

ARTICLE IV.

THE COMPARATIVE VALUE OF ENGLISH AND GERMAN
BIBLICAL SCIENCE.

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BIBLICAL SCIENCE is one of the legitimate fruits of Protestantism. The necessity of any high development of sacred learning will be practically conceded only where a free Bible is given to the people. Accordingly the world owes to Protestantism not merely a free Bible for all classes, but the cultivation of those means which shall open to any class a profound insight into the meaning of the Scriptures. Withhold the Bible from all but a small privileged order, and you remove, in great measure, the stimulus which shall impel the few to seek acquaintance with the import of the Bible. Why else have the monasteries in which was treasured all the learning of the dark ages, sacred and secular, preserved for us only such scanty and withered fruit? But Protestantism having given the world a Bible is under twofold obligation to make the gift available. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the great interpreter, it must seek to make the Scriptures intelligible to the masses; and, by teaching the true meaning and the right use of its gift, it must guard against perversions and abuses otherwise inevitable.

Then the church of Rome has ever relied less on the living word than on institutions and ordinances, which, apart from the word, are dead. Sacred science knows no more deadly foe than the spirit of Ritualism, under whatever ecclesiastical form it lurks. The Romish church is right in ascribing great efficacy to its forms and sacraments; but as *merc* forms, forsaken by the indwelling Spirit working in and with the word, they are efficacious only of evil. If this church has at any time put forth an effort to make the Scriptures more intelligible, it has been under the constraint of external pressure. In self-defence, or to maintain her self-respect and justify herself before an enlightened age, she must needs seem zealous for the promotion of an intelligent faith and a consecrated learning. But enthusiasm and proficiency in Biblical studies have always been an occasion of suspicion and jealousy at the Vatican.

Yet, for the services that Catholicism has reluctantly found herself compelled to render to Biblical learning, we tender grateful acknowledgment. We would not depreciate by a single iota the true merits of Valla and Erasmus, Simon and Calmet, Houbigant and De Rossi, Hug, Jahn and Van Ess. But if men like Mai and Mezzofanti had been Protestants, would not their prodigious learning have brought the cause of Christ more profit? And for our teachers in Biblical science must we not look, not merely of choice but of necessity, mainly to Protestant lands, and to Germany and England as chief seats of Protestant learning? The German and English language and literature were earliest consecrated by the Reformation, and the genius of Protestantism has ever found them most congenial.

It is proposed to inquire into *the comparative value of English and German Biblical science*. In defining our point of view we would guard against a twofold prejudice. The epithet "German," in any association with religion and theology, is received, by some good men among us, with the same shrug of the shoulders, which, it may be supposed, one might detect in a pious Jew when he heard the name of Nazareth. Others, as well meaning, deeply impressed by the superiority of German learning, and awed by the confidence with which Germans assume that "wisdom shall die with them," or, it may be, enamored of German liberality, quote German authorities as though that were decisive of all vexed questions. We need not profess to shun both these extremes, of superstitious antipathy and servile deference. We have to add, by way of explanation, only this, that we restrict the terms "Biblical science" to that department of theology whose province is to define and interpret God's written revelation.

It is worthy of remark, that the development of Biblical science has been for the last hundred years much more rapid in Germany than in England. Time was when Walton and Lightfoot and Mill and Usher and Selden were recognized authorities in their departments. But since their period few English names are to be found that are cited as authorities on the continent of Europe. The fact that there is no longer, as there then was, a common language for learned men, will in part account for the fact that the attention of continental scholars is so little called to the real merits of English Biblical literature. But must we not allow at least that we are no longer masters in this department of litera-

ture? Does not the prevailing style of our recent commentaries, for example, prove that Henry and Doddridge and Clarke and Owen still exhibit the fairest type of English exegesis? Whatever we have gained upon them, has been secured rather by appropriating and assimilating and correcting the results of German investigation than by original research. The impulse to the more important recent efforts of English Biblical scholars, has too manifestly come from Germany, to allow any denial that we have forgotten our former independence. Semler and Ernesti gave an impulse to Biblical studies in Germany to which no equivalent has been found in England.

It should further be observed, that Biblical criticism has been prosecuted most scientifically in Germany. True science loves order and method. Nowhere have the various departments of sacred science been so sharply defined, nowhere the prerogatives of each guarded with such jealous care as in Germany. The enthusiasm with which the general relations and proportions of science have been there discussed, has extended itself to the department of theology. We know of no good English work on what is called the *methodology* of the theological sciences, while in Germany this has become a distinct subject for the lecture-room, and a distinct department in literature. Practically we may be in the main following a just method, but this unconscious, unreasoning correctness should never claim the title of scientific accuracy.

The first problem to be solved by Biblical science respects the composition and history of the sacred canon. What are the constituent parts of the Bible, and how do these several parts authenticate their claim? What has been their history, severally and collectively? Then, what is the text of the Scriptures, and what is its import? What was the original record, what was its primitive intent, and what is its significance to us? The Romish church may seek an answer first and only through the answer to this other question, What has been the teaching of the church on these points? The church is thus exalted to sit in judgment on the word, rather than the word to be the judge of the church. But, as true Protestants, we protest against being bound by ecclesiastical tradition or any *textus receptus*. It may interest us, as a subject for historical inquiry, to learn the opinion of the church on these points. The concurrent opinion of great and good men may furnish us data or a valuable test for our own judgments.

And we may admit that a harmonious tradition establishes a presumption not easily overthrown, but we acknowledge no authority in human tradition. And the dictation of Protestant dogmatism is as irksome to us, and as baneful to true science, as any Romish assumption. We recognize as our competent teacher only the Holy Spirit, and claim to be, in our immediate responsibility to God, sole judges of the truth. We must think that Germany has been truer to this fundamental principle of Protestantism than England. Freedom and liberality of Christian science have been sadly cramped by the Romish affinities of the Anglican church. And English Calvinists have been slow to emulate Calvin in that free application of historical criticism to the Scriptures for which he was eminent above all the other reformers. That this should be the state of things in a church never more than half reformed, we can well understand; but that Calvinists should be so jealous of dissent from tradition admits of no justification. We apprehend that an examination of the literature of the Reformed and Lutheran churches on the continent, would show that the Lutherans, in respect to independence of religious inquiry, as in so many other particulars, are far more in sympathy with Romanism. In proportion to confidence in, and dependence on tradition, the necessity for and vigor of original research are diminished. The less intervention there is from whatever quarter between us, and the pure light of truth and the immediate teaching of the Holy Spirit, the clearer will be our discernment of the real form and substance of revelation. And we would protest against every view of the authority of the Scriptures, which would nullify that authority in case doubt be thrown on the correctness of the decisions of tradition. We refer mainly to discussions of the integrity, authorship, etc. of the sacred books. We may not be willing to go so far as Schleiermacher, and say "The Protestant church must claim to be still continually engaged in the more exact determination of the canon, and this is the highest problem for exegetical theology in the higher criticism." But we may never frown upon free investigation in this direction, unless we are willing to give ourselves up to be blinded and bound by tradition. The fact that Germany has exhibited lamentable instances of the abuse of this freedom, may admonish us to be cautious and circumspect. But it cannot forbid us the use of those means whose legitimate tendency is to define more clearly both the substance, and the import of the Scriptures.

Biblical science enters next upon the determination of the form of the sacred text. The "textus receptus" must furnish a basis for our investigations. But it may no more bind us than the decisions of tradition concerning the canon may in their sphere. In the prosecution of this investigation there are requisite the patience, and diligence, and enthusiasm in research for which German scholars are proverbial. This department of learned labor has been almost by common consent assigned to the Germans. They have, since the revival of classical studies among them, furnished the world with the texts of Greek and Roman authors. And in the department of oriental literature they must bring out of the undisturbed archives of English and continental libraries their manuscript treasures. The determination of the text of the original Scriptures demands the same qualifications, with the addition of a profounder reverence. Some critics, forgetting the solemnity of their work, have exhibited a disposition to play with the sacred text. This levity and licentiousness of criticism we would ever and only rebuke. A critic may easily shape a text so that everything difficult or obnoxious shall be removed, and the record shall no longer tell us what the writer said, but what the critic would have said in his circumstances. But one jealous both for the honor of God's word and the prerogatives of Christian science, will ask only, What was the original form of the revealed word? However we might wish to have the record read, research must tell us how it probably did read. There may be such a conflict of evidences that we can only approximate to a sure result. But this probable evidence is all that the case admits, and there is only the more need of impartiality and discrimination. No trivial reason shall lead us to alter the record, yet no prepossession shall make us obstinately tenacious of the received text. Regard for sound presumptions and the "analogy of faith," must keep in check irreverent criticism. It were a grave misdemeanor to tamper with the text of Greek and Roman classics; that misdemeanor becomes a crime of darkest hue, when the word of God is thus trifled with. Moral qualifications being supposed equal, we would not demur to that common consent which concedes to the Germans preëminent natural qualifications for this department of Scriptural criticism. And the fact that we have been content so long to rely on German texts, proves one of two things,—that we are not competent to criticise the fidelity of

their work, or that they have in the main been true to its responsibilities.

We cannot wonder that our Christian public has been disposed to regard with some suspicion German inquiries into the composition of the canon and the text of the Scriptures. The decision of some Tübingen critics, that only five books of the New Testament (Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Galatians and the Apocalypse) are genuine, is rather startling. But these extravagances on the part of men who have little reverence for anything but their own opinion, ought not to repel us from prosecuting these departments of study. The origin and development of Christianity are historical phenomena, on which science must pass judgment as on the other phenomena of history. And those writings which profess to be the original and authentic records of the early Christian church are, as historical documents, to be subjected to the tests ordinarily employed. We believe that God has declared their divinity by evidences satisfying to every willing heart. Yet, when men have attempted to exhibit and define these evidences, the best intention has not ensured completeness and proportion in their representation. To unfold the system of these evidences is the work of Christian science. And though it may for the time appear that the enemies of revelation are quite as scientific and more adroit than its friends, though it must be conceded that the truth has suffered quite as much from false methods of defence adopted by its friends as from any direct attack,— we are only to discipline ourselves the more diligently, that there may be a more perfect correspondence between the convincing power of these evidences over our own minds, and the power of our exhibition of them. It must be admitted that, in the sphere of Christian science, our opponents, have an advantage over us, in proportion as it is easier to object and to destroy than to convince and to establish. And in attempting to determine the text of the Bible, what advantage in means have we over those who have no sympathy with the truth? And shall we be so unreasonable as to frown on all emendations of the text, as though the “textus receptus” were possessed of higher authority than any other revision? The wildness of some German speculations can be proved extravagant only by comparison with the results of true and perfect science, not by mere negations. The so-called “negative” critics must be met by a sound positive criticism, not by denying the propriety of all criti-

cism, and acquiescing in traditions unsupported, it may be, by a single evidence.

It were unreasonable to expect that a just positive criticism should be already as fully developed among us as in Germany, where evangelical theologians have so long contended with the destructive critics. Unless we judiciously avail ourselves of their experience, we shall need to learn the same lessons by passing through the same conflicts, perhaps in an aggravated form. That the Germans are in advance of us in these departments of Biblical science is as certain as that in other respects they may well learn of us. And unless we refuse to recognize the progress that Christian science has made in this direction, particularly within the last century, we must for the present submit ourselves to the guidance of the Germans, however cautiously we may choose to follow them.

Having determined the outline, and, so far as may be, the substance of the sacred text, we are next to seek its meaning. The universal laws of language guide our search. Science brings to our aid its learned apparatus. In proportion as the language is remote in its affinity to our own, claiming kindred with the conceptions of a remote age, and a people isolated among the nations of the earth, the more laborious and discriminating must sacred philology be. On the other hand, no literature stands related at different points to so many ages and nations. None demands, consequently, in the interpreter so varied or extensive erudition. No nation is so competent to guide us in these linguistic researches as the German. Among them the philosophy of language has been subjected to more rigid and protracted investigation than elsewhere. They have discussed more thoroughly than others the relations and classification of languages. Most that we know of comparative philology has been taught us by the Germans. Living and dead languages are alike living to them, if we may judge from the enthusiasm inspired in them by philology. It is in great measure to this enthusiasm that they owe their eminent success as philologists. They know no "dry questions" in philology; no relations of language are so remote or complicated, no investigation so minute or arduous as to repel or weary them; they luxuriate in the intricacies of linguistic research. And underlying this enthusiasm is an unequalled tact or aptness in entering into the spirit of a language and literature, and appropriating its peculiarities.

With their mental character and habits, and in their circumstances, these are their "practical" subjects, about which gathers all the exciting power of a practical interest. The same ardor characterizes all their studies in Biblical philology. But the very pride of learning begets a wantonness that often ensnares. There is an Epicurean science that is content only with the new and rare and elaborate. And the Germans are peculiarly susceptible to this seduction. In attempting to avail ourselves of their labors, we are often reminded that the critic brings to his work too much learning. It comes between him and his text. The simplicity and purity of his perception of truth are marred. His object being twofold, display of himself and discovery of the truth, he often fails of the latter. Ready as we may be to admit the superior erudition of the Germans, we may not follow them heedlessly, nor accept uninspected the munificent gifts of their philology. The very extent and profoundness of their learning often enable them to bring forward an imposing array of authorities to support what our Christian consciousness tells us must be a false opinion. Says one of them: "The most eminent Biblical philologist is for all that far from being a Christian theologian, if, with all his learning, insight into the peculiarities of Christianity is wanting to him."

The simple grammatical signification of a text is modified by its historical connections. Language, if it be the world's currency, has not for its coinage an absolutely fixed value. Our present definition of a word does not tell the whole truth, nothing more, nothing less, concerning its import at all times in all connections. Science studies, therefore, the varying phases of language. The past is made to react its life before us. To appreciate the changes produced in language by the progress of national development and decay, one must be master of history as well as of philology. And to deny that such changes have been wrought, merely because we cannot see them, is neither to the credit of one's manliness and honesty, nor for the interests of science and truth. And yet this is the only way in which some men, of no pretension as philologists, are disposed to meet those German critics, who, on the ground of peculiarities in style and idiom, have assigned to the composition of some books of the Bible a different time or place from that generally received. Whether these critics have judged rightly or not, this is not the method to decide. It should be remembered that the development of

Hebrew literature covers the changes of more than ten centuries. And the New Testament literature, though in its origin comprised within a briefer period, occupies a larger scene of action, and one in which different forms of civilization were in contact and in conflict. We are not to expect, therefore, that Moses and Malachi, David and Daniel, Peter and Paul will speak the same dialect. And though by a standing miracle uniformity of style might be secured, yet until we can see stronger reasons for the interposition necessary, we are not at liberty to assume it. Thorough mastery of the language is no doubt necessary to enable one to distinguish peculiarities of the individual from those of the age. But we may not deny the possibility of gaining sufficient familiarity with the language to make this discrimination easy. And if for this, among other reasons, one should declare himself convinced, e. g. that the Pentateuch cannot be all from one hand, or the product of one age, you can reasonably expect to satisfy him only by accounting in some other way for alleged peculiarities — not by summarily crediting all to his imagination. Before we reject thus absolutely the judgments of competent scholars, we may well acknowledge, most of us, our want of qualification to form an opinion at all on the philological question. Then, if we choose, we may suggest that great caution is necessary, that one may rely too exclusively on this one method of proof, and such other considerations as may commend themselves to our sober sense. But to deny all the progress secured in Christian philology during the last two or three centuries, and to assume that Luther or Calvin or King James's translators were infallible in their critical judgments, is a bold, if not a scholarly, mode of reasoning with a candid and honorable opponent.

We would hold converse with Moses, and David, and Isaiah, and Paul, and John, as with contemporaries. We, therefore, inquire into the circumstances under which each book was written, that we may catch the play of expression upon the face of the author. We would arrest the fugitive shades of thought which sensitively shun every eye but that of a friend. This delicate work demands peculiar natural sympathy or acquired facility. Some critics possess in a remarkable degree this sympathy with a particular author. Their mental constitution, their temperament, or the discipline of their experience may have qualified them to appreciate this author as no one else could. We

know that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." And yet we may ask: "Why did the Holy Ghost move them to speak when, where, to whom, and as they did?" These questions will ordinarily be answered to our satisfaction, if we inquire into the character of the author, the character and peculiar circumstances of those addressed. Then one in sympathy with the writer will see the significance of a thousand turns of expression and shades of thought to which an ordinary critic is quite indifferent. Is it not for this reason that we find so much satisfaction in Calvin's comments on Paul's Epistles, and Tholuck's on John's Gospel? The more profound and comprehensive this Christian experience of the critic, the more readily will he throw himself into the position now of the writer, again of those addressed. And yet do we not feel that particular men are made to interpret to us certain books?

But this natural facility may not dispense with the aid of cultivation. And the lack of it may be in part compensated by diligent discipline. To this end we would often revisit and sojourn amid the scenes with which we would become familiar. Christian archaeology must unlock to us its treasure-houses. Knowledge of national and personal history must supply the place of intimacy of intercourse. The power of appreciation which we thus acquire is, it is true, far inferior to the sympathy of constant companions and bosom friends. Yet it is not for that reason of no value. It does promote, if not ensure, oneness of interest. One's words as well as his deeds are correctly apprehended only in their connection with time, place and circumstances. These supply the inflection and emphasis which make the words live again. If acquaintance with the incidentals of a discourse, these external scenes and influences, will not make us one with the speaker, it will do far more to make us one with the hearers. If we cannot, through familiarity with these occasions of discourse, know what a writer would say, we may at least know better how his readers would understand him. We do thus become interpreters of their thought if not of his. It is said by travellers, that one looking from Areopagus even on ruined Athens, or from the Mount of Olives on fallen Jerusalem, appreciates, as he could nowhere else, the words uttered there. And the Germans have always been eminent for this power to reproduce those external relations which existed only once, and then determined the whole tone of the discourse. This is one

of their most eminent qualifications as critics, either of classical or sacred authors. This may in part account for the fact, which might otherwise surprise us, that our own Shakspeare and the Italian Dante have found nowhere more appreciating criticism than in Germany. English scholars have rarely estimated so justly the individuality of the sacred writings. They seldom show us, as the Germans do, that this thought could be so expressed only by John, that only by Paul. The English critic finds no difficulty in ascribing to David all the Psalms which bear his superscription; the German has so definite an idea of David, that he finds it easier to assign the superscription to a later age, than to believe that David could have written all the Psalms ascribed to him. The German may sometimes err, and so may we. True, this facility of the Germans needs only to forget the restraints of reverence and authority to run into gross abuses. They sometimes magnify and so distort individuality. This is strikingly manifest in some of the speculations of Baur and others, regarding the different types of doctrine in the early church. The characters of Peter, John and Paul, for example, are so different, that, unless the natural working of their minds was overborne by supernatural influences, they could neither see nor express a given truth or doctrine in precisely the same way. But these Germans say, that the peculiarities are so essential, that at least one or two centuries must have elapsed before Christian consciousness in the church could have passed through these various stages of development. They accordingly extend the time of the composition of the New Testament canon over two centuries, more or less, and admit, in all the New Testament, the genuineness of only a portion of Paul's epistles. Some may ascribe to this same disposition the peculiar readiness of some Germans to attack the integrity of certain books of the Old Testament. And yet, for the sake of avoiding the confusion introduced by these imaginary diversities, we would not recommend shutting the eyes to all real and essential differences. That would be dishonoring the Bible as well as our own judgment and common sense. Not only are the Germans sometimes not content with appreciating the demands of time, and occasion, and individual character; they often forget the unity of the Bible. They treat it as a collection of books rather than as one book, and seek to make manifest their diversity rather than their unity. They sever the bond which makes all one. In the process they

sacrifice the vitality of the Scriptures. They bid "the eye say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; and again, the hand unto the feet, I have no need of you."

Grammatical signification, as modified by historical connections, is further defined and restricted by the peculiar nature of the sacred text and the "analogy of faith." Up to this point in our investigation, the peculiar nature of the Scriptures, as differing from every other subject of criticism, has exerted only a restraining influence. Now we come to consider not merely the form but the substance of the inspired text. Penetrating beneath that which is common to the Bible with merely human productions, its human element, we approach the confines of revelation. We have already insisted repeatedly on the necessity of reverence in the critic, as he discusses even the most superficial questions involved in his work. And we have had occasion to modify our commendation of the eminent qualifications of the Germans, as philological and historical critics, by calling attention to their proneness to forget the restraints imposed on them by the peculiar nature of their work. Nor would we imply that the sacred writers performed part of their work merely as men, at a certain point passing into a new sphere of thought and action. In all their work they spake as "holy men of God moved by the Holy Ghost." They were still men, and there was a human element in their action, which our criticism must recognize. The processes of our investigation must be in the main the same as though they laid claim to no inspiration. Otherwise, the Bible might as well remain in the dead languages, provoking no earnest inquiry, only to rebuke us in every stage of our investigation.

English Biblical scholars have not professed to disregard this human element; yet practically they have often refused to apply the same principles of investigation as in other similar cases. They have criticized the Bible as though it were of no account who wrote it, or where, or at what age of the world, or for what primary purpose it was written. Consequently they have often mistaken the true sense of the Scriptures. This has been a consequence of the form in which they held the doctrine of inspiration. The individuality of the inspired writers is often virtually destroyed by theories which intend no such result. Hence one of the best tests of the theory may always be found in its application in interpretation. As a single illustration, notice the manner in

which different critics discuss apparent discrepancies in Biblical narratives. Some weary themselves and you by their painful efforts to force into manifest consistency passages apparently irreconcilable. Their artifices disgust men who are not prepared beforehand to sympathize with such a procedure. The implication is, that an apparent discrepancy weakens, if not destroys, the force of all the other combined evidences of the Divine origin of the Scriptures. The work of Biblical criticism is degraded, if the main effort of commentators is to be spent upon this class of details, rather than in bringing out the great truths of revelation. It is said, and with apparent reason, by evangelical scholars in Germany, that a prime cause of the rationalistic movement of the last century, was the rigid, formal orthodoxy of the preceding age. Men could not believe that this was the true dignity of Christian science, and in the reaction went to the extreme of liberality in interpretation, and consequently in every other department of theology. It would be easy to point out, in Germany as well as in England, instances in which the importance of recognizing the human element in Biblical criticism has been undervalued. But the tendency has predominated rather in England than in Germany. We have not yet experienced, in its full extent, the rationalistic reaction which will in all probability be needed to bring us nearer the golden mean.

But the value of the human element may be over estimated. The sacred writers are men, but they are inspired men. The English critic is apt to forget that they were men; the German that they were inspired. We speak only of the tendency characterizing the Biblical critics of each nation. It will be said that, if we depart from the extreme of strictness, we know not where to stop. Very true; especially in the case of one who has been accustomed to rely implicitly on authority and prescription rather than on a faith disciplined by the Holy Spirit. Those who are deterred from any movement in the right direction by "not knowing where to stop," will find themselves safest in the Romish church, where every item of belief and every required duty is appropriately labelled, for the benefit of those weak in the faith. It is easier to put faith in the church and its confessions and formulas, than it is to discern and follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. There is a class of Protestants in Germany, very decidedly Romish in their sympathies, whose chief reliance, when all argument fails them, is, that a given

interpretation or explanation has been that of the church. Hengstenberg may be taken as their best known representative. But this is to us a very unsatisfactory mode of reasoning, wherever we may find it. We like better Luther's sentiment: "What Christ does not teach is not apostolical, although Peter and Paul may teach it; again, what Christ teaches is apostolical, although Judas, Annas, Pilate and Herod should do the same."

We have spoken of the analogy of faith as modifying our "grammatico-historical" interpretations. This idea is briefly expressed in the motto: "*Scriptura sua interpres.*" Each part of the Bible throws light on the interpretation of every other part. But by the "analogy of faith," the German critic too often means merely correspondence with established notions in philosophy; the English, conformity to some favorite creed or dogmatic system. In other words, the German too often finds the norm with which he will compare, and by which he will modify the simple, obvious sense, in some philosophical system; the English scholar, in his system of speculative theology. Kant's pupils, Schleiermacher's, Hegel's, can be easily recognized from their interpretation of passages at first view beyond the reach of their peculiar theories. And how many of our commentaries seem to have been written for the purpose of supporting peculiar theological opinions? "*Ne inferas sensum sed eferas,*" is a maxim that should rebuke both these tendencies. Every mind, mature enough to pursue to any extent the work of an interpreter, will of course bring to that work philosophical and theological opinions already considerably matured. It is more essential that our philosophical opinions be somewhat fully developed, for they are in a scientific view more fundamental. Yet one may err by bending everything to a favorite philosophy. This has less of the air of religious reverence about it, than to thrust constantly upon our notice theological opinions; yet it involves perhaps quite as much of the reality. The philosopher may be as devout in investigating and applying the laws of his science, which presents God's truth as revealed in the laws of mind, as the theologian. Indeed, the more constantly and needlessly the interpreter exposes the peculiarities of his speculative belief, the more we distrust his sincerity and impartiality as an interpreter. This method inverts the true relative position of exegesis and dogmatic theology. From the half interpreted Scriptures the analogy of faith is deduced, and is then applied in all further exege-

tical labors. The chief object of an interpreter thus disciplined, will be, by the exercise of his ingenuity, to find in the Bible the greatest possible support for a system of belief stereotyped before he knew much of the real import of the Bible. In this way, an endless variety of systems have been imposed upon the Bible, with very little genuine exposition on the part of their advocates. And this is the chief reason for the multiplication of sects, all professing to trace their origin to the word of God. And we do not see how the evil will be stayed until men love the truth with enough singleness of heart to bring church confessions and creeds into due subordination to Biblical science. Dr. Chalmers's strong sense and love of truth are indicated in this remark: "It is putting catechisms and confessions out of their place to look on them as magazines of truth. There's some of your stout orthodox folk just over ready to stretch the Bible to square with their catechism; all very well, all very needful as a landmark, but what I say is, do not let that wretched, mutilated thing be thrown between me and the Bible."

There are German as well as English critics who have fallen into this error. But it is much more common in Germany than in England and this country to find commentators who do not consider their peculiarities of theological opinion as the great truths of the universe. And the facility with which many Germans pass from one school of philosophy to another, shows us how superficial their speculations are. On their theories they can easily create a universe, and as easily destroy it. Opinions so lightly held cannot exert the deep, all-controlling influence exercised by opinions held as tenaciously as ours usually are. It is much more frequently necessary there than here to procure the different editions of an author's works, in order to keep pace with his changing opinions. The analogy of many a German's faith would be inconstancy itself; or, if it be fixed, it is only in its negative character. The Holy Spirit only can teach the true analogy of faith; and while we would not insist that all shall exhibit one type of piety, we cannot be blind to the fact that many German critics lay no claim to Christian faith.

In exhibiting the results of their investigations, English Biblical scholars have ordinarily manifested profounder reverence for the word of God. We have already had occasion to notice the same fact, as manifested in the course of their inquiry. Few German works in Biblical science have been written on bended

knees. The processes of investigation have not been conducted with so constant a sense of the sacredness of the work, and the manner in which the critic communicates his opinions is too seldom different from what it would be in other departments of science. A chief reason for this has been, that the office of critic and commentator on the Scriptures stands in relations quite different from those which it sustains in England and here. In Germany, theology is to the great majority even of scholars, nothing more than one of the departments of science, inviting all whom natural tastes, education, or any other circumstance may incline to devote themselves to it. This is a consequence partly of political relations, partly of the connection between Church and State, and partly of the decline of practical piety during the last century. Many men are thus led to devote themselves to theology as a science, who have no sympathy with its themes. The number of those who are thus professionally interested in theological studies thus comes to be very considerable. Many men, who, among us, would find a more congenial sphere of action at the bar, in politics, or in some form of practical enterprise, are in Germany forced into a literary career, and, unfortunately for theology, too often into the department of Biblical criticism. Such men may be enthusiastic and successful, so far as their work is purely scientific, but it is often painfully evident that their interest is only intellectual. Then the duties of the pastoral office do not prevent the pastor's devoting much time to literary labors. Indeed, in some instances, much more time is given to the public than to the pastor's peculiar charge. A large proportion of the theological literature of Germany owes its origin to the learning and literary zeal of the clergy. This were well enough, if it did not imply neglect of pastoral duty, and consequently lack of the practical experience which ought to attach a peculiar value to the literary labors of a faithful ministry. It is true of all departments of theology, and especially of Biblical criticism, that they are not successfully cultivated scientifically, when they are cultivated only as abstract sciences. A learned and earnest ministry may make contributions to theological literature such as can come from no other source, but all this advantage is sacrificed where the ministry is only a learned profession, and the pastoral office a sinecure.

In England speculation has been far more uniformly tempered by familiarity with the workings of Divine truth. Profound per-

sonal experience has rebuked all mere theorizing. Then study has sought for a word to be preached, fit to be preached, and effective when preached. Yet we can claim this only so far as the word of God rather than ordinances has been relied on as chiefly instrumental in regeneration. Wherever, and in proportion as the preaching of the word becomes a secondary thing, Biblical criticism loses not only its chief stimulus, but the most valuable test of its soundness. There is not only less occasion to engage earnestly in Biblical studies, but also less opportunity to prove the correctness of our understanding of the word. The word is "quick and powerful," but so soon as we put ourselves in a position where its efficient working becomes to us a thing of no account, we can no longer be sure that we have the true key to its meaning. By far the greater and more valuable part of our theological literature has come from men who have been for a longer or shorter time faithful and evangelical preachers. We have no class of men who are theologians or Biblical critics only by profession. That theological literature which has grown up out of the pale of church establishments, is for these reasons most apt to be vigorous and healthful.

Then in England strong practical sense has prescribed objects and modes and limits to research. Study has a more definite, practical aim. There are not so many books written merely for the sake of writing. One is astonished to see what an amount of literature appears in Germany only to be forgotten; enough everywhere, but in the department of which we are speaking, relatively far more there than here. This might be expected in view of the facts already noticed. And in every department of German theological literature it is surprising to see how much learning is lavished upon inquiries that could hardly have occupied us except in our reveries. Elaborate inquiries are instituted into what are to us most unpractical or indifferent subjects. And men grown bold in their inquisitiveness, ask questions to which no man could, without presumption, expect an answer. And a speculative temper is indulged with complacency and in security, for no practical experience will ever be likely to bear one way or another upon the point at issue. Such intellectual exercises may be interesting and exciting when there is no more earnest work to engage attention, but we do not like to spend our enthusiasm to so little profit. Biblical criticism is less exposed to the encroachments of this mere speculation than some

other departments of theology; yet, where the tendency is so strong as in Germany, even this will not escape.

One of the common tests of the value of a commentary among us has usually been its practicalness, and this has been judged of, perhaps, too exclusively by its adaptation to excite pious feeling. The German distinguishes much more strictly between commentaries for scholars and familiar practical expositions. A commentary which is to any considerable extent occupied with the discussion of critical, historical and doctrinal questions, must appeal mainly to the intellect. Then if truth be sought and reached, the heart will receive its healthful stimulus. But the "practical reflections" the German reserves for a distinct class of works. The methods of investigation and the style are so distinct in the two cases, as to forbid their combination in one work, on any scientific principles. Thus De Wette, in his commentary on the Psalms, confines himself to the simple exposition of the text; while in another work "*Ueber die erbauliche Erklärung der Psalmen*," he gives his views upon the use to be made of the Psalms for the edification of Christians. These practical expositions have formerly occupied our scholars much more than the German, and in this department of exegetical literature we are comparatively much richer than they. Every commentary should commend itself to a Christian's conscience and enlightened heart, but whether it should make its appeal primarily to pious feeling is quite another question.

German Biblical science is by far the more stimulating and suggestive. Bengel, De Wette and Tholuck may be cited as a few among many possible illustrations. No one can read a paragraph in the works of either of these writers without finding food for thought. Bengel's brief notes in the "*Gnomon*" suggest more new and rich and practical trains of thought than whole pages in many commentaries. Probably De Wette is intellectually more exciting, for besides the freshness and vigor with which he expresses his own opinions, he opens to view the whole history of interpretation. Tholuck's genius and fervid piety impart a glow to his expositions such as we should not know where to seek besides. These are not men who write merely to astonish us by their learning, nor do they withhold the exhibition of it when a difficult point demands elaborate discussion. The mental constitution of the German and his habits of study open to him in great richness and variety new views of

truth. Then "new" and "heretical" are not to him synonymous terms. No morbid public sentiment frowns upon the publication of what is new and original in any department of theology. He regards church confessions and organizations as still open to improvement, and the interpretations of the Fathers and Reformers, excellent as they may be, as less than inspired. He never has discovered the warrant by which the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were authorized to fix the opinion of the church for all coming time. One may then be earnestly and conscientiously seeking the truth, who is unable to find satisfaction in anything that men have hitherto accomplished in the various departments of theology. There is, undoubtedly, a danger in this independence. One ambitious to attract attention in a field in which so many able and learned men are laboring, can do it much more easily by some novel and startling pretention, than by unusual breadth and profoundness of attainment in a legitimate direction. And, where the number of those devoting themselves solely to literary pursuits is so large, there will naturally be a profusion of these extravagances. A thousand eyes will watch the course of a comet, when the clear shining of an unpretending fixed star attracts but few. It is an evil that in Germany so much unconsecrated genius and learning are forced into the department of theology. Were it not well for our Biblical science, if more of the consecrated minds and hearts of England and America had equal opportunity to expatiate in the broad fields of sacred learning? It is an evil anywhere that the talent of a land be shut up to science and speculation. But among us a thousand correctives to extravagance exist, that can be found nowhere else. With a more extensive discipline, and ampler materials at command, might not sterling English sense and our profounder religious experience render unequalled service to sacred science? Most of our scholars are under the constant restraint of arduous official duties, and, therefore, in mere learning will not soon be able to vie with the scholars of Germany. But in adapting the results of learning to our necessities, the Germans can never meet our requirements. We must maintain an independent scholarship, while yet, in many departments, we must, for a long time to come, submit ourselves to the instruction of the Germans. Anglo Saxon mind was not made for dependence in any department, and we find many encouraging evidences in the present, that American and English Biblical

scholars are disposed to vindicate for themselves an independent position. Alford and Tregelles are prosecuting with independence and vigor the work of textual criticism; Davidson is laying us under great obligation by his labors in the department of historical criticism (the Germans say without always acknowledging fully his indebtedness to them). And our own Robinson is quoted as authority by the Germans in the department of Scriptural geography, probably more than any other living English author in any department.

It will be seen, that, in our estimate of the comparative value of German and English Biblical science, we cannot assign a decided superiority to either. Each must be supplemented by the other. As an illustration of the rare blending of the distinctive excellences of the two, we may perhaps be allowed to point to the late Prof. Edwards. Those of us who had opportunity to observe his methods of study and instruction, must have admired the German patience and enthusiasm and discrimination with which he labored for large and accurate attainments, his German liberality and independence of opinion and quickness of insight into sacred truth, the sterling English sense which presided over all his investigations, and the reverence which he always manifested toward the word of God. His example, and that of his predecessor and colleague, Prof. Stuart, might teach some among us that German Biblical studies are not necessarily and only pernicious in their influence. Prof. Tholuck cites Stuart's Commentary on the Hebrews as among rationalistic expositions of that Epistle. We would quite as soon call Tholuck a rationalist, were it not so unjust to attach the epithet in any obnoxious sense to either. Such men, be they German or English, we are proud to acknowledge as teachers, and we can only wish that there were more to emulate their labors in Biblical criticism.