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touching Christ and the Gospel. From this course of study we hope to derive a clearer and more accurate view of Christ, working in us a greater likeness to Him; a removal of the misconceptions which weaken the influence of the Gospel and hinder its reception, and of the barriers which still separate those whom Christ has joined together in one great brotherhood.

JOSEPH AGAR BEET.

MEYER.

SECOND PAPER.

To the critical adjustment of the text which was to form the basis of his exposition he attached great importance, and lamented the indifference of the younger generation of theologians towards textual criticism. He took his statement of the facts at first from Scholz, but afterwards from Tischendorf's successive issues, which were carefully collated. In this field specially we miss such a general account of the principles on which he proceeded as he contemplated giving at the end of the work; and we cannot but think that the absence of such an account has led to an undue disparagement of the critical side of his labours. Men accustomed to the methods of Griesbach, Lachmann, Tregelles, or Westcott and Hort—to say nothing of the more varying principles and practice of Tischendorf—look with impatience or suspicion on a criticism that rests on no precisely stated theory as to documents or recensions; and the reader is apt, in the absence of any such definite guiding thread, to assume that the judgments expressed on individual passages are unequal and arbitrary. But the judgments of Meyer are by no means mere subjective expressions of opinion; on the contrary, it is his special distinction to indicate plainly in each case the grounds that

move him to a preference. He gives us the materials for a judgment, and he tells us the considerations that have determined his own. He admitted the value of Lachmann's text as an historical contribution, but he could not agree in the commendations bestowed on it; critically viewed, it bore on the face of it more corruptions of the original text than any other recension, not excepting even the Textus Receptus; and he had grave doubts "whether the brilliant Bentley, in whose steps Lachmann was proud to follow, would have been capable of a criticism not at all rational."[1] And, when Tischendorf in his eighth edition drew nearer to the method of Lachmann, Meyer remarked: "I am not quite free from hesitation as to this change of principles, whereby, instead of simply striving for the ideal goal as such, we are again directed, as in the case of Lachmann, only to an intermediate station, the actual reaching of which must withal, especially if it is to be the text of the *second* century, be in numberless cases uncertain."[2] He hints that the Codex Sinaiticus apparently possessed for Tischendorf too great a power of attraction.[3] So far as we may gather from Meyer's practice, his habit seems to have been to accept the text vouched for by the preponderance of ancient testimonies (special stress being laid on the versions), with a reservation to criticism to apply the canon that *that* reading is to be accepted as original, which being assumed serves to account for the emergence of the others, but which cannot in its turn be so readily accounted for. He is at times perhaps influenced too strongly by grounds of internal evidence; but his criteria are for the most part simply the well-known empirical sources of error; and, while such considerations may be urged at times on either side or at any rate affect differently different minds, few will deny that, if the right of such criticism is to be

[1] Pref. to John, 1834. [2] Pref. to Mark and Luke, 5th ed. (1866).
[3] Pref. to John, 5th ed. (1868).

admitted at all, its exercise by Meyer is as sagacious and discriminating as his statement of the facts is sufficiently full and his exposition of their bearings is pertinent and terse.

But his most distinctive excellence indisputably lies in the field of exegesis proper. Here from the very outset he strictly defined his province, and through all changes of the man and of the book he faithfully adhered to the standpoint and the aim so clearly marked out. Statements as to the nature, claims, and limits of the exegete's office recur in almost every Preface, varied enough in form, coincident in scope and spirit. The following is perhaps as good and full as any: "The common aim placed before all expositors of the word is just to ascertain its *pure* contents, without addition or subtraction, and with a renouncing of all invention of our own, with *simplicity*, *truth*, and *clearness*, without being prejudiced by, and independent of, dogmatic *a priori* postulates, with *philological precision*, and in strict *objectivity* as *historical fact*. Anything more than this they ought not as expositors to attempt; but in this—and it is much—it is required of them that they be found faithful."[1] He was fond of using italics; in a work which contains much that does not interest all readers, they enable the reader easily to seize, or readily to resume, the main points; and, superfluous as they may be in other forms of literature, I cannot but think their deletion in the posthumous issues of the book a retrograde step. Every word italicised above marks an element of importance in Meyer's definition, and calls up some contrasted method against which he has found it needful to protest. The Prefaces, calm and assured as they are in the maintenance of his own positions, abound in courteous but decided polemics directed against one or other of the manifold misconceptions or erroneous methods which he saw from time to time emerging.

[1] Pref. to 1 Cor. 5th ed. (1869).

His first claim for the interpreter is that of entire freedom to pursue his studies and arrive at his conclusions, undisturbed by influences of outward authority or of inward presupposition. It was only in the free atmosphere of Protestantism, owning the right of private judgment, that the expositor could work unfettered; and, while Meyer granted the excellence of much to be found in the earlier Roman Catholic expositors, and particularly in Estius, he discerned in the later representatives of that Church a disposition to defer to Church-authority that cramped meritorious effort even in such a man as Döllinger. He denounced with warmth the attempts to impose restraints on the freedom of exegesis in the assumed interest of the Lutheran Church or of its Confession. He conceived the standpoint of Philippi or of Hengstenberg open to the charge of *having* before it *sought* and of *finding* what it *had;* and he complained of the exception taken to his own exegesis on the ground of its not being confessional or, as some put it more generally, not in the consciousness of the Church. He affirms that Luther himself would have pronounced such rigid Lutheranism unevangelical and un-Protestant; that the consciousness of the Church ought above all to do homage to the principle of the sole authority of Scripture which it had itself laid down; and that the Church has no interest save that of truth, at once progressive and conservative. He declared himself ever ready to sit at the feet of any one, who should show sufficient grounds for setting him right. "Only no anathema in the field of science; only not the evil suspicion, the bitter condemnation, the rushing to and fro and denouncing with a zeal that lacks intelligence, which one has but too often to encounter, however rudely at variance with the dispositions which the most sacred of occupations should instil!"[1] "The Church should be careful of imposing narrower limits on exegesis

[1] Pref. to Matth. 4th ed. (1858).

than are implied in its nature. It has its own limits in language and history; others it cannot acquiesce in without sacrificing its life. If the exegesis of Calovius could be really brought back in the present time and carried into the future, a Hugo Grotius would still stand by his side in the Biblia illustrata. It is vain and fruitless to assign to this science the function of a horse in a mill. Vain, however, is also the apprehension for the faith of the Church. It is just from this exposition of Scripture—the more thorough and objective its procedure—that the Church-confession has to receive, as experience shows, more real confirmation and justification." [1]

While agreement with the Church-doctrine was neither to be *presupposed* nor *sought*, the general result of research was to confirm in substance the teaching of the Church, as he distinctly states in reference to the Epistle to the Romans. If in his second edition he had recalled his earlier view as to Rom. v. 12 and adopted that of the Church, but in regard to the Ego in Rom. vii., had discarded the Augustinian and Reformed interpretation, it was done in either case from a purely exegetic interest. Experience led him to distrust new exegetical discoveries. "A great many entirely novel expositions of individual passages," he remarks, "make their appearance now-a-days, of which I apprehend that hardly a single one will on trial approve itself correct."

His own standpoint was at the first that of a moderate Rationalist. In his first volume he indicates how entirely different was his point of view from that of Olshausen, and states that he could not accept as his own the super-rational principles of the latter. Reason was not merely the organ for apprehending revelation, but the criterion by which the pure contents had to be separated from the historical form and setting. "The supreme authority to decide upon this

[1] Pref. to Acts, 2nd ed. (1854).

ideal contents can be no other than reason, and a work dealing with this contents will be—no matter whether it bear the name or not—a system of Biblical rationalism, independent of all forms of current philosophy as of the Confessions of Trent, Augsburg and Dort. For such a work the Commentary will supply the materials to be manipulated and sifted." "Will it be too daring," he asks, "if I should set myself to that task after the Commentary is finished?"[1] Very different is his view twenty-five years later. "It is now an admitted fact, and a significant proof of the advances gradually achieved by exegesis, that the pervading supernaturalism clearly stamped on the Gospel of John in all the simplicity of truth cannot be set aside by any artifices of exposition."[2] Philippi had objected that his explanation of Rom. vii. yielded an anthropology of a Rationalist character. He replies, that he is not disturbed by the implied censure. "I have simply to ask whether the explanation is the *right* one. If it is wrong, I shall be the first to give it up on being so convinced. If it is right and its contents consequently *Pauline*, it is as certainly *not* Rationalist, for Paul himself was anything but a Rationalist. In fact it was this great and mighty Paul that enabled me, as well as doubtless many others who had grown up in the atmosphere of Rationalism, to *surmount* it—in my own case many years ago; but at the same time kept me from allowing the scientific exposition of his Epistles to be determined or even partially influenced by any human doctrinal conception, even if it should bear the name of Augustine or of Luther."[3]

But, while he thus strongly took exception to the claim to bias or control exegesis by foregone conclusions of the Church, he repudiated not less emphatically the control of other influences equally ready to assert their power—the *a priori* postulates or assumptions of philosophy. He could

[1] Pref. to Matth. (1832). [2] Pref. to John, 3rd ed. (1858).
[3] Pref. to Rom. 3rd ed. (1859).

not assent to a method of interpretation which adjusted the meaning of the New Testament utterances to meet philosophical requirements, "as if Jesus and Paul had sat at the feet of Kant or Schelling;" "nay, there are not even wanting products of exegesis that make the holy men of God—Hegelians!" On the other hand, he repeatedly deprecates in the strongest terms the introduction of new-fangled exegesis, or of points still *sub judice*, into the pulpit or popular teaching. "It is outrageous conceit and presumption, when upon matters as to which science among scholars has the right and duty of continuous inquiry, many young theologians, who have barely left the lecture-room and have not had time for thorough investigation on all sides, carry to the pulpit controversial views of their own or of others as if these were already made good and certain, and thereby lead astray and confuse the judgment and faith of the Church. The Church has an inalienable right to draw from the believing heart and confessing mouth of its clergyman the old simple and sound doctrine of the Gospel, as it is clearly enough given in Scripture and borne witness to in our Confessions."[1]

Meyer was a disciple in the school of Winer and Fritzsche, to whom he owed mainly his emancipation from the old empiric courses. He conceived that the New Testament was to be interpreted on the same principles, and by the same methods, as other ancient writings; only the special bearing of its contents on the spiritual life of the Church laid on the interpreter a stronger obligation and deeper responsibility. He acted on the belief that the writers had a meaning clear to themselves, and that it was possible to put the same meaning into the words that the writers put. Paul, he tells us, knew how to make his meaning clear, palpable, and apt. In such circumstances the aim of the expositor should be to make *his own* mean-

[1] Pref. to Gal. 3rd ed. (1862).

ing simple and clear. Meyer had little sympathy with the search for recondite meanings in Scripture, with the tendency to find everywhere allegories and types, or with the disposition to indulge the play of fancy in discovering mystic senses, of which the words and the context gave no sign. Nor had he any faith in the success of those who, troubling themselves little about the *letter* of Scripture, hoped by sympathetic instinct to reach the *spirit*. He remarks, that the principles on which Baumgarten—whose love of truth he readily grants—had prepared his exposition of Acts, are diametrically opposed to his own; and adds with a touch of irony, "The new age seems as if it were to be that of the exegesis of the *spirit*, and I must wait quietly to see how it will set in and justify itself. If it does so, works like mine are doomed and belong to the past." He could not tolerate any attempt to deal with language in a double sense, or, while professing to explain it, to use obscure, ambiguous and laboriously involved phraseology, which itself in its turn stood in need of a commentary. In his later editions he was brought into frequent antagonism to Dr. von Hofmann of Erlangen, "an antagonism which he had not sought, but which it was not his duty to evade or conceal;" and, as he encounters the tortuous explanations and hair-splitting subtleties of that too ingenious exegete, he is not very measured in denouncing them. There is little doubt that he has Hofmann in view, when he says: "Often the doubtful commendation of novelty is purchased only by strange strainings of the text and other violent expedients," and protests on his own part that "he has striven after a clear and definite expression, that should have nothing in common with the miserable twilight haze and intentional veiling of meaning, which mark the selection of theological language in the present day." [1]

Meyer insisted that language was subject to its own laws,

[1] Pref. to Gal. 5th ed. (1870).

and sought in these a rational basis for his operations. He did not believe it possible to reach "the ideas and spirit of the original" without the preliminary process of carefully examining "the words and constructions." He investigated the words with the aid of whatever light classical or Hellenistic usage could supply; and he held that the constructions should be explained on strict and uniform principles. The authors of Scripture employed the popular speech in accordance with the habits of their time, but there is no reason to suppose that there was any such laxity or arbitrariness in their employment of it as was alleged by the interpreters of the older school, who did not scruple to solve a difficulty by suggesting that the writers used words somewhat at random, and put one particle or preposition in the place of another. He was often charged with undue precision in this respect, with philological pedantry and exaggerated purism, with a tendency to dwell on grammatical minutiæ. He replies, that in very few cases has he been convinced of the justice of the reproach; that he will not in the least abate his linguistic exactness, and wishes that it were but attainable in a higher degree; that he had been early trained in it and so is bound to it; that he at least cannot reach the facts without the medium of the words; and that for his part he cannot attain to "the brilliant boldness of theological romancing, which in its light and airy fashion gets rid of the precision and consistency of linguistic demands." He asks that Tholuck, against whom the last remark is pointed, would, instead of frequently carping (Gal. v. 15) at his rigid adherence to rule (*stricte Observanz*), either leave it in peace or refute it, if erroneous; and, after acknowledging the value of such differences of mind and of gifts as distinguished Tholuck and Philippi from himself, he adds, "perhaps the Lord has a blessing now and then even for my rigid adherence to rule."[1] He

[1] Pref. to Rom. 3rd ed. (1859).

attributed much that was loose and unsatisfactory in the exposition of the day to the lack of thorough philological culture, and especially of a comprehensive and accurate knowledge of Greek grammar; and, in one of his latest Prefaces he strongly recommends the second edition (1869–72) of the larger Grammar of his friend Kühner—who was often the companion of his walks—as "a glorious monument of erudition and of familiarity with the genius of the language."

But, while faithful to his own banner of grammatico-historical exegesis, and thoroughly independent in the best sense of the term, he was ever open to conviction and ready to accept whatever was serviceable from whatever quarter it might come. He was, as he says, indifferent to the *quis* but not to the *quid*. He owned the need of mutual help, the importance of turning to account the variety of gifts and of concentrating different lights, in an enterprise which might fitly command the service of all. He drew freely from the old and from the new, from the Patristic and mediæval commentators (making frequent extracts especially from Euthymius Zigabenus, in whom with much allegoric and homiletic sand he found not a few grains of gold), from the exegetes of the Reformation-age and the following century ("how much to the point we still find in these old expositors! how much to put later interpreters to shame! not only in such heroes of exegesis as Erasmus and Grotius, but even in men of second rank like Estius!") as well as from the latest disquisitions that came into his hands. He heartily acknowledges and aptly characterises the merits of the fellow-workers with whom he was most fully in sympathy—such as Fritzsche, Lücke, Harless, Osiander, Wieseler; but he is no less ready to do justice to the excellences of others, whose standpoints were more or less divergent from his own—such as Stier, Olshausen, Philippi, or Ewald, Baur, Holsten. Modest and candid on

his own part—never too old to learn, ready to modify or retract his earlier views on sufficient cause shown, and bespeaking gentle and charitable judgment for himself, as keenly alive to the shortcomings of his work and to the disproportion between the willing and the performing—he was tolerant of honest differences of opinion, and only desirous that from such conflict the truth might emerge more pure and clear. "The sharpness of passion should not interpose to banish the charitable belief that an opponent, even when chargeable with error, has been seeking the truth and striving to find it." "It is the love of truth," he says in quaint paradox, "that makes us all err." For some things he confesses that he had a rooted repugnance—for what he terms "theological diplomacy and compromise, the prudent half-and-half attitude of those who would not say Yea or Nay;" for exegetical fiction (*Dichten*) "with its alleged depths and extravagant fancies"; for "subterfuges of obscure words, where clear ideas are wanting"; for "such stuff as Bruno Bauer's, hardly capable, and certainly not worthy, of serious refutation;" for such popularising of questions of theology as was attempted by Strauss in his later work; for anonymous authorship, with which he was reluctant to enter into discussion, because "every one should carry his honest name with him into the arena, if he means to fight;" but in all other cases he is willing to give and take, and, as he had never spared himself when in error, but had frankly confessed it, he invites an unreserved candour and even sharpness of criticism.

The Commentary possesses the special advantage of having been in all its parts subjected to repeated revision by its author; so that its successive editions reflect the growth of his views, and its final shape presents the results of his most mature judgment. In this way he freely omitted or abridged what seemed less important, expanded and added fresh illustration to the old, and introduced what-

ever was needful to keep the book abreast of the current literature. The extent and importance of these changes are obvious on even a cursory comparison of an old edition with a recent one. He was kind enough to send to me the interleaved sheets of the fourth edition of the Commentary on Romans, on which he had inserted the alterations for the fifth. I should think that the changes and additions, inserted in a clear and neat small hand, amount to nearly a fourth of the volume. A specimen of this process of correction may be seen in my General Preface to the English translation of the volume on Romans. Well might he under such circumstances complain, that his views were often quoted from other than the latest editions, and that he had opinions still imputed to him which he had long since abandoned.

The essential and permanent elements of value in the Commentary are, its comprehensiveness of plan, its unity and consistency of treatment based on the uniform application of definite principles, its ample mastery of the exegetical literature and summary exhibition of its results, its impartiality and independence—above all, its firm grasp and persistent application of the right method of interpretation, and its wonderful clearness, on the whole, of thought and expression. Without here defending the absolute validity of all the positions which he lays down, we cannot but acknowledge their high value and the signal service rendered to Biblical science by his having brought them into prominence and having acted on them so freely and fully. It may be that, as some think, he insists too strenuously on the strict application of his canons, as in the case of the telic use of *ἵνα*, or that there is an occasional redundance of references illustrative of the *usus loquendi*, or an unnecessary specification of opinions noticed only to be dismissed; it may be too, that the form of the work has suffered from the very exigencies of its growth, so that the later insertions, called forth by controversy with other

exegetes, especially with Hofmann, are at times awkwardly dovetailed or appended; and it may be that in such controversy his language sometimes waxes warmer than his favourite principle of speaking the truth in love may warrant. But, taken as a whole, it must be held to be—what all competent judges have pronounced it—one of the greatest master-works of exegesis, stamped with a character of its own, and realizing most fully its author's ideal of the combination of qualities needed in an expositor of Scripture—a sound understanding, profound erudition, living Christian interest, genuine and fervent love of truth, precision of thought and clearness in expressing its results.

Of the changed form which has been given to the work in Germany since its author's death—a form, under which it still bears Meyer's name and is invested with all the prestige due to it, but has become more or less remodelled by its recent editors Weiss, Wendt, Schmidt, Heinrici, and others, and to that extent is no longer his—I forbear to speak. I have already elsewhere[1] expressed an opinion as to a procedure, which seems to me alike uncalled for and unbecoming, an indignity to the memory of Meyer, and a source of confusion to the present and future student. The English translation, which was suggested and to a large extent revised and superintended by me with Dr. Meyer's sanction—and which is usually quoted as the work, not of the several translators or of the editors, but of the publishers, Messrs. Clark—has at least the merit of reproducing the book in the last and best form given to it by the author—nothing less and nothing more. It is being reissued, I believe, with some notes, in the United States; but the enterprising publishers there have not yet favoured either Messrs. Clark or myself with any specimen of their work.

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[1] See Pref. to the English translation of the Comm. on Mark, and also of the Comm. on Ephes.