in Europe from the days of Bede († A.D. 735) down to those of Gabriel Biel, at the close of the fifteenth century. I will now endeavour in one or two papers to point out the immense change which took place in the methods of Biblical exposition at the period of the Reformation.

Such changes are rarely sudden and revolutionary. They are usually the slow outgrowth of views which have long before found isolated expression. The Reformers must be regarded as the founders of the modern system of Interpretation, but they were themselves indebted to the precursors

of the Reformation in earlier centuries. Erasmus and Calvin did but carry out a work which had been initiated by Wiclif and Huss.

1. It is, for instance, hardly possible to exaggerate the services of WICLIF. The fact of his deeming it essential to translate the Bible into a tongue "understood of the people," marks the depth of his insight into the nature of Scripture, and the force of his revolt from the politic traditions of the dominant priestcraft. The time was fast ripening for the overthrow of Scholastic Exegesis, when such a man as Wiclif could write, "It is obvious that the whole error in the knowledge of Scripture, and its debasement and falsification by incompetent persons, rises from ignorance of grammar and logic: and unless God aids to the understanding of those rudiments of faith, the faith of Scripture will be much undervalued."¹

2. HUSS—who, both indirectly, and in all probability directly, had been greatly influenced by the life and opinions of Wiclif—did much to extend his work. His synoptic commentary on the Gospels is indeed a compilation from the Fathers, much in the fashion of the old glosses; but his commentary on the Catholic Epistles is of a more independent character, and shews his preference for moral and dogmatic teaching rather than for the allegoric mode of treatment which at that time was universal. In his various writings he clearly enunciates the principle that the Scriptures furnish the sole absolute rule of life, and that no Christian man is bound to believe anything which is not contained therein, and cannot be proved thereby. He repudiates the claim of the Pope to interpret Revelation at his will, and says that there is no heresy except such as consists in a contradiction of Scripture. He also insists on abiding by the literal sense. Alike his principles and his practice earn the just encomium of Luther, that "in

¹ *Triologus*, i. 8 (ap. Klausen, *Gesch. d. Neut. Hermen.*, p. 212).

the treatment and explanation of Scripture he was a man of ability and weight."

3. But the father and founder of modern Biblical Criticism is NICOLAS OF LYRA, who died A.D. 1341, when Wiclif was seventeen years old. In two particulars he towered over his contemporaries and predecessors, namely in his philological knowledge, and in his all-but-total abandonment of the allegorical method. In both respects he was a worthy predecessor of Erasmus, and he deserved his scholastic title of the *Doctor planus et utilis*.¹ The name of his epoch-making work was *Postilla perpetua seu Commentaria brevia in universa Biblia*. In the Prologue to this work he sets forth his exegetical principles. It is true that here he adheres to the current distinction between "outward" and "inner" Scripture, and recognizes (as in his age he could hardly refrain from doing) the three traditional divisions of the mystic sense into allegoric, tropologic or moral, and anagogic or spiritual. He is even the author of the famous lines:—

Littera gesta docet; quid credas allegoria,
Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia.

But he lays down the strict rule that all other senses must be built upon the literal sense as their sole and absolute foundation, and he expresses his own determination "to dwell on the literal sense, and to interpose very few and brief mystic expositions." He practically swept away the validity of nine-tenths of the then treasured commentaries by his axiom, that "when the mystic interpretation differs from the literal sense, it must be regarded as improper and

¹ In describing the library of "Bays" in the Dunciad, Pope says:

"There saved by spice, like mummies, many a year,

Do bodies of Divinity appear;

DE LYRA there a dreadful front extends," etc.

Pope, in a note, says, Nic. de Lyra, or Harpsfield, a very voluminous commentator, whose works in five vast folios were printed in 1472. Mr. Courthope says that Pope's date is wrong; and so it is, if he meant Harpsfield, Archdeacon of Canterbury, who died in 1583. But he probably meant the great commentator.

unfitting, or at any rate as less proper and fitting than others," and that only the literal sense is of any validity in dogmatic proofs. He objected altogether to the Kabbalism which split up texts into words, and unduly allegorized the force of the minutest particles.¹ Though his principles were superior to his practice, yet his clearness, his impartiality, his learning, his good sense, his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, the use which he made of that knowledge, his candid recognition of the merits of Rabbi Solomon Jizchaki (Rashi), and the manner in which he availed himself of the rich stores of knowledge enshrined in the works of other Jewish commentators, give him a right to be regarded as "the Jerome of the fourteenth century." The claim of his epitaph was fully established by his labours:—

Littera nempe nimis quæ quondam obscura jacebat,
Omnes per partes clara labore meo est.

4. It was not, however, till the very dawn of the Reformation that the great principles which Nicholas of Lyra had enunciated and practised, bore their full fruit. It was natural that at the Renaissance, when "Greece rose from the dead with the New Testament in her hand," satisfactory results should spring from what has been called "the Protestant principle" of not accepting the authority of the Vulgate, but of referring, as Nicolas had constantly done, to the original languages. The honour of having written the first specifically philological commentary must be assigned to LAURENTIUS VALLA. Valla, a Canon of St. John Lateran, was born in 1415, and died in 1465. By profession he was a teacher of rhetoric rather than a theologian, but Erasmus was so much struck with his Notes on the New Testament—of which he found a MS.

¹ On the immense services of Nicolas of Lyra, see (among others) Fabricius, *Bibl. Lat.*, vol. v. p. 104; Rosenmüller, *Hist. Interpr.*, vol. v. pp. 280 seqq.; Cave, *Hist. Litter.*; Merx, *Eine Rede von Auslegen (ad fin.)*; Merx, *Joel*, pp. 305-339; Grätz, *Gesch. d. Juden*, vol. vii. p. 512; Klausen, l. c., pp. 210 ff.

in a monastic library at Brussels—that he published them with a warm eulogy, A.D. 1505, forty years after the death of their author. They are purely literary and aphoristic, and have little religious or spiritual interest. Their value consists in the recognition of the supreme importance of abandoning when necessary an imperfect translation and a dominant tradition, and of ascertaining what the Apostles and Evangelists really wrote and really meant.¹ The writer had already shewn his courage by refuting the genuineness of the pretended Donation of Constantine to the Popes, and by setting aside the legend about the composition of the Apostles' Creed. Valla shewed the same spirit in the freedom with which he rejected the views of St. Thomas Aquinas and others of the Schoolmen which were then accepted with extravagant servility. He ventured to remark that, since the Scholastic writers were for the most part entirely ignorant of Greek, he wonders at their boldness in venturing to comment on St. Paul at all.² He goes even further than this, for he does not scruple to criticise St. Augustine, and the Vulgate version. His criticisms are not always correct,³ but he rightly realized the necessity for textual study and philological explanation, and he helped to stimulate the enquiries of later writers. He was the protégé and the intimate personal friend of Pope Nicolas V.; but so distasteful was his independence to the ecclesiastics of his Church, that Cardinal Bellarmine calls him “a precursor of the Lutherans,” and Cornelius Aurotinus stigmatized him as “a croaking raven.”

¹ Hallam, *Lit. of Europe*, vol. i. p. 147, calls them “the earliest specimens of explanations founded on the original language.”

² He somewhat contemptuously rejects the legend that St. Paul had appeared in a vision to St. Thomas Aquinas to assure him that no one had understood his Epistles as he had done. “*Peream nisi id commenticium, nam cur eum Paulus non admonuit errorum suorum?*” See Valla, *Annotaciones in 1 Cor. ix.* 13, and the more measured remarks of Erasmus on the same text.

³ See R. Simon, *Hist. Critique*, p. 485, chap. xxxiv.

5. One name more must be mentioned—that of JACQUES LE FEVRE D'ÉTAPLES—usually known as Faber Stapulensis. Encouraged by the example of Valla, he sometimes diverged from the Vulgate in his Latin version of St. Paul's Epistles. He has the high honour of having produced the first French version of the Scriptures (A.D. 1523).¹ Like Valla, he never openly left the Church of Rome, yet his writings furnished some assistance to the Reformers. He was not a first-rate critic, but he helped to lead his age in the right direction, and to break the heavy yoke of Scholastic tradition. Erasmus, even while he freely corrects his errors, invariably speaks of him with personal respect.

6. The real founder however of the Biblical Criticism of the Reformation is ERASMUS of Rotterdam. In the remainder of this paper I will endeavour to point out the character of his contributions to the great cause of Scriptural Exposition.

i. It must be reckoned among his services that he finally made the path easy for all who followed him.² In the Preface to his Notes on the New Testament he says, "We by our diligence have smoothed a road which previously was rugged and troublesome, but in which henceforth great theologians may ride more easily with steeds and chariots. We have levelled the soil of the arena, in which, with fewer obstacles, they may now display those splendid processions of their wisdom. We have cleansed with harrows the fallow land which heretofore was impeded with briars and burs. We have swept away the impediments, and have opened a field wherein they who may hereafter wish to explain the secrets of Scripture may either play together with greater freedom or join battle with more convenience."

¹ This French version was published anonymously, but there is little doubt that Le Fevre was the author.

² For the influence exercised by the translations of Erasmus on Tyndale and Coverdale, see Westcott's *Hist. of the Engl. Bible*, pp. 140, 203-205.

It was his sincere and ardent desire that the Bible should be more widely known. The publication of his Greek Testament "formed a great epoch in the history of Western Christendom, and was a gift of incalculable value to the Church." "I do not see," he says,¹ "why the unlearned are to be kept away, especially from the evangelical writings, which were proclaimed alike to learned and unlearned, equally to Greeks and Scythians, as much for slaves as for the free, at the same time to men and to women, not less to peasants than to kings." And again, "I should prefer to hear some maidens talking about Christ, than some who, in the opinion of the vulgar, are consummate Rabbis." If we recall with admiration the vow of our own great Tyndale (in answer to the learned man who had said, "We had better be without God's laws than the Pope's") that "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause the boy that driveth the plough shall know more of Scripture than thou doest"—we must remember that Erasmus had already spoken with scorn of "men and women chattering like parrots the Psalms and prayers which they did not understand"; and had expressed the wish to see the glory of the Cross of Christ honoured in all languages, to hear the Psalms sung by the labourer at his plough, and the herdsman amid his flock, and the Gospels read to poor women as they sat spinning at the wheel. "The veil of the Temple," said Erasmus, "has now been rent in twain, and it is no longer a single High Priest who alone can enter into the Holy of Holies."²

ii. He chiefly carried out this aim by his Paraphrases. He knew that the words of the Vulgate had partly been deadened by familiarity, partly perverted by mistaken appli-

¹ Præf. in *Paraph. in Matt.*

² Since writing this paragraph I see that Canon Westcott (*Hist. of the Engl. Bible*, p. 26) thinks that Tyndale's phrase was suggested by Erasmus. The English martyr Bilney owed his conversion to Erasmus's New Testament.

cation. His paraphrases were, as he explained, a freer kind of continuous commentary in which everything was added which seemed actually necessary to explain the meaning of the writer. He saw that many were deterred from reading the New Testament by its style and its difficulties. "I have endeavoured," he writes, "to meet their distaste and their despair, in such a way that my paraphrases may be regarded as commentaries by those who desire no word of the sacred writings to be changed, while to those who are free from superstition of that kind, Paul himself may seem to speak."¹ In carrying out this design it was his object "to supply gaps; to soften the abrupt; to arrange the confused; to simplify the involved; to untie the knotty; to throw light on the obscure; to give the Roman franchise to Hebraisms; in a word so to alter the language of St. Paul that the *παράφρασις* may not become a *παραφρόνησις*;² in other words, so to speak in another manner as not to say other things." No one can doubt that exegetically at any rate Erasmus belongs to the Reformers, and that his Translation, his Paraphrases, and his Annotations mark an immense advance in the history of Biblical Interpretation.

iii. By the fame of his ability and learning, Erasmus greatly strengthened the growing spirit of manly independence and established the right and duty of private judgment. His notes are so original that they can still be read with advantage. He wrote in an admirable Latin style, with expressions full of humour and vivacity, and his acknowledged learning made it more easy for him than

¹ Dedicat. paraphr. in *Ep. ad Rom.*

² Luther adopted this nickname for them, *Paraphroneses*, "insanities"; but Melancthon thought very highly of their exegetical value, and Herder said that they were worth their weight in gold. Jortin (*Life of Erasmus*, vol. ii. p. 91) speaks of them with warm praise, and Hallam (*Lit. of Europe*, vol. i. p. 373) says that by an Order in Council in 1547 every parish church in England was obliged to have a copy of them.

it would have been for many men to express himself with freedom on the inadequacy of the dominant criticism. He places the Fathers first in the rank of interpreters, especially those who were acquainted with Greek and Hebrew; but he calls attention to their own admission that they left much work to be done by those who succeeded them. Of later writers he speaks with much greater freedom. For the compilers of glosses he had little veneration, and not much for the Schoolmen.¹ Though he refers to Thomas Aquinas with invariable respect, he does not hesitate to shake his authority by pointing out the errors which arose especially from his ignorance of Greek.² He corrects a "*puđendus lapsus*" committed by no less a person than Peter Lombard, "the Master of the Sentences," who, in Matt. i. 19, had rendered *παράδειγματίσαι* (Lat. *traducere*) by "*rem habere cum sponsá*"; and while admitting that the error was "due rather to the age than to the man," he remarks that such errors become the more conspicuous in those who profess themselves to be teachers of the world.³ Of his contemporaries he speaks with open sarcasm, and remarking that the Dominicans, the Franciscans, the Augustinians had each one commentator from whom they would admit no deviations, he says that the seeker after truth must accept no man's absolute authority, for such an authority is not even claimed by any great teacher, and if claimed, ought all the more to be refused.⁴

iv. A fourth service, and one which ought to have

¹ Ubique fere gaudeo sequi vetustissimos quosque Doctores Ecclesiæ potius quam placita Scholasticorum, quorum aliqua sunt dubiæ veritatis, aliqua etiam inter ipsos controversa sunt.—*Præfat. Declar. ad Censur. Theol. Paris.*

² On 1 Cor. xiv. 11 he blames the confidence with which St. Thomas Aquinas "spoke of things which he did not understand," as when he gives a strange erroneous definition of what is meant by "barbarians." See too his note on Heb. xi. 37. He speaks highly of him on Rom. i. 4.

³ See his *Annotaciones* on Matt. i. 19, xxvi. 31; Rom. i. 4; 2 Cor. ii. 23; 1 Tim. ii. 15, etc.

⁴ *Annot.* in Luke ii. 35; 1 Tim. i. 7. (*Klausen*, l. c. 222.)

saved Protestant exegesis from much of its later deadness, was his dogmatic independence. He expressly rejects the exegetic infallibility not only of the Pope, but even of Churches;¹ and writing on the word *μυστήριον* in Eph. v. 32, denies that it furnishes any proof that marriage is a sacrament,—a doctrine which he only accepts in deference to tradition. He points out the late origin of the dogma of transubstantiation, and admits that he should have accepted the Zuinglian view of the Eucharist but for Church authority. This independence got him into serious trouble. He tells us how on one occasion a Carmelite preacher, in the violet hood and cap of a Doctor, noticing his presence in church, charged him with two out of the three sins against the Holy Ghost—namely Presumption, especially for having ventured to “correct” the Lord’s Prayer and the Magnificat; and impugning of recognized truth, because after hearing two preachers the same day, he had observed that neither of them understood his subject. In this matter Erasmus paid the penalty which all must pay who love truth better than ecclesiastical tradition.² On speaking to his assailants, he found that (as usual in such cases) none of them had read the book they were attacking. There never can be any advance in knowledge without freedom of spirit. It is to the credit of Erasmus that, with noble candour, he never hesitated to reject a Scripture proof when it seemed to be inadequate,³ nor to retain a Scripture phrase although

¹ *Annott.* in 1 Cor. vii. 39; 2 Cor. x. 8; 1 Tim. i. 7.

² What he felt most was the censure of the Theological Faculty of Paris. Natalis Bedda called for the condemnation of “Græcising Theologians,” and Titelmann, Latomus, Lee, Stunica, and others severely attacked him. Caranza published a book called *The Blasphemies and Impieties of Erasmus*. For an account of these controversies see R. Simon’s *Hist. Crit. der N.T.*, pp. 521–536. In answer to Stunica, who stung him by the remark “Erasmus Luther-issat,” he answered that in truth “*Lutherus Erasmisat*” (*Apol. ad libell. Stunic.*). Among other complaints, the Spaniard is indignant that he had robbed Hispania of a letter by printing *Σπavίav* in Rom. xv. 28.

³ See his note on Rom. v. 5; and Phil. ii. 6, which he says cannot be used against the Arians. See too on Matt. ii. 5; 1 Tim. i. 17; 1 John v. 7–20.

it was capable of abuse.¹ He implies that "Inspiration" is not by any means identical with infallibility. "Christ alone," he says, "is called the Truth. He alone was free from all error."²

v. The philological merits of Erasmus were of a high order.³ He led the way in critical studies by his *Editio Princeps* of the Greek Testament in 1516. He was one of the first to convince the Church of the now admitted spuriousness of 1 John v. 7. His materials were of course most defective, nor was it possible in that day that critical principles should be securely based. But any one who will trace the critical and philological remarks of modern commentaries to their first source will soon feel how much we owe to Erasmus. With the assistance of *Æcolampadius* he sometimes refers with advantage to Hebrew idioms,⁴ and observes that St. Paul's style is charged with Hebraisms. When we remember that in his day thousands of theologians did not so much as know whether the Apostles wrote in Greek or in Hebrew, or as many supposed in Latin,⁵ and that in his Preface to Valla he has to defend grammarians against the charge of audacity for presuming to write comments at all, we may estimate the theological value of his philological contributions to the knowledge of Scripture. We may refer for instance to his notes on Rom. v. 12 ("in that all have sinned"); Phil. ii. 6 ("thought it not robbery to be equal with God"), and Rom. ix. 5 ("God over all blessed for ever"). He has excellent remarks on many of the rarer words, as on the readings *συναλιζόμενος* and *συναυλιζόμενος* (Acts i. 4); and on *καταβραβεύετω* (Col. ii. 18). In his own day he was fiercely attacked for his opinions on the Greek style of the New

¹ See his note on *μηδὲ ὁ υἱός*, Matt. xxiv. 56.

² On Matt. ii. 5.

³ Even Erasmus had to struggle with the fear that the study of philology would promote Paganism.

⁴ Not always correctly. See his notes on Matt. xxi. 42; Luke i. 37.

⁵ *Annot. in Act. Apost.* xxii. 9; John xiv. 26.

Testament; on the possibility of trival errors and discrepancies in the sacred writers;¹ on the form in which our Lord clothed some of his teaching;² on the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews; on the Epistle of St. James; and on the Apocalypse:—but on all these points he has expressed views which command an ever-increasing multitude of modern suffrages.

vi. Once more Erasmus powerfully advanced the saner interpretation which abandoned the mystic sense. In the Dedication of his Paraphrase on the Gospels he says that some of the allegoric interpretations of his predecessors seemed to him so arbitrary that he was almost tempted to regard them as a jest. He declines to follow them on a superstitious road, and says that he will only use such methods sparingly.³ In his notes on Matt. v. 16, xix. 2; John v. 2; Acts xxvii. 12; 2 Tim. iii. 2; Tit. i. 7; 1 Pet. ii. 24 he gives specimens of the extravagant allegories of Cardinal Hugo. On this subject, however, he does not speak with perfect consistency; for in his Preface to Ecclesiastes he says that any interpreter may allegorize if he does so piously, and that the Holy Spirit may have intended the words to be taken in various senses, which is to be set down not to the “uncertainty” but to the “fecundity” of Scripture. His most fundamental misconception on this point is shewn by his famous remark in his *Enchiridion*, that if we leave out of view the allegoric meaning “we might just as well read the story of Livy as the Book of Judges.” But, in spite of such remarks, his example was of the greatest value, and it helped to dethrone the defective theory which he was unable altogether to shake off.

vii. The last service which I shall mention is the sovereign good sense which Erasmus shews in handling

¹ On Luke xxii. 36; John ii. 19, etc.

² *Annott. in Acts x. 38; Præf. in Rom.*

³ On Matt. ii. 6.

Scripture. This is specially exhibited in his refusal to be misled by theological quibbles, and to indulge in empty speculations. He requires that Scripture should be interpreted reverently and with godly fear. "What thou readest and understandest therein thou must embrace with firmest faith. Frivolous questions, and those which spring from a mistaken piety, thou must reject: *dic quæ supra nos nihil ad nos.*" Above all, he adds, we must not torture the Scripture into accordance with our own will and pleasure, but rather bring under its rule our own prejudices and our own way of life.

It is clear then that Erasmus must always hold a very high place among Bible Interpreters. His name is one of the few which mark a distinct and decided progress. To say that he made mistakes is merely to say that he was human, and his work was imperfect as all human work is and must be imperfect.¹ The charge that he sometimes made needless alterations in the Vulgate translation is the same that has been brought against our Revisers, and it can only be judged in each separate instance. Nor can I set down among his faults the polemical digressions of which his critics so bitterly complain. We could ill spare his reflections on "the commandments of men" (Matt. xv. 9); on the Pharisaism of priests (Matt. xxiii. 5); on marriage dispensations (1 Cor. vii. 39); on idle speculations (1 Tim. i. 6); on the spirituality of true religion (John iv. 24); on the non-existence of any earthly infallibility (Matt. xvii. 5); on monkish divisions (Matt. xxiv. 23); on religious mendicancy (Matt. v. 3); and so forth. He rightly believed that the Word of God contains the Magna Charta of freedom from tyrannous burdens and false traditions, and he was justified in so interpreting it—at whatever cost

¹ In his paraphrases there are unauthorised additions to, or modifications of the sense, in Matt. vi. 11, ii. 11, xxvi. 26; Luke i. 69; John i. 1-3; Phil. ii. 6, etc. Lee said he could point out 300 errors in his New Testament.

of hatred and obloquy—as to render a direct assistance to the emancipation of the human soul in the days wherein his lot was cast.

F. W. FARRAR.

ADAM'S GOSPEL.

GENESIS iii. 14, 15.

IN his Epistle to the Galatians (Chap. iii. 17) St. Paul argues that the Gospel is older, as well as better, than the Law; and that the law, “which came four hundred and thirty years after,” could not disannul the gospel given to Abraham, or make “the promise of none effect.” Had he been arguing with Gentiles instead of Jews, he might have contended that the Gospel was more than sixteen hundred years older than the Law, and that the promise given to Adam could not be disannulled by a law which came sixteen centuries after it.

We had some trouble to discover what Abraham's Gospel was;¹ but it will cost us no trouble to discover the Gospel given to Adam. *That* was long since determined for us. There has never been any doubt or question about it. With one consent the Church, whether speaking by the early Fathers or the most modern [of Divines, proclaims the two verses now before us to be the first Evangel, the first Gospel given to man.

The difficulty, here, lies in determining—not what the Gospel is, but—what it means, what it conveyed to Adam and what it should convey to us. For no passage in the Old Testament has been more frequently, or more variously, handled; as, indeed, was quite inevitable, since few passages legitimately convey more and larger meanings. Only two interpretations seem to be wholly inadmissible: (1) that which reduces it to a nature-myth, invented to account

¹ See Vol. vi. of *THE EXPOSITOR* (New Series), pp. 98 ff.