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Hermeneutics

Source Materials:

“Hermeneutics: the Science and Art of Biblical Interpretation”

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“A Syllabus of Studies in Hermeneutics”, Rollin Thomas Chafer

HERM002

adapted for Grace Notes training by Warren Doud

Grace Notes

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Hermeneutics

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Lesson 3 - Historical Schools-Literalists

General:

The literal method of interpreting the Bible is to accept as basic the literal rendering of the sentences unless by virtue of the nature of the sentence or phrase this is not possible. This allows for figures of speech, fables and allegories. When reasons exist for something beyond the literal meaning, there must be some type of control.

Jewish Literal School

Ezra founded this school when he translated the Hebrew to Aramaic for the Jews who were coming out of captivity (Neh 8:1-8). The Jewish Canons of interpretation were that:

- the Word is to be understood in terms of sentence and the sentence by its context.
- one should compare similar topics of scripture and give the clear passages preference over the obscure.
- one must pay close attention to spelling, grammar, and figures of speech.

- Logic is be used to apply scripture to life in circumstances where the Bible is silent.

The Literal school recognizes the Divine accommodation of Revelation to men.

Some Problems in the Literal School:

The “hyperliteralists” who are also called “letterists” took things to the extreme and were constantly looking for hidden meanings lying “under” the surface of the text.

The Cabbalists (Kabbalists) often allegorized the letters. They used *notarikon* where each letter stood for another word. They also used a method called *gemetria* which assigned numerical values to words, and then compared numbers and a system called *termura* which changed the letters of words to form new words.

Syrian School of Antioch

The Syrian School of Antioch avoided letterism and allegories. Lucian and Dorotheus were founders, around 325 A.D. Arius and Eusebius studied at this school. Diodorus who was the first presbyter of Antioch until 378 AD, then the Bishop of Tarsus, also was part of the school at

Antioch. There exist many extant writings from the students of this ancient school.

Theodore of Mopsuestia was a student of Diodorus who was intellectual and dogmatic. He denied the inspiration of some books of the Bible, but he also denied Allegory.

John Chrysostom who was also called "the golden-mouthed" was a talented exegete and communicator who recognized inspiration and totality of the Canon.

This School debated Origen's Allegorical school.

The Syrian School:

- recognized a plain-literal and a figurative-literal sense of Scripture.
- were not "letterists."
- avoided the authoritarian exegesis of the Roman Catholics.
- insisted on historicity of Old Testament events.
- related the Old Testament and New Testament *Typologically*, not Allegorically.
- recognized Progressive Revelation.
- held that the bond between the Old Testament and New Testament is prophecy.

This is the line of descent passed through by the writer of this course.

The Victorines:

The major representatives of The Victorines were Hugo of St. Victor, Richard of St. Victor, and Andrew of St. Victor. They noted the importance of history and geography, which is the natural background for literal exegesis. They emphasized syntax, grammar and exegesis and did not get involved in letterism.

The Reformers:

The Reformers based their approach on the philosophical system of Occam. This system first separated Grace and Nature and said everything we know about God is via Divine Revelation. The second factor involved a renewed study of Hebrew and Greek. Erasmus

published the first Greek New Testament in 1516.

The Reformer Martin Luther held the following hermeneutical principles:

- The Psychological Principle which recognized faith and illumination.
- The Authority Principle which held that the Bible is the supreme authority and is above church authority.
- The Literal Principle, which rejected allegory as, used by the Catholics. (They were not adverse though if the context were Christ and not something about the papacy). They accepted the primacy of the original languages and paid attention to grammar, time frame, circumstances, conditions, and context.
- The Sufficiency Principle, which indicates that the Bible is a clear book and a devout student, can understand it. This includes the fact that Scripture interprets scripture, so one must let the clear interpret the obscure. They also employed the "Analogy of Faith" which was believed to be the theological unity of the Bible and not the recognized dogma of an institution.
- The Christological Principle states that the function of all interpreters is to find Christ.

(The Roman Catholics seek to do this with Allegory)

- The Law-Gospel Principle which recognizes that the Law is not necessary for salvation.

In the Post-Reformation Era Ernesti published *Institutio Interpretis* in 1761 which stated that grammatical exegesis had authority over dogmatic exegesis which was the Roman Catholic method.

Devotional Schools:

This group emphasizes the edifying aspects of Scripture as per 2 Tim 3:16. The Medieval Mystics who used the Scriptures to promote the mystical experience led this school. The Victorines fell into this category.

Pietists

This was started by Philip Spener (1635-1705) and August Francke (1663-1727) who attempted to recover the Bible as spiritual with the intended use of edification. It was a reaction against those who read the Bible only to tear down others. Bengel was the chief exponent. The Pietists emphasized grammatical and historical interpretation seeking to apply it to life.

The Pietists influenced the Moravians. This evangelical movement can be traced to Moravia and Bohemia (Czechoslovakia). Count von Zinzendorf (1700 - 1760), the leader of the Bohemian Brethren was a part of the Devotional School. The Pietists also influenced the Puritans including John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, Mathew Henry, and the Quakers.

The problem they faced was one of having only pious reflections of Scripture without clear explanations. The Modern Devotional School claims devotions are absolutely necessary as Christians need applications to live by. The weaknesses of this school are that it can easily fall prey to Allegory, and often, pious reflections are substituted for valid exegesis.

Lesson 4 - Historical Schools - Liberals

The Liberal School of interpretation grew primarily out of the debate between rationalism and authoritarianism. Whatever was not in harmony with 'educated' morality was rejected.

The Liberal system of hermeneutics is that:

- The Modern Mentality was to govern one's approach to scripture.
- The Bible is just another book.
- Miracles are not to be accepted because they are not scientific.
- Hell, sin, and depravity are rejected because they offend moral sensitivities.
- The text may be rearranged.
- They reject all forms of Inspiration.

- Revelation is redefined to mean human insight into religious truth.
- Doctrinal and theological content are not binding.
- They believe that religious experience is fundamental and that theology is an afterthought.

The Liberal School applied Evolution to the religion of Israel. Thus they held that Jesus was a good man of the highest prophetic order and was transmuted by theological speculation and Greek metaphysics into the God-man of the creeds.

They believe that the writers of the Bible accommodated their recipients and hence the Bible is not binding on us. Liberalism also rejects typology and prophecy. They place a high value on philosophy and use a synthetic system that comes from beginning with a thesis and adding to it an antithesis thus forming a synthesis.

Some of the different names Liberalism appears under are:

- Neo-Orthodoxy which seeks to recover the insights of the Reformers. Karl Barth was the chief representative of this movement.
- Neo-Supernaturalism which reinstates category of transcendental.
- Logotheism which seeks a new theology of the Word of God.
- Neo-Evangelicalism which seeks to recover the Christian gospel in contrast to social gospel.
- Neo-Liberalism which has not really broken with liberalism.
- Biblical Realism which is a new effort to discover theological interpretation of the Bible.

Neo-Orthodoxy:

The approach of Neo-Orthodoxy to the interpretation of the Bible:

- denies the infallibility, inerrancy, and Divine revelation of Scripture.

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- says that only God can speak for God and thus revelation only comes when God speaks.
- claims that His speech is His personal presence, not mere words.
- views the Bible as a witness and record to revelation, but is not revelation.
- believes only that which witnesses to Christ is binding.
- believes we cannot interpret the particulars or specifics of Scripture.
- interprets mythologically the Creation accounts, the fall of man, and the Second Advent.
- believes you can read the Bible without any attempt to understand it (Existential).
- recognizes paradoxes.

“Holy History” School:

Another part of the Liberal School believed in a *Heilsgeschichtliche*, which is German meaning “Holy History” or “Salvation History.” Von Hoffman who tried a new system based on the experience of regeneration, history, the fact of the Church and Scripture started it. They accepted “Higher Criticism” which believed the books in the Bible to be written by several authors over the period of several hundred years.

The approach of the “Holy History” was that an historical event had roots in the past, meaning in the present, and was a preview of the future. It was also called the “Organic” view and when applied meant that interpretation was to be dynamic (ever-changing). This school turned applications into interpretations and believed that the Bible is the Bible if you make it *your* Bible.

Their Hermeneutics involve:

- The “Quest for Life” movement of document which is an attempt to discover unity of the book, to determine to whom it was written and find the flow of ideas

- comprehending the Bible’s message in context of the author’s view of life and reality as seen by the rational mind.
- determining the relationship, which exists between the ideas of the documents and the ideas of our own mind, namely reading into The Word our viewpoints which is, called eisegesis.
- critically studying the Bible since criticism establishes authenticity.

The New Hermeneutics:

Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) introduced the German Hermeneutical Principle also called the “New Hermeneutics.” Its principles are that:

- all matters of fact are settled by science and thus rejects miracles. (Scientific)
- the historical setting of a concept becomes more important than the strict interpretation of that concept. (Critical)
- the 1st Century church expressed faith mythologically. (Mythological)
- the modern person must strip away the myths. (Demythological)
- faith lives only by decision and does not need to be objective or have historical support. (Dialectical)
- scriptures are a witness that revelation does occur, but it is not directly the Word of God. (Revelational)
- there is no Old Testament predictions of the New Testament events. (The Law)

They are on a quest for the “historical Jesus” speaking of the person apart from what they view as myth. The Liberal Hermeneutic is based on how each person may see or understand his own world and experience. They view language as a “speech-event” and thus it does not carry responsibility even if coming from God.

Historical Sketch (Rollin Chafer)

Brief historical outlines of the development of Biblical Hermeneutics are found in several of

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the standard texts on this science.¹ These writers agree that Hermeneutics as a formulated science had no existence before the Reformation. Comparatively speaking, it is a newcomer in the family of subjects constituting Theological Encyclopedia and Methodology. However, principles claimed to have hermeneutical value, howbeit fraught with destructive elements, emerged in the third century and with accretions during the following centuries persist today.

Cellérier divides the historical development of Hermeneutics into eight (8) periods. As it is advantageous in this study to give consideration only to the governing principles of systems that have had a marked effect upon Biblical interpretation, details of some of these periods which did not seriously change the trend of the science will not receive more than cursory mention. It is of prime importance, however, to note the sources and following development of systems that have made permanent contributions, destructive as well as constructive, to methods which are defended and employed by their respective endorsers up to the present moment.

FIRST PERIOD. This may be disposed of in a few words. During the first two centuries of the Christian era "Hermeneutics did not exist, and could not exist." Several reasons contributed to this state. The church was harassed by persecutions, having little time for speculation in the realm of interpretative thought. "The Church of this era was, moreover, so near to the time of the preaching of the Apostles and of the

¹ Works to which I refer more frequently than other texts, namely, *Biblical Hermeneutics* by Terry, and *Manuel d' Hermeneutique* by Cellérier, trace the outline of this history. I am indebted to these comments, besides material on the subject in general ecclesiastical histories, for the factual matter in this section of the Syllabus. Responsibility for the interpretative comments on these historical facts is mine.

publication of their writings, that these were sufficiently perspicuous and fully explained by the oral traditions so carefully sought for at that time." A questionable system of interpretation is demanded only when there is a desire to avoid the application of the plain truth. On the other hand, a sound system of hermeneutics is essential to counteract such methods. The fact that an elaborate system of interpretation was not needed in the immediate post-Apostolic period is of important, nay determining, significance. It was an indication that Apostolic authority had not in the main been abandoned, although here and there departures from the truth were beginning to be manifested.

SECOND PERIOD. In the Patristic Age which followed, far-reaching departures from former beliefs were introduced. These changes were engendered by the rise of a scientific spirit, encouraged largely by philosophizing theologians of the Christian school at Alexandria, whose methods of interpretation had been profoundly influenced by the mode of allegorizing promulgated by Philo and the Jewish school.

Origen emerges as the most important figure of this period. A product of the Alexandrian school, he possessed an extraordinary ability for sustained mental labor. This industriousness coupled with a remarkable memory won for him a reputation for scholarship. Like many scholastics, however, he lacked the ability to think straight. His system of interpretation constantly exhibits the fact that he ignored fundamental laws of logic. He had been trained in a philosophy developed by the eclectic mode as taught by Clement, rector of the school, and the new Platonic system founded by Ammonius Saccus, his preceptor. Mosheim says: "He held that all things that exist, whether corporeal or void of gross matter, emanated eternally from God, the source of all things. This first principle of the new Platonic school, derived from Egyptian wisdom, was the basis or foundation of Origen's

philosophy.”² Finding much in the literal statements of Scripture that was repugnant to his adopted philosophy, he introduced three principles of interpretation by which he attempted to harmonize the Bible to his preconceived ideas, always, it is needless to say, at the expense of the former. The very character of the principles themselves provided for this. These were:

(1) *The divinity of the Bible.* Because it is divine it cannot contain anything unworthy of God. This statement is innocent enough, and would meet with general agreement of believers in the Bible as the Word of God. He qualified this, however, by saying that the Bible taken in its plain literal sense contains much that is unworthy of God, much that is false and misleading. Therefore human reason, proceeding on the basis of philosophy, must be the judge as to what and what is not worthy of God in the Scriptures. What is thus found to be unworthy must be changed *by interpretation* to something consonant with what he considered to be worthy of God. Thus the divine authority, governing the revelation as transmitted through the sacred writers, was nullified in the passages thus revised.

(2) *Multiple sense of the Bible.* To allow for ample latitude in carrying out his desire to bring the Scriptures into harmony with his philosophy, Origen adopted the doctrine of the double sense in Scripture, passed on to him by Clement from the teaching formerly developed by the Pharisees and Essenes. To this doctrine he committed himself unreservedly, elaborating it into a system which included four categories, viz.: “*grammatical, moral, analogical or mystical, and allegorical.*”

Under a method which allowed the application of these various meanings, it is at once apparent that a Scripture might be made to mean almost anything but the true intent of the sacred author. To preserve the fundamentals of his philosophy at any cost, he threw logic to the winds and distorted plain statements of revelation to fit his notions as to what is worthy of God. On this Cellérier comments as follows: “The principle of multiple sense, has little respect for the Scripture, inasmuch as it delivers them over to the imagination and caprice of the interpreter, that is, to the fancies and whims, which they ought to control.”

The great influence of Origen’s writings resulted in widespread acceptance of this method which was modified and in some respects amplified during the succeeding centuries. The disastrous effects resulting from its use will be pointed out more fully in a later section of the Syllabus. Suffice it to say at this point that there are many theologians claiming orthodoxy today who defend the general principles, here outlined, in the interest of a philosophizing theology which embodies an unscriptural world view and curtailments of other vital and legitimate elements of the theology of the Scriptures.

(3) *The Mystic Force of the Bible.* Another principle which survived only amongst extremists, was that the Bible, as a book, possessed a mystical force which exerted an influence upon those who read it whether they understood what they read or not. This idea may be disposed of with two quotations, viz.: “This was a pious, but dangerous superstition” (Cellérier); “It is pious nonsense” (Scofield).

Although attempts to formulate rules of interpretation did not result in anything approaching a true system of hermeneutical laws, the destructive method of allegorizing plain statements of Scripture secured a

² Historical Commentaries on the State of Christianity. Tr. James Murdock. Vol. II., p. 150.

strong foothold which has never been entirely dislodged from the formal theologies of the various Christian faiths. To whatever extent it has been employed it has been a blight upon hermeneutical progress and a serious hindrance to the understanding of the divine revelation.

In order to put his system into practical use Origen formulated seven (7) rules which resulted in replacing the authority of the Word of God with human judgment. Of the seven rules the first two only will be cited here:

Rule I. When the words of any passage in either Testament afford a good sense, one worthy of God, useful to men, and accordant with truth and sound reason,-this must be considered a sure sign that the passage is to be taken in its literal and proper sense. But whenever anything absurd, false, contrary to sound reason, useless, or unworthy of God, will follow from a literal interpretation, then that interpretation is to be abandoned, and only moral and mystical senses are to be sought for.” ”

Rule II. Consequently, that portion of sacred history, both in the Old Testament and the New, which narrates things probable, consonant to reason, commendable, honest, and useful, must be supposed to state facts, and of course must be understood literally. But that portion of sacred history which states actions or events that are either false, or absurd, or unbecoming of God and holy men, or useless or puerile, must be divested of all literal meaning, and be applied to moral and mystical things in both the spiritual worlds.”³

These are high-sounding words which have misled the unthinking all down the centuries since they were penned. The fallacy underlying

³ Mosheim. *Historical Commentaries on the State of Christianity*. Tr. James Murdock, pp. 181,182, Vol. II.

these propositions is that the reasonableness or unreasonableness of the divine disclosures is to be judged by the finite mind. Much of the plain and didactic teaching of the Scriptures is repugnant to man, just as these were repugnant to Origen’s philosophy. Under this dangerous authority of reason changes in the plain intent of the Scriptures came in like a flood, originated and fostered by Origen and his followers. It is one thing to properly interpret a Scripture allegory. It is quite another thing to allegorize a plain “Thus saith the Lord,” violating thereby all the laws governing the transmission of thought.

During the next century after the introduction of this system, Augustine, adopting the allegorizing method, added to the “practice of interpretation” (no real science of hermeneutics yet existed) three elements, namely:

- (1) *“The qualifications necessary to the interpreter;*
- (2) *the analogy of faith; and*
- (3) *the authority of tradition.”*

These three propositions at first made slow progress. The first and second come up for fuller discussion in the later divisions of the study. The latter became one of the dominating principles in the church of the following period.

THIRD PERIOD. The Middle Ages. The Church developed the errors introduced in the former period. The authority of an extra-Biblical tradition became strongly entrenched. Under this authority all the abuses in the Church of the times, the adoption of dogmas of pagan origin, and other perversions of Christianity were justified. There could be no progress toward a true hermeneutical science in this age.

FOURTH PERIOD. The Reformation. This movement “was destined to exercise and did exercise, an immense influence on Hermeneutics.” In fact, it is in this period that a true science of hermeneutical principles had its beginning. Three new principles were generally accepted, namely:

(1) Theopneusty. Inspiration of the Scripture “taken in its absolute sense.” But Bannerman wrote: “Within the pale of the Protestant Church there soon emerged a difference of opinion, which has subsisted with growing divergence ever since. The one principle of the singular and supreme authority of Scripture found its natural expression in the views of Calvin and his followers in the Reformed Churches, with respect to inspiration.”⁴ The return to the authority of the Scriptures opened the way for the recognition that the Bible is a self-interpreting book. It opened the way for the development of the principles which resulted from the examination of the Scriptures themselves.

(2) The Analogy of Faith. “This principle, according as it is explained and applied, is a fruitful source of error, or of truth. It is very much like reposing on a treacherous wheel, which is ready to run either way. Nevertheless it merits all confidence, so long as we take for the rule of faith the uniform teaching of Scripture. But if, on the contrary, we take the faith of the Church or official doctrinal symbols for the rule of faith, and apply it in theory, or in fact, to the interpretation of the Scriptures, we are guilty of the fallacies of *petitio principii* and of reasoning in a circle. This would be the death of all examination, and of all Hermeneutics, and of all exegesis. Undisguised Popery could not be worse.”⁵

Although Augustine first mentions this principle there could be no progress in its use until the church had thrown off the shackles of traditionalism. “With the Reformation of the sixteenth Century the mind of Germany and of other European

states broke away from the ignorance and superstition of the Middle Ages, the Holy Scriptures were appealed to as the written revelation of God, containing all things necessary to salvation, and the doctrine of the justification by faith was magnified against priestly absolution and the saving meritoriousness of works.”⁶

This freedom to study the Scriptures inductively, resulting in the formularies which became crystallized as controversy arose, has not survived to any such extent as the truth demands.

Amongst a great many churchmen there has been the tendency to keep within the bounds of the Reformation creeds as constituting the analogy of faith by which the Scriptures are to be interpreted, instead of being conformed to the whole tenor of Scripture teaching. In view of this it needs to be said that no short creedal statement does or can exhaust the wealth of Scripture truth, on the one hand, nor does any group of exegetes hold a mortgage on what measure of truth is embedded in the creeds, on the other hand.

The Spirit-led believer has the God-bestowed freedom, within the confines of revealed truth, to enter every room of the revelatory structure and make himself at home in all the counsel of God. To deny him this on the grounds of a so-called Protestant traditionalism is no better in principle than the withholding of the right under the Roman Church traditionalism. Such is the perversity of human nature, however, that this denial of the right of such freedom is frequently voiced by those who are jealous for the limitations of the creeds.

In connection with the vital challenge of Scripture, a discerning writer has said: “For orthodoxy, let us observe, is not my ‘doxy’

⁴ Quoted by Cell erier from *Bannerman on Inspiration*, p. 135.

⁵ Cell erier. *Man. d’ Her.* p. 17.

⁶ Terry. *Bib. Her.* p. 47.

or the other fellow's 'doxy.' It is *what it is, viz.: sound or right teaching according to the Scriptures* and inspiration, the guarantee of orthodoxy, like a flaming sword, turns every way on an approach to Scripture. Those who attack the Bible, if they had vision enough to perceive it, are *always bound* to fail in carrying the assault. This (from a philosophical standpoint) explains why the modernist so often takes refuge in affixing stupid and unmeaning labels on those who challenge him to show that the claims of Scriptures are not worthy of the highest credence."⁷

This also precisely explains why the creedal limitationist attaches stupid labels on those who do not follow the traditionalism which had its beginning in the Patristic age and insist on going back to take a stand with the Apostles. The frequently repeated label is, one is devoid of "scholarship" if one does not *accept* this traditionalism. One may *know* all the quirks and turns of it, but to take one's stand instead with the source of Truth, is unscholarly.

(3) *The Comparison of Scripture with Scripture.* "The Reformation, while rendering Hermeneutics more intellectual, more logical, and more Biblical, enabled interpreters to derive more benefit, than their predecessors had done, from the Bible itself, by the method of comparing its different portions. Suffice it to remark that this new tendency, to compare Scripture with Scripture, did more than anything else to prepare a conscientious and logical exegesis, and began the work of placing Hermeneutics upon its true foundation."⁸

This comparative study of the Scriptures is included as a fundamental principle of Biblical interpretation by all standard

works on Hermeneutics. An elaboration of it will be made in a later section, entitled, "Four Fundamental Rules of Interpretation."

Following the Reformation several marked movements took place, none of which presented entirely new principles of interpretation. Rather, they were revivals of ideas long held by various leaders, some of the views dating back to the first century and others originating in the third century or thereafter. These movements included the prominence in the seventeenth century of the demands of the Socinians that Revelation be subject to reason, and the demands, at the other extreme, of the Quakers who would subject "the written Word to the *Inner Word*, that is, to individual revelation."

In the early part of the eighteenth century three schools of different principles emerged:

(a) *The Logical School*, founded by two Genevese, Le Clerc and Turretini, who succeeded the Arminians. "This school broke the despotism of the allegorizing school, but through its cold logic lost the spiritual truths of the Bible."

(b) *The Pietistic School*, founded by Spencer, which was a reaction from the former. Although accused of mysticism, Spencer opposed the Quakers thus: "Our feelings are not the norm of truth, but divine truth is the norm of our feelings. This rule of truth exists in the Divine Word *apart from ourselves.*" (

(c) *The Naturalistic School* of the German Naturalists, a destructive reaction.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries four systems, the underlying principles of which are still appealed to, should be noted more particularly, namely:

(1) *The Postmillennial System*, introduced by Daniel Whitby, an English Arminian theologian who died in 1726. Although he published his system admittedly as a "new

⁷ Amos. *The Vital Challenge of Biblical Certitude*. p. XIX.

⁸ Cell erier. *Man. d' Her.* p. 17.

hypothesis," he employed principles which the savants of the Alexandrian school followed as early as the third century. It became the accepted interpretation in the majority of the theological schools of Christendom, and held the first place for many years. More recently it has been replaced by the *Amillennial System* which differs in certain respects and in other features is similar in interpretation. A comparison of these systems will not be presented in this brief historical sketch.

(2) *The Grammatical School* founded by Ernesti. He based sound interpretation on the philological study of the text. Although productive of valuable results it failed in general exposition of Scripture. It is true that sound interpretation must begin with the grammatical sense of the text, and this does indeed hold first place in the rules for interpretation, nevertheless it is possible to trot all day in a grammatical half-bushel and fail to get the great sweep of the meaning of the broad context. Hence there are other rules, presented in a later section, which safeguard against an overemphasis of grammatical considerations.

(3) *The Historical School*, founded by Semler, "occupied itself principally, and too much, with exposition," interpreted by "the facts, usages, and prejudices of the times." "Semler was the real father of German rationalism. This school bore its fruits. It filled Germany with a crowd of theologians, without piety, without faith, and without life, with now and then original thinkers and keen critics, distinguished only by the rashness and fickleness of their theories, and by the superficial and vain levity of the hypotheses which they advanced with jealous rivalry. To sum up in a few words, the grammatical school was judicious, methodical, enlightened; but it was insufficient; to complete it other methods and other principles were necessary. The

historical school would have been useful if it had been inspired by a spirit of sound criticism and of pious prudence, and, in the exercise of this spirit, been contented with the modest character of an auxiliary, instead of aspiring to supremacy."⁹

(4) *The Premillennial System*. Although there are writers who, either being unfamiliar with the facts of Church history or willing to ignore these facts, claim extreme modernity for the Premillennial faith, the truth is that the chiliasm of the Apostles and the First Century Church is identical in all its major features to the Premillennial system held by orthodox Christians today. Throughout the history of the Christian Church God has had His witnesses to this truth. During periods of great spiritual declension this body of Scripture truth has been kept alive by a few only. With every revival of the spiritual emphasis in life and Bible study by Christian people, this faith has come to the fore, thus evidencing the blessing of God upon the testimony whenever it has recurred.

The bulk of the literature on Hermeneutics has been produced during the last century. In many of the works the laws governing interpretation have been sound, but the application of the laws have not always illustrated the principles inherent in the laws themselves. This inconsistency is often noticeable in connection with points on which the author is prejudiced in favor of a preconceived or adopted interpretation. That this common fault is not in harmony with sound Hermeneutics will be amply demonstrated in future sections of our study. We shall next consider some of the fundamental axioms on which sound Hermeneutics rest.

⁹ M. Cellerier, *Man. d' Her.* tr. p. 26.

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Exercises for HERM002

1. Describe the Literal approach to God's Word.
2. What were some of the problems in the Literal School and why would they be problems?
3. Which Literal School debated Origen's Allegorical School and who were some of its famous students?
4. Discuss the principles held by the Syrian School.
5. Discuss Luther's principles of hermeneutics.
6. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Pietists.
7. Where did the Liberal School of interpretation come from?
8. What philosophical theory did the Liberals apply to Scripture?
9. Discuss their basic positions.
10. What is my overall evaluation of the liberal hermeneutical system?