



THRICE GREATEST HERMES

G.R.S. MEAD

Thrice-Greatest Hermes

G.R.S. Mead

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Hermeneutics

By Anthony J. Maas

Derived from a Greek word connected with the name of the god Hermes, the reputed messenger and interpreter of the gods. It would be wrong to infer from this that the word denotes the interpretation or exegesis of Sacred Scripture. Usage has restricted the meaning of hermeneutics to the science of Biblical exegesis, that is, to the collection of rules which govern the right interpretation of Sacred Scripture. Exegesis is therefore related to hermeneutics, as language is to grammar, or as reasoning is to logic. Men spoke and reasoned before there was any grammar or logic; but it is very difficult to speak correctly and reason rightly at all times and under any circumstances without a knowledge of grammar and logic. In the same way our early Christian writers explained Sacred Scripture—as it is interpreted in particular cases even in our days by students of extraordinary talent—without relying on any formal principles of hermeneutics, but such explanations, if correct, will always be in accordance with the canons of our present-day science of exegesis.

I. NECESSITY OF HERMENEUTICS

The reader must not infer from what has been said that hermeneutics is a mere accomplishment in the Biblical exegete, that its knowledge is not necessary for the Bible student. It is true that in the early Church the science of exegesis was not developed; but it must be remembered

that the so-called sacred languages were the vernacular tongues of the Syrian and Greek writers, who were familiar with what are to us Biblical antiquities, and who were also imbued with the early oral traditions containing the true explanation of the many difficult passages of Sacred Scripture. As soon as these natural aids of the Christian interpreter began to wane, the principles of hermeneutics began to develop. Even at the time of St. Augustine they were collected into a single book, so that they could be made known and put into practice without much difficulty. Anyone acquainted with the variety of opinion concerning the meaning of some of the most important passages of the Bible will wonder rather at the suggestion of explaining Scripture without the aid of hermeneutics, than at the claim for its urgent necessity. Nor can it be said that the variety of exegetical results on the part of writers well-versed in the principles of scientific interpretation shows the uselessness of hermeneutics in the explanation of Sacred Scripture. No scientific principles have ever done away with all disagreement of scientists in any branch of knowledge; besides, in the case of Scripture, hermeneutics has diminished the number of the opinions of interpreters by eliminating the views not supported by any solid scientific principle. Such principles are even more necessary for the Biblical interpreter than a study of logic is for the thinker; for while the laws of thought are based on an inborn tendency of the mind, the rules of hermeneutics rest to a great extent on facts external to the mind. And the results flowing from the application of the principles of hermeneutics are not less important than those derived by means of the formal laws of logic, since the controversies between Jews and Christians, between Christians and Rationalists, between Catholics and Protestants, are in the end brought back to hermeneutic questions.

II. LIMITS OF HERMENEUTICS

Though the influence of hermeneutics is so far-reaching, its efficiency must not be overestimated. Hermeneutics does not supply a deficiency of natural ability, nor does it rectify false philosophical principles or perverse passions, nor again does it impart the needed philological and historical erudition. Secondly, of itself hermeneutics does not investigate the objective truth of a writer's meaning, which has been established by its canons; it does not inquire what is true or false, but only what the writer intended to say. Hence a hermeneutic truth may be an objective falsehood, unless the writing subjected to the hermeneutic rules be endowed with the prerogative of inerrancy. Thirdly, hermeneutics does not inquire into the authenticity of a writing, nor into the genuineness of its text, nor again into its special character—for instance, whether it be of a sacred or profane nature. Biblical hermeneutics presupposes, therefore, a knowledge of the history of the Canon of both the Old and the New Testament, an acquaintance with the results of the lower or textual criticism, and a study of the dogmatic treatise on inspiration. The number of limitations of hermeneutics will not render the reader impatient, if he keeps in mind that he bears with the limits which circumscribe the field of other branches of learning; no one blames grammar, for instance, because it does not confer any special linguistic aptitude on the grammarian, or because it does not improve the melody or the syntactical structure of the language.

III. OBJECT OF HERMENEUTICS

After removing what is foreign to hermeneutics, we are enabled to understand its proper object more thoroughly. Its material object is the book or writing which is to be explained; its formal object is concerned with the sense expressed by the author of the book in question. Thus, Biblical hermeneutics deals with Sacred Scripture as its material object, furnishing a complex set of rules for finding and expressing the true sense of the inspired writers, while the discovery and presentation of the genuine sense of Sacred Scripture may be said to be its formal object.

IV. DIVISION OF HERMENEUTICS

The most direct and simple method of determining the meaning of an author consists in the latter's statement of the sense he intended to convey. Such a statement, whether it proceed from the author himself or from another person who has certain knowledge of the author's mind, is called an authentic interpretation. The legal interpretation differs from the authentic in that it proceeds, not from the lawgiver himself but from his successor, or from this equal in legislative power or from the supreme legal authority. The scientific interpretation differs from both the authentic and the legal; its value is not derived from authority, but from the trustworthiness and the learning of the commentator, from the weight of his arguments, and from his faithful adherence to the rules of hermeneutics. Authority as such does not enter into the field of general hermeneutics. The rules of hermeneutics, thus circumscribed, may be either of universal or particular application, that is, they may be valid for the right explanation of any book or writing, or they may be adapted for a particular class of books, e. g., Sacred Scripture or canon law. Biblical hermeneutics belongs to this second

class, not because the universal rules of exegesis are inapplicable to the Sacred Books, but because the sacred character of the Bible demands additional rules of interpretation, which are not applicable to profane writings. Finally, Biblical hermeneutics is either general or special, according to the character of the exegetical rules it contains: it is general if its rules are applicable to the whole Bible; it is special if they are intended for the explanation of particular books only, e.g., the Psalms or the Pauline Epistles. But, as in logic the species contains all the essential notes of the genus, so does special hermeneutics contain all the exegetical rules of general hermeneutics, and so does particular hermeneutics embrace all the laws of interpretation imposed by universal hermeneutics.

V. FIRST PRINCIPLE IN HERMENEUTICS

Since the more special hermeneutical laws do not contradict the more general laws, but only determine them more accurately in order to adapt them to the particular writings which they are to explain, it ought to be possible to determine the first and highest principle or law of hermeneutics, from which all the special exegetical rules are derived. The reader will remember that such first principles exist in other sciences, too; in logic, for instance, and in ethics, we have the principle of contradiction and the principle of doing good respectively. Returning to hermeneutics, thought must be derived from language according to the same law which regulates the expression of thought in language, the process alone being inverted. In this respect language in general does not differ from a cipher message which must be read according to the code in which it was written. Now a writer commonly uses the code of his day and of his own peculiar circumstances; he employs language in accordance with its peculiar usages

and its rules of grammar; he follows in the expression of his thoughts the sequence of logic, and his words reflect his mental as well as his physical and social conditions. If the interpreter wishes to fully understand the writer, he must be guided by these quasi-criteria of the author's meaning: his language, his train of thought or the context, and his psychological and historical condition at the time of writing. Hence flows the first and highest principle of hermeneutics: Find the sense of a book by way of its language (grammatically and philologically), by way of the rules of logic (from the context), and by way of the writer's mental and external condition. Expressing the same truth negatively, we may say that any meaning of a passage which does not agree with its grammar, its context, and the internal and external conditions of its author, cannot be the true sense of the writer. In the case of Scripture, the fact of its inspiration and of its authentic interpretation by the Church must be added to the three common criteria of interpretation; hence any meaning not in keeping with Scriptural grammar, context, or the concrete conditions of the Biblical writers, or not in harmony with the fact of inspiration and the spirit of the Church's interpretation, cannot be the true sense of Scripture. Regard to only the first three of these criteria renders the exegesis rationalistic; observance of the first four is a recognition of the specific Christian doctrine of Biblical inspiration; but it is only the conjunction of the fifth with the other four that gives birth to true Catholic exegesis without destroying the rational and simply Christian character of the interpretation.

VI. SOURCES OF HERMENEUTIC PRINCIPLES

The foregoing remarks reveal the sources from which hermeneutics derives its secondary principles. It

presupposes a grammatical and philological knowledge of the language in which the work is written, an acquaintance with the laws of logic and rhetoric, and a familiarity with the data of psychology and the facts of history. These are the sources of the rules of universal hermeneutics; in the case of the Sacred Scriptures, the scientific interpreter must be well-grounded in the so-called Sacred or Biblical language; he must be well-versed in Biblical history, archaeology, and geography; he should know the various Christian dogmas bearing on the Bible and their history; finally he must be instructed in patrology, ecclesiastical history, and Biblical literature. Before entering on the explanation of any particular book of Scripture, the commentator must also be versed in the dogmatic, moral, philosophical, and scientific questions connected with his particular subject. In the light of these many requirements, one easily understands why it is so hard to find commentaries which are fully satisfactory, and one also realized the need of reading several commentaries before one can claim fully to understand the Scriptures or any part thereof.

VII. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HERMENEUTICS

Seeing the importance of Biblical hermeneutics, it may seem a matter for surprise that this branch of study was not developed earlier. But the history of every science shows that practice precedes theory. Language, for instance, had been in use for many generations before systematic grammars were written, health had been the object of care for centuries before the growth of the science of medicine. In a similar way, the books of Sacred Scripture were read and explained by means of what may be called natural hermeneutics before the science of

exegesis was thought of. Deut., xvii, 8-12, 18; xxi, 5; xxxi, 9-13, 24-26, may be regarded as containing at least implied testimony in favour of the practice of exegesis, though it is impossible to determine the hermeneutical laws then in force.

A. Jewish Development

Not long after the days of Christ, R. Hillel set forth seven hermeneutic rules (*middoth*), among which are found the inference from the greater to the less, from the general to the particular, from the context, and from parallel passages. At the beginning of the second century R. Yishma 'el ben Elisha' increased the number of Hillel's rules to thirteen, treating among other questions the way of harmonizing contradictory passages. About the middle of the second century R. Eli'ezer derived thirty-two hermeneutic rules from the then prevailing method of interpretation, and these are still to be found in the editions of the Talmud after the treatise "Berakhoth". In the Middle Ages Aben Ezra and Maimonides explained certain hermeneutic rules, but no rabbinic writer has written *ex professo* any complete treatise on Biblical hermeneutics.

Christian Development

The First Three Centuries

Among the earliest Christians, too, the Scriptures were read and explained without the guidance of any acknowledged rules of hermeneutics. We may infer from the sayings of the Fathers that tradition and the analogy of faith were the sovereign laws of the early Christian interpreters. In the second century Melito of Sardis

composed a hermeneutic treatise, entitled "The Key", in which he explained the Biblical tropes. The Fathers of the third and fourth centuries suggested many rules of interpretation without collecting them into any distinct work. Besides Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria, Origen proposed and defended against Jews and heretics his rules of exegesis in his work "De principiis", lib. IV; Diodorus of Tarsus (d. before 394) wrote on the difference between type and allegory, but his work "Quomodo differt theoria ab allegoriâ" had been lost; St. John Chrysostom urges the commentator to study the context, the author, the readers, the intention of the speaker, the occasion, place, time, and manner of writing (Hom. in Jer. x, 33; Hom. xv in Joan.) St. Jerome, too, has left many hints on the proper method of interpretation ("Ep. ad Pammach."; "De optimo genere interpretandi"; "Lib. quaest. Hebr. in Gen."; "De nominibus et loc. Hebr."; "Praef. in 12 prophet."; "In quat. evang.", etc.).

From the Fourth to the Fourteenth Century

About A. D. 390 the Donatist Tychonius published a work entitled "Septem regulae ad inquirendum et inveniendum sensum S. Scripturae", which was both incomplete and infected with error; it was on this account that St. Augustine (d. 430) wrote his work "De doctrinâ Christianâ libri quatuor", in which he treated the rules of interpretation more satisfactorily than had ever been done before his time. Hermeneutic principles may be found scattered also in other works of the great African Doctor,, e. g., in his "De Genes.", his "Exposit. Psalm.", and his "De civit. Dei". Isidore of Pelusium (d. about 440-450) left letters explaining the hermeneutic principles of the School of Antioch, and also a work entitled "De interpretatione divinae scripturae". To Eucherius of Lyons (d. about 450) we are indebted for two hermeneutic works, "Formularum

spiritualis intelligentiae ad Uranium liber unus: and "Instructionum ad Salonium filium libri duo". In the fifth century, too, or at the beginning of the sixth, the monk Adrian explained the figurative expressions of Sacred Scripture, especially of the Old Testament, according to the principles of the School of Antioch in a work entitled "Introductio ad divinas scripturas". About the middle of the sixth century Junilius Africanus wrote his celebrated letter to Primasius, "De partibus divinae legis" in which he expounds the rules of Biblical interpretation, as he received them from an adherent of the School of Edessa. About the same time M. Aurelius Cassiodorus (d. about 565-75) wrote, among other works. "De institutione divinarum litterarum", "De artibus et disciplinis liberalium litterarum", and "De schematibus et tropis".

To the Council of Trent

Though we meet with fewer complete hermeneutic works during the period of the Middle Ages, still we have copious exegetical rules in the commentaries and introductions of St. Venerable Bede, Alcuin, Rabanus Maurus, Hugh of St. Victor, and especially St. Thomas (Summ. theol., I, Q. i, n. 9 sq.). There were several special reasons which led to the promotion of Biblical and hermeneutical studies in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Council of Vienne (1311) ordained that chairs of Oriental languages were to be erected in the universities; the humanistic studies began to flourish anew and reacted favourably on the pursuit of Biblical languages; the discovery of the art of printing (1440-1450) facilitated the spread of the Scriptures; the taking of Constantinople by the Turks (1453) occasioned the westward emigration of numerous learned Greeks, who carried with them their literary treasures as well as their learning and artistic skill. It was during this period, too, that Nicolaus Lyranus (d. 1340) wrote his works, "Tractatus

de differentiâ nostrae translationis ab Hebr. litterâ and "Liber differentiarum V. et N. Testamenti", and John Gerson (d. 1429) produced his hermeneutic treatise entitled "Propositiones de sensu litterali Scripturae Sacrae", in which he considers the various kinds of Scriptural sense, and expresses his preference for the literal sense to be determined according to the teaching of tradition and the pronouncements of the Church. In the sixteenth-century the so-called Reformers began with regarding the analogy of faith and the symbols as the criteria of Biblical exegesis, but in the end they had to fall back on the rules of Christian and even rationalistic hermeneutics, so that they naturally prepared the way for the Biblical rationalism of the eighteenth century. The Catholic hermeneutic literature also grew during these centuries, partly owing to the rivalry between Catholic and Protestant scholars. As this tended to enlarge the hermeneutic works, clearness and thoroughness demanded the separation from hermeneutics of critical, historical, and dogmatic questions, and the development and solid proof of the strictly hermeneutic principles.

VIII. RELATIONS OF HERMENEUTICS TO THE OTHER BRANCHES OF SACRED STUDY

It may be of interest to consider the relation in which hermeneutics, thus reduced to its own specific limits, stands to the other branches of Scriptural studies. Needless to say, the first step in the scientific study of the Bible consists in acquainting oneself with the foundation and the extent of the human and Divine authority with which the Scripture is endowed; the so-called historico-critical introduction to Sacred Scripture teaches us all this. The second step leads us to the key for the right understanding of this doubly authoritative collection of

books, that is, to the study of hermeneutics proper. The final stage of Bible study is exegesis, which opens to us the innermost treasures of the inspired writings. All this would be very simple and clear, if the second stage did not demand the additional knowledge: sacred philology, history, and sacred archaeology. It would be quite impossible to apply the rules of hermeneutics without possessing this knowledge. Finally, those who arrange theological studies systematically place philosophy and Bible study, together with ecclesiastical history and patrology, among the preambles preparing us for theoretic theology (fundamental, dogmatic, and apologetic), practical theology (moral), pastoral theology, and canon law.

IX. CONTENTS OF HERMENEUTICS

After considering hermeneutics in relation to its cognate branches of study, we may return to a more accurate scrutiny of its own contents. We have seen that the science of interpretation has for its formal object the discovery and the presentation of the sense of Sacred Scripture. Starting from this fact, we may infer that

- a complete treatise of hermeneutics ought to treat first of the sense of Scripture in general;
- it must lay down definite rules for finding this sense;
- it must teach us how to present this sense to others.

These three questions have been fully explained in the article EXEGESIS, so that it is unnecessary to repeat their respective developments here. It will be useful, however, for the reader to have before his eyes a summary of the principal points treated in that article.

X. SUMMARY OF HERMENEUTIC PRINCIPLES

(1) The writer begins by dividing the genuine sense of Sacred Scripture like so:

- the literal sense
- its nature
- its division
- its ubiquity
- its unity and multiplicity
- The two kinds of a so-called sense of Scripture which at best bear only an analogy to the real Biblical sense:
 - the derivative or consequent sense, and
 - Biblical accommodation.
- the typical sense.
 - its nature
 - its divisions
 - its existence
 - its occurrence in the Old Testament and in the New
 - its criterion
 - its theological value.

(2) In the next place the writer treats of the method of finding the genuine sense of Scripture, considering:

- the human character of the Bible, which demands an historico-grammatical interpretation so that the

commentator must keep in mind

- the significance of the literary expression of its sacred and Scriptural language;
 - the sense of its literary expression, which is often determined by the subject matter of the writing, by its occasion and purpose, by the grammatical and logical context, and by parallel passages;
 - the historical setting of the book and its author.
-
- The Divine or inspired character of the Bible requires a so-called Catholic interpretation, which involves additional directions of both
 - a negative character preventing (a) all irreverence and (b) the admission of any error and
 - of a positive nature, which bid the interpreter to respect (a) the definitions of the Church, (b) the patristic interpretation, and (c) the analogy of faith.

(3) After the genuine sense of Sacred Scripture has been found, it had to be presented to others by means of

- the version,
- the paraphrase,
- the gloss and scholion,
- the dissertation,
- or finally the commentary.

The homily may also be classed among the more popular method of Biblical exposition. **(4)** The concluding pages of the article EXEGESIS are devoted to a brief history of the subject:

- Jewish exegesis is divided into (a) Palestinian and (b) Hellenistic;
- Christian exegesis comprises,
 - the patristic period
 - the Apostolic Fathers and apologists,
 - the Greek Fathers of both Alexandrian and Antiochene tendencies,
 - the Latin Fathers
 - the time from the Patristic age (in its narrower sense) to the Council of Trent, where we again meet with (a) Greek writers, and (b) Latin scholars, either pre-Scholastic or Scholastic;
 - the period after the Council of Trent with
 - its Catholic writers of the golden age, of the transition period, and of recent times, and
 - the non-Catholic exegetes, whether they be of the number of the early Reformers, or of their immediate successors, or again of the rationalists.

We have added this survey of the history of exegesis because it throws light on the historic development of hermeneutics.

XI. TWO SPECIAL QUESTIONS

No difficulties will be raised against the Biblical interpreter as long as he remains within the sphere of the rules which govern his grammatico-historical exegesis; but protest will rise up on every side as soon as he urges the principle of

Biblical inerrancy, and the duty of bowing to the authority of the Church. A few additional observations on these two points will therefore not be out of place.

A. INERRANCY

Nature of Inerrance

The inerrancy of Scripture means that its hermeneutic truth is also objectively true, and that its genuine sense is adequately presented by its literal expression, at least by its complete literal expression, found in the original text interpreted in the light of the special purpose of the Holy Ghost and of its intended circle of readers. But this perfection of literary presentation does not remove obscurity and ambiguity of expression, defects which flow naturally from the human authors of the various books of Sacred Scripture, and were foreseen, and for good reasons permitted or even intended, by the Holy Ghost. Nor does the absolute truthfulness of Sacred Scripture imply that the Bible always presents the whole truth under all its aspects, nor does it demand that all the saying quoted by the Bible as historical facts are objectively true. Words quoted in Scripture as spoken by infallibly truthful speakers, e.g., by God Himself, or the good angels, or the prophets and apostles actually inspired, or by the sacred writer himself while under the influence of inspiration, all these words are not merely historically, but also objectively, true; but words quoted in Scripture as proceeding from speakers open to error are not necessarily objectively true, though they are historically true. If however such profane words are expressly approved of by the inspired writers, they are also objectively true.

Consequences flowing from Inerrancy

It follows from what has been said that there can be no contradictions in the Bible, and that there can be no real opposition between Biblical statements and the truths of philosophy, science, or history.

No Contradictions in Sacred Scripture

The impossibility of any contradiction existing in the Bible itself flows from the fact that God is the author of Sacred Scripture, and would be responsible for any such discrepancy. But how are we to remedy apparent contradictions in Scripture, the existence of which cannot be denied?

In some cases it is practically certain that our present text has been corrupted. I Kings, xiii, 1, says that Saul was a child of one year when he began to reign, and he reigned two years over Israel, though, according to Acts, xiii, 21 (and Joseph., Antiq., VI, xiv) Saul reigned forty years, beginning at the age of twenty-one. In the former case, the letters of the Hebrew text denoting forty and twenty respectively must have been lost. A similar corruption must be admitted in III Kings, iv, 26, which grants to Solomon 40,000 stalls of chariot horses instead of the 4000 assigned to him in II Par., ix, 25 (Hebrew text).

In other cases the apparent contradictions in the Bible are due to an erroneous exegesis of one or both of the passages in question. Such wrong interpretations are easily caused by the change of the meaning of a word; by the assumption of a wrong nexus of ideas (chronological, real, or psychological); by a restriction or an extension of the meaning of a passage beyond its natural limits; by an

interchange of figurative with proper, of hypothetical with absolute, language; by a concession of Divine authority to mere quotations from profane sources, or by a neglect of the difference between the Old and the New Testament. Thus the word "tempt" has one sense in Gen., xxii, 1, and quite another sense in James, i, 13; the expressions "faith" and "works" have not the same sense in Rom., iii, 28, and James, ii, 14, 24; the "sincere companion" of Phil., iv, 3, does not mean "wife", and does not place this passage in opposition to I Cor., vii, 8; the "hatred of parents" inculcated in Luke, xiv, 26, is not the hatred prohibited by the commandment of the decalogue; the nexus of events in the First Gospel is not chronological and does not establish an opposition between St. Matthew and the other Evangelists; in I Kings, xxxi, 4, the inspired writer testifies that Saul killed himself, while in II Kings, i, 10, the lying Amalecite boasts that he slew Saul; in John, i, 21, the Baptist denies that he is "the prophet:", without contradicting the statement of Christ in Matt., xi, 9, that John is a prophet; etc.

Apparent contradictions in the Bible may have their source in an erroneous identification of distinct words or facts, in a neglect of the difference of standpoint of different writers or speakers, or finally in an erroneous assumption of opposition between two really concordant passages. Thus Gen., xii, 11 sqq., refers to facts wholly different from those related in Gen., xx, 2, and xxvi, 7; the healing of the centurion's servant related in Matt., viii, 5 sqq., is entirely distinct from the healing of the king's son mentioned in John, iv, 46 sqq.; the multiplication of loaves in Matt., xiv, 15 sqq., is distinct from that described in Matt., xv, 32 sqq., the cleansing of the temple related in John ii, 13 sqq., is not identical with the event told in Matt., xxi, 12 sqq.; the anointing described in Matt., xxvi, 6 sqq., and John, xii, 3 sqq., differs from that told in Luke, vii, 37 sqq.; the

prophets view the coming of Christ now from an historical, now from a moral, and again from an eschatological standpoint, etc.

No Opposition between Biblical and Profane Truth

Proof — Thus far we have considered apparent contradictions between different statements of Sacred Scripture; a word must be added about the opposition which may appear to exist between the teaching of the Bible and the tenets of philosophy, science, and history. The Bible student must be convinced that there can be no such real opposition. The Vatican Council declares expressly: "Though faith is above reason, still there can never be a true discrepancy between faith and reason, since the same God, who reveals mysteries and infuses faith, implants in the human mind the light of reason" (Sess. III, Constit. de fide cath., cap. iv). The same truth is upheld by Leo XIII in the Encyclical "Providentissimus Deus": "Let the learned maintain steadfastly that God the creator and ruler of all things is also the author of the Scriptures, and that therefore nothing can be gathered from nature, nothing from historical documents, which really contradicts the Scriptures." Consequently, any contradiction between Biblical and profane truth is only apparent. Such an appearance of opposition may spring from one of three sources: Scripture may be wrongly interpreted, there may be a mistake in reputed profane truth, or finally the proof establishing the opposition between profane and Biblical truth may be fallacious.

Apparent Opposition — Any statement resting on a faulty text, or an exegesis neglecting one or more of the many hermeneutic rules, cannot be said to be a Biblical truth. On the other hand, a mere theory in philosophy, or a mere hypothesis in science, or again a mere conjecture in history,

cannot claim the dignity or right of a profane truth. Many mistakes have been made by Scriptural exegetes, but their number is not greater than scientific blunders. But even in cases in which the sense of the Bible is certain, and the reality of the profane truth cannot be doubted, the proof of their mutual opposition may be faulty. It is all the easier to go wrong in the proof of such an opposition, because the language of the Bible is not that of philosophy, or of science, or of the professional historian. The Scriptures do not claim to teach ex professo either philosophical theses, or scientific facts, or historical chronology. The expressions of Scripture must be interpreted in the light of their own age and of their original writer, before they are placed in opposition to any profane truth. There are expressions even in the language of to-day (for instance, the rising and the setting of the sun, etc.) which contradict acknowledged scientific truths, if no attention be paid to the conformity of such language with "sensible appearances".

Relation between Hermeneutics and Profane Learning —
What is, therefore, the relation between the interpreter and the scientist?

- It would be wrong to make Scripture the criterion of science, to decide our modern scientific questions from our Biblical data. In certain historical controversies this course may be followed, because some of the books of Scripture are truly historical works. But in scientific questions, it suffices to hold that "in matters of faith and morals" Scripture agrees with the truths of science; and that in other matters, Scripture rightly understood does not oppose true scientific results.
- Towards the use of profane truths in Biblical exegesis, the attitude adopted by commentators is not so

uniform. The ultra-conservatives are inclined to explain Scripture without any regard to the progress of profane learning. This method is opposed even to the warning of St. Thomas (I:68:1). The conservatives are prone to adhere to traditional scientific views until such are evidently superseded by modern results; these exegetes expose themselves to the danger of at least seeming defeat—a disgrace that reflects on Biblical exegesis. It is well, therefore, to temper our conservatism with prudence; prescind from "matters of faith and morals" in which there can be no change, we should be ready to accommodate our exegesis to the progress of historians and scientists in their respective fields, showing at the same time that such harmonizing expositions of Scripture represent only a progressive stage in Bible study which will be perfected with the progress of profane learning. To repeat once more, with regard to "matters of faith and morals" there is no progress of the faith in the faithful, but only progress of the faithful in the faith; with regard to other matters, the progress of profane knowledge may throw additional light on the true sense of Sacred Scripture

B. AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

Thus far we have considered the inerrancy of the Bible which can never be lost sight of by the believing interpreter; we come now to the question of authority to which the Catholic exegete owes obedience.

Law of the Church

The Council of Trent (Sess. IV, De edit. et usu ss. II.) forbids that, in "matters of faith and morals belonging to the building-up of Christian doctrine", the Bible be explained

against the sense held by the Church, or against the unanimous consent of the Fathers. The Tridentine Confession of Faith and the Vatican Council (Sess. III, Const. de fide cath., cap. ii) enjoin in a positive form that in "matters of faith and morals belonging to the building-up of Christian doctrine", the Scriptures be explained according to the teaching of the Church and the unanimous consent of the Fathers. In the article EXEGESIS the rules have been laid down which will ensure due conformity of Catholic exegesis with Catholic and patristic teaching; but little had been said about the meaning of the clause "in matters of faith and morals" and about the relation of ecclesiastical authority to those truths which do not belong to "matters of faith and morals".

Meaning of the "Matter of Faith and Morals"

The phrase "matters of faith and morals" has been compared with St. Thomas's truths revealed on their own account as distinct from truths revealed, accidentally as it were, on account of their connexion with the former (II-II:1:6, ad 1um); matters not of "faith and morals" have been found in the Angelic Doctor's expression, "in his quae de necessitate fidei non sunt" (II Sent., dist. ii, Q. i, a. 3); Vacant extends the words "matters of faith and morals" to the dogmas of faith and the truths pertaining to the custody of the deposit of faith; Granderauth identifies "matters of faith and morals" with all religious truths as distinct from merely profane verities: Egger is inclined to comprise under "matters of faith and morals" all revealed truth, and again the whole deposit of faith. in which he includes all Biblical truths; Vinati appears to extend "matters of faith and morals" to all truths that must be believed with Catholic or Divine faith, adding that all Biblical statements fall under these groups; Nisius seems to identify "matters

of faith and morals" with the truths contained in the deposit of faith without including all Biblical statements in this collection). Whatever may be thought of the foregoing opinions, it appears to be clear that "matters of faith and morals" contain all truths that must be believed with either Catholic, Divine, or theological faith. The further clause, pertaining to "the building-up of Christian doctrine", includes all the truths necessarily connected with the Christian system of doctrine and morals whether by way of foundation, or necessary proof, or, again, logical inference.

As to Matters not of Faith or Morals

Certain writers have inferred from the fact that the decrees of the councils do not say anything explicitly about the interpreter's subjection to authority in case of Biblical truths not included among "matters of faith and morals", that the Church has left the commentator perfectly free in this part of Biblical exegesis. The laws of logic hardly justify this inference. On the contrary, logic demands that he should not give any explanation which would not be in keeping with the analogy of faith. The most reasonable view of this question maintains that in matters not of faith or morals the teaching of the Church offers no positive guide to the commentator, but that it supplies a negative aid, inasmuch as it tells the Catholic student that any explanation must be false which is not conformable with the spirit of the Catholic Faith. To illustrate the foregoing rules, we may consider the attitude of the Bible towards the movement of the earth as involved in the Galileo question:

- If the Bible evidently teaches the stability of the earth, it is not permitted by Biblical inerrancy to say that the earth moves;

- if the Biblical teaching needs any explanation with regard to this point, the question arises whether the stability of the earth belongs to the "matters of faith and morals"; this is a question of right;
- if the question of right be answered in the affirmative, it is followed by the question of fact: does the teaching of the Church, or the analogy of faith, or again the unanimous consent of the Fathers maintain the stability of the earth? Or even if the second question be answered in the negative, is there any unanimous consent of the Fathers on this point which compels the reverent consideration of the Catholic interpreter?

A careful study of these points will show how the rules of hermeneutics affect the judgment passed on Galileo.

Thrice-Greatest Hermes

THESE volumes, complete in themselves as a series of studies in a definite body of tradition, are intended to serve ultimately as a small contribution to the preparation of the way leading towards a solution of the vast problems involved in the scientific study of the Origins of the Christian Faith. They might thus perhaps be described as the preparation of materials to serve for the historic, mythic, and mystic consideration of the Origins of Christianity,—where the term “mythic” is used in its true sense of inner, typical, sacred and “logic,” as opposed to the external processioning of physical events known as “historic,” and where the term “mystic” is used as that which pertains to initiation and the mysteries.

The serious consideration of the matter contained in these pages will, I hope, enable the attentive reader to outline in his mind, however vaguely, some small portion of the environment of infant Christianity, and allow him to move a few steps round the cradle of Christendom.

Though the material that we have collected, has, as to its externals, been tested, as far as our hands are capable of the work, by the methods of scholarship and criticism, it has nevertheless at the same time been allowed ungrudgingly to show itself the outward expression of a truly vital endeavour of immense interest and value to all who are disposed to make friends with it. For along this ray of the Trismegistic tradition we may allow ourselves to be drawn backwards in time towards the holy of holies of the Wisdom of Ancient Egypt. The sympathetic study of this material may well prove an initiatory process towards an understanding of that Archaic Gnosis.

And, therefore, though these volumes are intended to show those competent to judge that all has been set forth in decency according to approved methods of modern research, they are also designed for those who are not qualified to give an opinion on such matters, but who are able to feel and think with the writers of these beautiful tractates.

The following abbreviations have been used for economy of space:

C. H. = Corpus Hermeticum.

D. J. L. = Mead (G. R. S.), *Did Jesus Live 100 B.C.? An Enquiry into the Talmud Jesus Stories, the Toldoth Jeschu, and Some Curious Statements of Epiphanius: being a*

Contribution to the Study of Christian Origins (London, 1903).

F. F. F. = Mead (G. R. S.), *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*. Some Short Sketches among the Gnostics, mainly of the First Two Centuries: a Contribution to the Study of Christian Origins based on the most recently recovered Materials (London, 1900; 2nd ed. 1906).

G. = Gaisford (T.), *Joannis Stobæi Florilegium* (Oxford, 1822), 4 vols.; *Io. Stob. Ec. Phys. et Ethic. Libri Duo* (Oxford, 1850), 2 vols.

H. = Hense (O.), *I. Stob. Anth. Lib. Tert.* (Berlin, 1894), 1 vol., incomplete.

K. K. = "The Virgin of the World" (Κόρη Κόσμου).

M. = Meineke (A.), *Joh. Stob. Flor.* (Leipzig, 1855, 1856), 3 vols.; *Joh. Stob. Ec. Phys. et Ethic. Lib. Duo* (Leipzig, 1860), 2 vols.

P. = Parthey (G.), *Hermetis Trismegisti Pœmander ad Fidem Codicum Manuscriptorum recognovit* (Berlin, 1854).

Pat. = Patrizzi (F.), *Nova de Universis Philosophia* (Venice, 1593).

P. S. A. = "The Perfect Sermon, or Asclepius." *R.* = Reitzenstein (R.), *Poimandres: Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur* (Leipzig, 1904).
Ri. = Richter (M. C. E.), *Philonis Judæi Opera Omnia*, in