

INAUGURAL ADDRESS.
[delivered on 21 September 1900]

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN OF THE BOARD OF
DIRECTORS:

Let me thank you for the great honor which you have conferred upon me in calling me to take a part in the succession to the labors of those illustrious men who, in their day, made the name of Princeton known and revered throughout the world, and whose memory still is blessed. May the portion of their mantle which has fallen upon me, cause me to be filled with the same spirit which was in them, and make me worthy of a place among my learned and distinguished confrères in the present faculty of this mother of Presbyterian Seminaries.

It gives me especial pleasure and comfort, in leaving a city which for nearly a quarter of a century has been my home, to see among you here so many of the old familiar faces of those who in College and Seminary were my professors or fellow students, and to receive a charge from one whom I have always deemed one of the dearest of my Seminary friends.

Will you pardon my for expressing the hope that those of you who have known me for so many years and yet have esteemed me fitted for this place, may never be disappointed in your choice.

Before discussing the subject which I have chosen for my inaugural address, a few definitions may be necessary. By Lower Criticism I mean grammar, lexicography and textual criticism ; by Higher Criticism, any literary criticism of the text or any systematic statements of truth, which may be derived from the purest possible

text, in strict accordance with the rules of grammar and the most probably results of lexicography. Following these definitions, we restate the theme of our discourse as follows: A thorough knowledge of the principles of grammar, lexicography and textual criticism is necessary as a preparation for the critical study of the Scriptures along any line of thought, literary, historical or theological.

Before passing to the discussion of our subject, let us remark that the three branches of Lower Criticism are not mutually exclusive nor logically distinct. Indeed, there is a sense in which both lexicography and textual criticism may be looked upon as parts of grammar, while on the other hand, no part of grammar or lexicography can be considered without reference to the criticism of the text.

After these preliminary remarks by way of definition and limitation, I proceed to the discussion of the kind and amount of lower criticism which are demanded by the times, and which it shall be the endeavor of the incumbent of the Chair of Semitic Philology and Old Testament Criticism to impart. The first department of Lower Criticism is that which is commonly called grammar. For convenience of treatment Hebrew Grammar may be divided into three parts, Phonics, Graphics and Morphics, or sounds, signs and forms. The study of sounds, in their relation to Higher Criticism, is important only because of its bearing upon the derivation and the variations of the forms of words, and upon the errors of text arising from the confusion of consonants of similar sound. The study of Graphics, especially in MSS. and in palaeography, is necessary in order to understand the transmission of the text, and in particular the variations arising from mistakes in reading letters which, at some time, have been similar in form. And when we come to the first part of Morphics, which is commonly called etymology, it is not sufficient to study the forms

of words as they are embodied in the traditional punctuation of the Massoretes. The origin of the sounds back of the written forms, the inflection and meaning of the forms, the ability to change forms in accordance with the demands of exegesis, this must be thoroughly learned before one is prepared to advance with steady tread by the paths of syntax and textual criticism to the higher regions of history, theology and literary criticism. But if the origin, inflection and meaning of single words is indispensable, what shall we say of the more complex forms of syntax? You will agree with me, that this is one of the most difficult tasks in the learning of any language. You will agree with me, further, in my belief that no part of a theological education was formerly more neglected than the study of Hebrew Syntax. In fact, it was scarcely taught at all in our theological seminaries a generation ago. If you will look at an old Hebrew grammar, you will find that very little space is given to it. One was expected to know it by intuition, or to pick it up. The advance in the importance attributed to a special knowledge of Hebrew syntax, may be gauged by comparing the different editions of Gesenius' Grammar which have appeared in the last fifty years, or the translation of Conant with the last editions of the English version of Kautzsch's Gesenius. We are convinced that the reason why so many of our ministers have neglected the independent exegesis of the Old Testament, has been that they were ignorant of syntax. Certainly no one acquainted with the subject would suppose for an instant that a knowledge of that difficult and varied instrument for the expression of thought, the Semitic verb, could be gained otherwise than by thorough and protracted study. The Hebrew imperfect is as varied in its usage as the Greek Aorist, the Hebrew genitive and article as the Greek, and the exegete who

attempts to expound the Old Testament, without being master of these, is just as insensible to the requirements of the case as is he who would try in like ignorance to expound the Greek of the New.

The second division of Lower Criticism is lexicography, the science or art of determining the meaning of words. By most students of the Old Testament, this department of research is given over entirely to the dictionary makers. What appears in a standard current dictionary is considered final and decisive. I remember that when I was in the Seminary two great theologians carried on an important discussion, which depended upon the meaning of a single word, and neither of them thought it necessary to appeal to other authorities than the English edition of Gesenius. Who was Gesenius, that our Presbyterian ministers and professors should appeal to his dictionary as the final court in linguistic matters? Should a rationalist of his type, whose opinions in Higher Criticism would be rejected as untenable, shall the work of such a man be accepted as the standard in the field of lexicography? Do a man's views of God not enter into his definition of miracles and prophecy and holiness and sin? Those of you who are conversant with Gesenius' dictionary will remember the frequently recurring note: See my Commentary on Isaiah, in loco; and there we find the discussion of the reasons for defining the word as it is given in the dictionary. In short, a dictionary is but the dicta of the writer on the words defined. The exegete should be prepared to go back of the dictionary so as to examine the reasons for the definition. As my learned colleague, in his masterly review of the meaning of the word θεόπνευστος (inspired), so every searcher after truth should, so far as possible, be prepared to search out the meaning of any disputed term and to thoroughly investigate his premises before arriving at a

conclusion. But it is a pertinent question here to ask, whether this is ever in the range of possibility for the ordinary theological student? To which I answer : Yes; in large part.

Every theological student learns enough Hebrew to use a concordance. Now, a concordance of a language like the ancient Hebrew, whose entire literature is found in a single book, gives a comprehensive survey of the usage of a given word. If the construction in which the word occurs is always exactly the same, little information can be gained in this way ; but if the word is of frequent occurrence, and is found in several or many different connections, a tolerably accurate definition of most words may be made without further help than a concordance. If there is profit in using Cruden's and Young's concordances in the explication of the text, much more might one argue the utility of using those in the original languages in which the Word of God was written, as "The final appeal in all questions of faith and practice." The Greek and Hebrew concordances are the airbrakes on hasty conclusions, the safety-valves of the Church against the rash judgments of professional dictators or ignorant enthusiasts.

A second aid which the ordinary student may find in determining the meaning of words, is that to be derived from the meaning of forms. If it be true that forms have meaning, then a knowledge of the usual meaning of these forms will enable the student to demand that the lexicon shall give a sufficient reason for any departure from the customary meaning of a form.

A third aid which the ordinary student can use in the control of the dictionary is to be found in the ancient versions into Greek and Latin. These versions are fortunately within the reach of all, and their daily use in the interpretation of the original is to be most highly com-

mended. It will not merely keep up and increase a knowledge of those languages upon which so much time has been expended, but it will certainly call attention to matters of grammar and exegesis which would otherwise be entirely overlooked. But as to the point in question, it will be immediately perceived that when there is a difference between one or more of the ancient versions and the lexicon as to the meaning of a word, that there is a subject worthy of the investigation of the exegete. To my mind no better method for mastering the ancient Hebrew, and at the same time for retaining and perfecting our knowledge of the classics, can be found than the study of the ancient versions in connection with the original text, discovering and seeking to explain every slightest variation of thought or expression. As tests of dictionaries and suggesters of new ideas they are invaluable and unsurpassed. While ordinary students must remain satisfied with the study of the Greek and Latin versions, the extraordinary student will acquire Syriac and Aramaic in order to make use of the other great primary versions, that he may derive a full benefit from these great masterpieces of interpretation of the word of God which have been handed down from antiquity.

A fourth aid in the control of lexicons is not open to the ordinary student. It is that to be derived from the cognate languages. Its value in correcting the errors of citation and logic on the part of lexicographers can scarcely be overestimated. I shall never forget the shock which went through my frame when upon looking at an Arabic dictionary in confirmation of a statement made by that imperial scholar, Ewald, with regard to the meaning of a word, I found the facts to be the very opposite to that which he had stated to be the case. It caused a revolution in my methods ; I have never since accepted the references to the cognate languages in the commentaries

and dictionaries without first making an investigation for myself, and even then often with the admission to myself that the inductions of meanings in the dictionaries at hand may be incomplete or misunderstood. Some of the commentaries and lexicons cannot be comprehended without a partial knowledge of Arabic and Syriac at least. Would that every one who had the opportunity of perfecting himself in the use of all the means which God has given us for ascertaining with as much fulness as possible the meaning of every word which the Holy Scriptures contain would avail himself of the advantages which this institution may afford of learning these sister tongues of the inspired.

The third department of Lower Criticism is Textual Criticism, the purpose of which is to discover the original text. One would suppose that the first endeavor of all students of the Bible would be to discover the very words which were written through the inspiration of God. It is only lately, however, that any critical apparatus, approximating in any suitable degree what it should be, has been prepared. The publication of the Polychrome edition of the Hebrew bible and the amount of textual changes suggested in many of the latest commentaries, such as Klostermann's, and in religious magazines, like the Expository Times, have rendered it necessary for the intelligent and conscientious reader to gain as good as possible a knowledge of the correct principles of Old Testament textual criticism. While Old Testament books are costly, every man can have at least one polyglot which will give most of the data upon which the conclusions of the critics are based. As to the methods of textual criticism, this is neither the time nor the place to enter into a full statement of what they are. Let it suffice to say that they should be objective rather than subjective. The purpose of the critic should be to find out what the author said,

not what he would like him to have said, nor what he thinks he ought to have said. Such a method, moreover, must be scientific, *i.e.*, it must seek to secure a complete induction of the facts without selection or exclusion, because of preconceived opinions or tendency theories of any kind whatsoever. What the men of God wrote, that is the task of the critic to discover and to pass on to the exegete, the historian and the theologian, that they may have correct premises on which to base the conclusions in their commentaries, histories and theologies.

Here let me guard against two common misconceptions. One is the supposition that the Hebrew original of the Old Testament has been so preserved as to render all revision objectless. No one can hold such a theory in view of the evidences of the Hebrew MSS. and the parallel passages alone. No more will any one who accepts the evidences of the New Testament quotations in their bearing upon the text of the Old, and who recognizes the need for a revision of the New Testament, have a *locus standi* in defending the impeccability of the text of the Old.

The other error is that the ancient translators or the later revisers of their versions were so characterized by prejudices and tendencies that their translations were intentionally inaccurate and biased from the start, so as to render them largely useless in enabling us to re-establish any original Hebrew text. In answer to this it may be said that (except in isolated instances and books) no sufficient proof of these intentional variations from the original text has as yet been produced. My own conviction is (and this is a conviction based upon a more or less extensive study of all the versions), that all of them, primary and secondary, by whomsoever made, bear undeniable evidence of having been designed to be faithful to their original. Had we the original texts of the versions, we could doubtless, with the aid of the Hebrew *textus receptus*,

reconstruct in most instances the originals from which they were translated. As it is, the first question to be asked when we find a variation in a version is, why this variation? Was the original of it different from the *textus receptus*? Did the translators misunderstand the original? Do we misunderstand either the original or the translation, or is either one or other text corrupt? It will be seen that before one is fitted to answer these questions with anything like accuracy, he must be acquainted with all the departments of grammar and lexicography mentioned above. Phonics, palaeography, the concordances, versions and cognates will all contribute their portion toward the settlement of every question of text. The failure to use any one of these factors may cause an error in the result.

Such, then, are the three great divisions of Lower Criticism—text, grammar, lexicon—and knowledge of all three is indispensable to any one who will rightly divide the Word of Truth. A correct view of the possibilities and attainments of textual criticism, a thorough knowledge of all the parts of grammar, an intelligent control of lexicography – these must be the possession of him who would understand the biblical literature of the day ; these give the logical premises for all conclusions based upon the Word of God. These are the foundations upon which are to be built the stately structure of literary criticism, history and theology.

We shall seek to lay the foundations deep and broad and firm in the minds of our students, that all men may admire the uprightness and strength and beauty of the superstructures which they shall build.

You will all have noticed that throughout this discourse I have emphasized the study of the cognates, and of the primary versions, at least, for those who would fully master the details of Lower Criticism. Only after

having learned these will they be fully furnished for the more attractive but not more important work of Higher Criticism. Not forgetting that the primary object of the Theological Seminary is to train men for the Gospel ministry, I should like to see Princeton, and I think that the Church would like to see Princeton, offer to young men of the Presbyterian faith facilities for the acquisition of any branch of knowledge that will help them to discover and defend, in its full meaning, every word of God. It shall be my aim and ambition, with the hoped for hearty aid of the faculty and directors of this institution, and of our *Alma Mater* across the way, to present to every student the opportunity of acquiring any language which, as cognate to the Hebrew, throws light upon its grammar and lexicon, or any language in which a version of the Bible was made before the Sixth Century, A.D. Some of my fellow professors have kindly offered to assist in this plan, which is only an extension of what has hitherto been offered. With the assistance which the University can render, and which we are happy to believe it will be glad to render, we hope that soon it will not be necessary for any of our students to go abroad to perfect themselves in any branch of theological science.

In my plans for the offering of increased facilities for the more thorough understanding of the Old Testament, I have projected a number of works and series of works which seem necessary to fill out the *apparatus criticus*. In the completing of these works, I shall invoke the assistance of the students whom I expect to train, the advice of my fellow professors, and, when needed, the financial aid of the friends of this Seminary.

And may God grant His grace and His strength that all our labors may be well done and fully done, to the increase of knowledge and faith, to the honor of His Word and the glory of His name.