

as thus to be the pioneer of evangelization in two churches so completely divided from each other as the early Syrian and the early German churches? The more we learn about this early Harmony of the Gospels the more romantic does its history appear.

We must reserve for another article a discussion of the further critical investigations which Dr. Zahn bases upon these facts; but this story, which occupies the first portion of his work, appeared sufficiently interesting to be presented to the reader by itself.

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ON THE CLEARING OF COMMENTARIES.

THIS Age, however numerous may be its other drawbacks and shortcomings, has certainly been signalized by marked progress in the science of Exegesis. It would be quite possible, for any one who was gifted with the requisite knowledge, to draw up a list of conclusions which must now be regarded as finally established. Some writers of course, whose convictions were stereotyped fifty years ago, would be still found to maintain exegetical opinions which have long been consigned to oblivion by advancing knowledge. Dead theories have a knack of going on fighting long after they are dead, like the poor warrior in Ariosto,—

“ Il pover uom che non sen era accorto,
Andava combattendo, ed era morto.”

But the polemics which emanate from the shadow-land of exploded inferences may be passed over in silence; and the anathemas of ghost-like combatants who still love to regard ruins as their strongest fortresses have ceased to awake even an echo of the thunder. Any scholar who would undertake the task of provisionally recording what may now be fairly regarded as ascertained facts would

be rendering a very great service to the cause of Biblical criticism. I cannot myself pretend to furnish such a list of ascertained results; but—merely to allude to one or two general points—we may surely set down among the certainties of modern criticism of the Old Testament, that the Pentateuch in its present form could not have come exclusively from the hands of Moses; that many of the achievements and periods of the Judges were synchronous, not consecutive; that in places where there is an apparent discrepancy between the Books of Kings and Chronicles the latter books, written with an obvious purpose, are of later origin and inferior authority;¹ that the Book of Ecclesiastes was not written by Solomon; that there are few of the Psalms and Prophecies which had not a primary as well as an ultimate significance; that there must be grave hesitations about the authorship and date of the Book of Daniel; that the headings of King James's translators are in multitudes of instances founded upon the most untenable assumptions; that the conceptions of morality among the Jews shew an increasing enlightenment as time goes on; that God revealed Himself "fragmentarily" as well as "multifariously" in the "times of ignorance"; that the Bible was not intended to anticipate, and that it does not in any single instance anticipate, the discoveries of modern science; that large allowance must be made for the characteristic metaphors of an Eastern style, and in general for the laws which govern Semitic idiom; that every act recorded in the earlier stages of Jewish history must be considered with immediate reference to the state of feeling and the degree of civilization prevalent in those ages, and not be made to square with the Christian ideal by the invention of unrecorded miracles. Broad as are these principles, and commonplace as they will seem

¹ Luther said: "*Libris Regum plus crediderim quam Paralipomenon. Præcedunt centum et mille cubitos scripto Chronicorum.*"

to many readers, they yet admit of almost numberless applications. And if, among positive results, any one should also set down such facts as that the Book of Revelation is one of the earliest instead of being one of the latest Books of the New Testament; that the Wild Beast from the abyss is a symbol of the Roman Emperor and the Roman Empire; that the number of the Beast is an enigma which is solved by the name Neron Kesar in Hebrew; that Mark xvi. 9-20, John vii. 53-viii. 11 and 1 John v. 7, formed no part of the original apostolic autographs; that St. Paul was not in the remotest degree thinking of the future Popes of Rome when he spoke of the Man of Sin; that he was not the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews; that the genuineness of the Second Epistle of St. Peter is highly uncertain; that the general understanding of the New Testament would be greatly improved by printing the books of which it is composed at least in an approximate order; that a very vast number of the "stock" texts quoted in proof of party dogmas are entirely distorted from their original meaning; that our best chance of advancing in the real comprehension of the Scriptures lies in studying the books as books, and the Bible as a whole, and not in splitting it up into texts to be largely used as polemical missiles;—he I say, who should enumerate these points, among many others, as being beyond the reach of serious dispute, might have books and articles written to denounce him, but would be expressing the views which are regarded as indisputable by the vast majority of such recent critics as have established any claim to serious attention.

I cannot here enter any further upon this topic, but as the number of commentaries is daily increasing, I venture to offer one or two humble and respectful suggestions which may, I think, help to clear their pages of unnecessary incumbrances.

I. From all critical and exegetical commentaries I would at once exclude all that is of a purely homiletic character, and all long disquisitions about questions of inferential theology. The readers who demand to be fed with the pemmican which is requisite for sermons should have it furnished to them in separate books, in which it should be clearly understood that the "texts" are regarded not in their original and direct force, but from the sermonic point of view. Other readers, whose faith cannot be extricated from the systems and shibboleths of particular sects and churches, should be referred to such treatises of scholastic theology as will most—or, if they be wise, as will *least*—answer them according to their idols. The object of a commentator should be to establish, to elucidate, and within reasonable limits to illustrate, the real and the primary meaning of the sacred writers so far as it can be ascertained. He ought resolutely to eschew the temptation of reading his own meaning into the text. Among his most primary and essential qualifications should be reckoned the capacity to interpret words apart from the modern connotations which in the course of centuries have crystallized around them. For these reasons it is not merely *irritating* to be entangled on every page with moral platitudes and theological crotchets; it interferes directly with the "dry light" which is indispensable for attaining the intended meaning. The commentator who indulges in these digressions is apt to be warped in many directions by the necessity for discovering moral lessons where none were indicated, or he is liable to distort every available passage into the senses which most favour the differentiae of his religious opinions. Sermon-writing upon isolated texts, and the boundless license of drawing ever-widening inferences from narrow premisses, have been more fatal than any other causes to the right understanding of the Holy Scriptures. But if a man does sincerely desire to enter the inmost

sanctuary, he must leave behind him all his idols, and above all, the shadowy *idola* of the tribe, the cavern, and the market-place—those false notions and false phrases and false traditions to which so many of us are tempted to offer our incense even while we stand before the shrine of the Most High. No incense is more acceptable to Him than absolute sincerity and unbiassed love of truth; and it is to be feared that no incense is so rarely offered.

II. Further, from the legitimate functions of Exegesis I would expel all allegorizing of plain passages. To follow the Fathers in their use of this method, *except* as a pious play of the imagination, is an inexcusable anachronism. Let us by way of instance take the Book of Judges. The function of a commentator of that Book is to explain its literal and grammatical meaning; to offer, so far as is possible, some solution of its chronological difficulties; to illustrate the thoughts and actions of men in the wild period of which it affords us a few glimpses; to shew the bearing of the book and of its separate narratives upon the history and development of the chosen people; to obviate the peril of moral confusion which may arise from contemplating the mixed actions of rude warriors in an epoch when the lessons of the wilderness had fallen into abeyance. So treated, the book is full of instruction, and rich in examples of heroic patriotism. Treated otherwise, it may be made the excuse for grave perversions of God's eternal law, and may be quoted—as it has been quoted—in defence of actions as atrocious as those of Clement and Ravailiac. Nor, again, have we any more right to allegorize it than we have to allegorize any other history; far less right than the monk had in the *Gesta Romanorum* to allegorize the *Iliad* by saying that Achilles meant the spirit, and Helen the soul, and Paris the devil. Treated as the Fathers treat it, the whole force of that human history, with all its patriotic and stirring incidents, is volatilized into false and vapid

symbols. Gideon's fleece becomes a prophecy of the world and the Jewish Church, alternately dry or wet with the dews of God. The "day of Midian" is put into connexion with "the victory of God Incarnate." The breaking of Gideon's pitchers is a flashing forth of the Gospel from the broken earthen vessels of martyred saints. Abimelech foreshadows the Pope. Samson becomes a strange type of Christ—"One who out of the prostrate bodies of sin, Satan, and the grave, gathered for us the honey of spiritual sweetness and holy joy; One who was meek and lowly as Samson was in his modest beginning, but continued meek to the end; *One who overthrew his thousands and tens of thousands by the foolishness of preaching as Samson slew the Philistines by a despised instrument, the jawbone of an ass*; One who awoke at midnight from sleep—even from the sleep of death—in the strong city of a spiritual Gaza, even in the fortress of Satan, and broke asunder its iron bars and brazen bolts, and carried them away on his shoulders towards the top of a heavenly Hebron:—" and so on, at great length. That all this could be invented and elaborated by pious students shews that it cannot be the unnatural and irreverent trifling which it appears to be to many minds; but considering what manner of man Samson was—how insensate, and how immoral—such attempts to "improve" his story into a series of types of Christ, must surely be pronounced most arbitrary, and, at any rate, utterly alien from the domain of exegesis. Even if we do not go so far as to say that the "spiritualizing" method, which so effectually robs us of the divinely-human lessons of sacred history and of national experience, is in reality very unspiritual,—yet many of us are at least forced to hold the opinion that it is a method of tampering with plain narratives which is entirely unwarranted by Scripture, and unwarrantable by any sound rules of interpretation. It was excusable in centuries when there was no such thing as a

science of criticism, and when the Bible was regarded as a sort of supernatural enigma; but it cannot hold its ground in days when our reverence for the true sense of the Scriptures—as apart from the fantastic and unnatural hypotheses introduced into it as a disastrous legacy from Rabbis and Alexandrians—has been so happily deepened by those lessons of time which we recognize as coming from the Spirit of God.

III. And, along with such allegorizings, we would ruthlessly expel all invented miracles, and all attempts to put a gloss on deeds morally wrong. It is monstrous to explain Scripture on the hypothesis of a perpetual *subauditur*. No amount of reasoning can alter the fact that the deed of Jael, judged by every utterance of the moral law from Genesis to Revelation, was a cold-blooded murder, aggravated by falsehood and treachery. To judge her from our own standpoint would of course be most unfair. The rude and ignorant wife of a Kenite Arab, in days of turbulence and bloodshed, was not likely to know, as we know, that the end does not justify the means. But what are we to think of three pages of a quite modern commentary in which we read as follows:—

i. “The act of Jael was *clearly miraculous* (!). The nail went down and sank into the ground as by a Divine impulse and impact, for Sisera has fallen down astounded; . . . he sunk as it were paralysed and prostrate by the visitation of God, who armed and enabled a woman to subdue and destroy the enemy of the Lord and of his people.”

ii. “Almighty God *incited and enabled Jael* to do that by which she fulfilled what God had purposed and foretold should be done.”

iii. “And what is the instrument by which the Christian Jael, the Gentile Church, fixes her tent into the earth? What is it by which that tent, when extended, is firmly

fastened to the ground? *It is the cross of Christ. . . .*
 ‘*Palo illum interfecit, id est ligni Crucis acumine*’ (Origen).”

iv. “*There may well be a parallel between Jael and the Virgin Mary. Deborah sings the Magnificat of Jael.*”

v. “And is it irrelevant to remark that Jael is called the wife of Heber, but nothing is said of Heber himself? Now the tent is called ‘the tent of Jael the wife of Heber’! *Is this altogether without a mystery?* (!) The tent in which the Lord of all took our nature and *tabernacled* in us (John i. 14) was the Blessed Virgin; and she was the wife of Joseph, and yet Joseph has no part in the work by which the world was saved, and our enemy was destroyed.”

These are brief extracts from five closely printed columns of a commentary on the Book of Judges. The sentiments are pious; the writer is a learned, holy, and much revered scholar; and the style of moral application may have been regarded as genuine exegesis by Origen and Ambrose, and St. Prosper, and the Venerable Bede. But how many can affirm that all this tends to *explain* in an honest way the Book of Judges? Most readers who approach the study of the Bible with the conviction that it is a book thoroughly Divine to us because it is also thoroughly human, will love it infinitely less if it be thus converted into a sphinx, speaking in arbitrary riddles, and will be inclined to say, “*Quodcumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.*” If we are to have allegory let us have it in treatises avowedly allegorical. It would surely be a waste of space in any ordinary commentary to discuss interpretations which rest on no basis and lead to no result. They must be regarded as merely Kabbalistic, like the discovery of the Pseudo-Barnabas that Abraham’s 318 servants are a type of Christ on the cross (TIH); and the notion of other Fathers that Gideon’s 300 soldiers formed “one body with three equal parts,” and so (possibly) foreshadowed “the doctrine of one Divine Godhead and three coequal Persons, the doctrine of the ever-

blessed Trinity." Has there ever been any human being since time began who felt his belief in the Trinity strengthened by one iota from the fact that Gideon fought with 300 soldiers? Do not such attempts to foist mystic fancies into genuine history do more harm than they can possibly do good?

IV. Again:—I think that there ought to be no room in commentaries for the discussion of the merest hypotheses. The fact that such hypotheses have been invented by this or that writer really furnishes no excuse for wasting the reader's time by their needless refutation. When once they have been mentioned as curiosities of exegesis, or conjectures of ingenuity, they ought to be set aside as unprofitable observations which add nothing to our substantial knowledge. In reading the Bible we have such deep need for the Divine light most of all, and next for the light of the unbiassed reason, that we can only lose by following mere Will-o'-the-wisps, which flicker over places where no foot can tread.

a. Take for instance St. Paul's message in Philippians iv. 2 to Euodia and Syntyche. A commentator who, like the Bishop of Durham, proves that these are the names of two *ladies*, not of two *men*, Euodias and Syntyches, and who illustrates this by the demonstrated prominence of women in the Philippian Church, is throwing real light on the original. But he very rightly contents himself with merely *mentioning* once for all Volkmar's extraordinary suggestion that the name Euodia implies orthodoxy and indicates the Petrine Party, while Syntyche means "the partner," and implies the Gentile Church. Instead of discussing this outrageous invention of Tübingenism run mad, the Bishop wisely passes it over with the remark that "it is needless to waste time on this learned trifling."

β. Yet we find some conjectures and combinations which are a mere congeries of linked "perhapses" repeated in com-

mentary after commentary. One harmless but quite baseless specimen of very precarious inference has found its way into many exegetical volumes, but ought, I think, to be finally set aside. It is the theory about Claudia and Pudens mentioned (but not *together*, for the name Linus comes between) in 2 Timothy iv. 21. Archdeacon Williams, in his "Discourses and Essays" (1857), devotes nearly fifty pages to an attempt to shew that "Claudia was daughter of Cogidubnus, a British chief, and that having come to Rome she was converted to Christianity, and was married to Pudens, and afterwards returned with her husband to Britain, where he held lands under her father Cogidubnus." Now Martial mentions a Claudia who was married to a Pudens, a man who was addicted to the worst heathen vices and who became a primipilar centurion. A combination of the facts recorded in a conjecturally emended inscription found at Chichester, with other facts mentioned in Tacitus (*Agricola*, 14), shews that Cogidubnus, a British vassal-king, had taken the name Claudius and was in some way connected with a Pudens.

There is the narrow aperture of fact; here are the spread-
ing smoke-wreaths of inference:—

Martial mentions a blue-eyed British maiden named Claudia Rufina, and it had been already conjectured on very slight grounds that she was a daughter of Caractacus and a native of Colchester. It is now, however, supposed that this lady *may* have been admitted into the Claudian gens; and *may* have taken the name of Rufina; because she *may* have been the protégée of Pomponia, wife of Aulus Plautius; who *may* have been called Rufa. As Pomponia *may* have been a Christian (*Tac. Ann.*, xiii. 32), and so *may* have converted Claudia, Martial's epigrams indicating the vicious life of Pudens *may* have been written before his conversion and marriage, and his invocation of Hymenæus *may* be connected with a Christian marriage. But even

after we have wasted all this time in elaborating a rope of sand, there is absolutely nothing to connect the Pudens and Claudia mentioned (but not even mentioned together) by St. Paul with the Claudia and Pudens of Martial. It is *à priori* most improbable that men like the Pudens of Martial should have been among the Christian converts, who were, with scarcely an exception, slaves and freedmen and artisans. In the Rome of that day there were probably hundreds of Claudias, and dozens of men who bore the name of Pudens. What do we gain by the pursuit and discussion of bare possibilities, which even when, by a long series of conjectures, they are imagined to be dimly possible, still remain to the last degree improbable, and therefore un-instructive?

Indeed I think that Newton's great rule "*Hypotheses non fingo*" would be a very useful one for most commentators. Conjectures which float in the air, or dangle from a mere thistledown of possibility, are highly distracting, and, even when they do no worse harm, at least waste a great deal of valuable time.

γ. Here for instance is a recent theory about the Second Epistle of St. John.

It is that the Epistle is addressed by St. John to the Church of Babylon as a sisterly greeting and Apostolic reply to the greeting which St. Peter in his First Epistle had addressed to the elect in St. John's Churches of Asia.

Very beautiful and touching no doubt, though a little euphuistic if it were so. But on what a mass of the merest conjectures does such a theory rest! It assumes (among other assumptions)—

i. That St. John's "elect lady" or "lady Electa" or "elect Kyria" is a Church, and not (which is the far more simple and natural view) a Christian lady.

ii. It assumes that "Babylon" in 1 Peter v. 13 means Babylon; and not (as is all but certain) Rome.

iii. It assumes that the "the co-elect" (*ἡ συνεκλεκτή*) in that verse is a Church,—which is indeed probable though not certain.

iv. It assumes that St. John was familiar with the First Epistle of St. Peter; which *may* be true, but of which there is no trace of proof.

v. It assumes that St. John's brief letter was addressed to Babylon, which is most wildly improbable, and has not a word to be said in its favour except what looks like a series of blunders. St. Clement, in a Latin translation of his Hypotyposes, is made (by a mistake which corrects itself) to say that St. John's Second Epistle was addressed to *Virgins*; and then, if any dependence can be placed on the Latin translation, he contradicts himself in the very next line by saying that it is addressed to *a certain Babylonian lady* named Electa (who certainly could not have been a virgin), so that

vi. It is assumed that "ad Virgines" represents *πρὸς παρθένους* and that "*Parthenous*" is a mistake for *Parthōs*; and that "*Parthos*" implies a letter to Babylon. Q.E.D.!

V. And while we are on the subject of this "Elect Lady" we may quote part of a specimen note from the interminable verborosities of Karl Braune.

"To what purpose is it that Kyria was a female name . . . and that this was maintained by Athanasius and later (!) by Benson, Heumann, Bengel, Krigele, Brückner, Lücke, Düsterdieck, and others. . . . So Luther, Piscator, Beza, Heidegger, Rittmeier, Wolf, Baumgarten-Crusius, Lauder, and al.; à Lapidè reports her to have been called Drusia or (!) Drusiana. Carpzovius supposes that Martha the sister of Lazarus is the person addressed; Knauer suggests Mary the mother of the Lord, etc., etc."

In this same note we have the additional views of Augustine, Jerome, Scholiast I., Calov, Hofmann, Hilgenfeld, Huther, Serrarius, Whiston, Whitby, Michaelis, etc. It illustrates the necessity of clearing our commentaries from

rubbish-heaps of idle and baseless theories, and rubbish-heaps of vainly-accumulated names. This vice of recording *everything* is peculiarly German. The German exegete apparently feels himself bound to refer even to every school-programme, however valueless, however second-hand, which touches on his subject. He is stung by an *œstrum* which drives him to demonstrate the width of his learning, or at any rate the extent of his researches. But as Voltaire wisely says

“ Mais malheur à l'auteur qui veut toujours instruire ;
Le secret d'ennuyer est celui de tout dire.”

As to mere theories, however, heterodoxy cannot assign the palm of recklessness to orthodoxy. Both are guilty of encumbering the pages of exegesis with masses of purely untenable theories. Here for instance is Baur's theory of the Third Epistle of St. John.

He assumes:—i. That the Epistle was not written by St. John.

ii. That the “ certain Babylonian Electa ” of St. Clement means the Romish Church.

iii. That Diotrephes symbolically designates Anicetos or one of the early Roman Bishops.

iv. That the letter was written by a Montanist, who shews the heat of his party-spirit by characterizing the orthodox party of Diotrephes as heathens.

v. That Gaius was at the head of the Montanists.

vi. That the letter alluded to in 3 John 9 was addressed to Gaius.

Now to all such arbitrary and reckless guesswork, I apply the remark elsewhere made by Baur himself, “ It is not worth while to discuss vague hypotheses which have no support in history, and no coherence in themselves.”

And I urge that all record of such groundless guesswork which has failed to win a single adherent should be remorse-

lessly expelled from commentaries, and retained (if at all) in histories of the vagaries of exegesis.

VI. Once more, I would entirely eliminate even the discussion of *à priori* schemes invented to explain away the plain and obvious meaning of words and passages.

a. A salient instance is afforded by the record in Galatians ii. 11-21 of the rebuke administered by St. Paul to St. Peter at Antioch. The notion that "Kephas" was some unknown person and not the Apostle Peter, though suggested by no less a man than Clement of Alexandria, found very few followers; but Origen's theory that the dispute was not real, and was only a preconcerted scene, was supported by St. Chrysostom, and, at one period of his career, by St. Jerome. It need not here be further alluded to because no one now ventures to maintain a method of interpretation of which the falsity was demonstrated even by St. Augustine. It only serves to shew the lengths to which even good and great scholars and thinkers can be misled by the ceaseless influence of bias, against which every sincere commentator should be unsleepingly upon his guard.

β. In this case the false and (unconsciously) disingenuous theory arose from *à priori* notions of Apostolic infallibility; in the next instance false, and scarcely more ingenuous, methods of interpretation are due to *à priori* conceptions of what is and what is not conformable with our ideal of the early Christian Church.

St. Paul, in his great argument about the Resurrection, suddenly introduces an *argumentum ad hominem* by asking "Else what shall they do who are *baptized for the dead*, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?"

I venture to say that no human being would have ever dreamed of doubting St. Paul's meaning, but for conceptions which they bring with them to his perusal and which find no shadow of support in his own words.

“Some of you,” he says, “assert that there is no resurrection of the dead; how is this consistent with the custom of some among you of getting themselves baptized for the dead?” Nothing was more natural than such a practice in the then immature condition of knowledge in the infant Churches. They were all expecting the immediate Advent of Christ (Rom. xiii. 12; Phil. iv. 5; 2 Thess. ii. 2; 1 Pet. iv. 7, etc.). Many of them were also labouring under the apprehension that those who died before that Advent would be grievous losers, and perhaps would not be partakers of the Resurrection. St. Paul writes to the Thessalonians with the express object of correcting this misapprehension (1 Thess. iv. 15). But, since it existed, we can see how much stronger this dread would be in cases where a Christian died unbaptized. The postponement of baptism, even till the approach of death, became (as we know) a common practice in the Christian Church, and it is a phenomenon which we constantly find in missionary experience. Inevitably, then, some must have died before their baptism was accomplished; and in that case nothing would have seemed more natural for a heartbroken survivor than to be (if haply that might be of any avail) baptized for the departed relative. We know that this practice of baptism by proxy on behalf of the dead actually did exist among the Cerinthians and Marcionites, and it can be paralleled by similar customs in heathen antiquity.

But it is argued that St. Paul *cannot* mean this, because—

- i. We cannot suppose that a Christian Church would ever sanction so superstitious a proceeding; and
- ii. St. Paul could not have mentioned the practice without condemning it.

Hence, because of two purely *à priori* assumptions, both equally untenable, the plain and obvious meaning of St. Paul's words must be explained away. This is done in

so many ways that Bengel says it would require a dissertation even to give a mere catalogue of these interpretations. It is done sometimes, in bold defiance of the grammar, by making the words *ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν* mean "over the dead," *i.e.* on their sepulchres. Others, in equally bold defiance of the plain meaning of plain words, make "on behalf of the dead" mean "for those who are dying," or "on behalf of their own *bodies*," or "in the profession that the dead will rise from their grave." "Every baptized person," says Bishop Wordsworth in the long note in which he defends this view, "was an *apologist for the dead*; he vindicated them from the calumnies of the sceptic; he was *baptized* on their *behalf*." Others, by way of twisting the requisite means of escape out of the *other* word in the clause, explain, "they who are *baptized*" to mean "those who are *immersed in sufferings*!" Even Rosenmüller was content with this transparent subterfuge.

All such obvious endeavours to get rid of perfectly unambiguous statements in favour of groundless prejudices ought to be expelled from the domain of exegesis. Any commentator would at once demonstrate his unfitness for his work who thought it his duty to reproduce all the monstrosities of interpretation recorded in explanation of this passage in Poole's *Synopsis*. Since the assumptions which lead to such playing with words are false, the numerous modes of tampering with the plain meaning should be simply set aside without notice. After what St. Paul tells us of the Church of Corinth, it would not surprise us to find practices among them far more reprehensible than this, and far more superstitious. Nor ought we to be surprised that St. Paul does not here break the thread—or rather impede the rush and sweep—of his argument, to rebuke the practice. It was his mental characteristic (1) to attend to one thing at a time, and (2) to argue against others from their own concessions. In

1 Cor. x. 8 he does not pause to rebuke the sitting at meat in an idol's temple; in xi. 5 he expresses no disapprobation of women speaking in public. "When his mind is full of a particular subject," says Dr. Hodge, "he does not leave it to pronounce judgment on things incidentally introduced." Thus neither in the nature of things, nor in his own character, is any excuse to be found for distorting his words into multitudes of senses not one of which would have been conveyed by the words to the original readers.

γ. I will conclude this paper with one more instance. It shall be the famous passage (1 Cor. xi. 10), "For this cause ought the woman to have *power* on her head *because of the angels.*" On the meaning of the word "power" I shall not speak farther than to say that it most obviously means some kind of veil or covering. A friend supposes that it was a local word, and that you would have been understood if you had gone into any Christian or Jewish shop at Corinth and asked to see so many *exousiai* at so many drachmas apiece. However this may be, the *reason* why this particular head-gear was called "a power" must be merely conjectural, although (if this were our subject) the reason is not difficult to divine. But the desperate conjectural emendations—*exiousa*, *hexousian*, *exoubian*, *ex ousias*, *kausian*, etc., are follies that deserve no mention. The latter clause—"because of the angels"—furnishes a good illustration of the all-but universal determination not to explain, but to explain away. First came the ridiculous emendation *διὰ τὰς ἀγγέλων* "on account of the crowds," with the cognate absurdities of *andras*, *engelastas*, *angelias*, *ochlous*, etc. Then came the extraordinary attempt to explain the word "angels" as meaning "messengers," "spies," "bishops," or "divorces" (!); or to make the clause a sudden adjuration, introduced by St. Paul, "by the angels!" I say that these follies do not deserve a record. The only real

question is, does St. Paul mean that women ought to cover their heads in order not to drive away *the good angels*; or to avoid the contaminating intrusion of *bad angels*? If we interpret the clause by the entire tendency of Jewish and Oriental thought, we must take the latter view. It probably would never have been disputed by any critic who knew the many parallels to this reasoning in Eastern writings and among the Rabbis, and who bore in mind the Jewish belief about the cause of the Fall of the Angels, as intimated in Gen. vi. 2-4; Jude 6; 2 Pet. ii. 4. In that sense most of the Book of Enoch furnishes a comment on this verse. The only valid, or half-valid, objection to an interpretation so consonant to the schools of thought with which St. Paul was familiar from lifelong training, is to be found in the statement that the "angels," when used without qualification, invariably means "good angels." Is this, however, so certain? When St. Paul says that the saints "will judge angels" (1 Cor. vi. 3), is it reasonable to explain it in any other sense than that of evil or fallen angels? But may not St. Paul in this passage about women have meant angels of both kinds—alike good and bad? Women ought according to Eastern notions to be veiled, lest by being unveiled they shame or put to flight the good angels; and lest they attract the presence of other and evil spirits—the *Shedim* who play so large a part in later Rabbinic stories—who were angels once. The only possible alternative is to suppose that, as a matter of general decency and order, St. Paul bids women to veil themselves in public, by way of expressing their reverence to the angels who are supposed to be present in the assemblies of Christian worship. But whatever shade of interpretation we may adopt as to the matter the one important thing is that we be not tempted to explain away what St. Paul says because the conceptions in which he had been trained are no longer familiar to ourselves.

But, to conclude; the object of this brief paper is to recommend a style of exegesis less tedious, less infructuous, less intolerably repellent, and, above all, less absolutely second-hand, than that which has been too long in vogue. It is a real misfortune, especially to the young, that the characteristic of so many professed commentaries is their interminable verbosity and their terrible dullness. It is a still greater misfortune to the old that their progress should be blocked up by accumulations of the obsolete, and by whole trains of reflexion and comment, not founded upon the real meaning of the author, but upon the erroneous fancies thrust into his words by bias and tradition. Nothing is more unprofitable than commentaries stuffed with known, half-known, and unknown German names; with masses of traditional, unverified, and often misleading references; with trite or ponderous moral reflexions; with lengthy discussions of theological minutiae with many of which the sacred writer was absolutely unconcerned; with illimitable inferences; with reckless emendations; with masses of collateral or barely collateral "information;" with superfluous geography, history, and archæology, nine-tenths of which can have little or no bearing on the subject, and which would have been quite as new to the inspired writers as to the reader; with theories elaborately baseless; with the fantastic allegorizing of simple historic narratives; with attempts to get rid of all views which do not accord with our own preconceived dogmas; with the rival egotisms of divergent exegetes; with party innuendoes; with impossible lexical and grammatical suggestions; with defences of the morally indefensible; with attempts to be exhaustive; with long discussions of slightly varying opinions; with efforts to make impossibly nice distinctions in the variation of words, tenses and particles; with the predetermined struggles to maintain, at all costs, the patristic or the traditional interpretations. If we clear away all that may

be fairly classed under these heads, we shall indeed have made havoc with many pages of thick exegetical volumes, but we shall have far ampler scope for the discovery of what the sacred writers really tell us. And if our commentaries sink into more attenuated proportions out of their present enormous and unwieldy bulk, they will gain indefinitely in interest, in sincerity, in profitableness, and above all in adaptation to the one end at which they all should aim—namely the spread of the true knowledge of Holy Writ.

John of Salisbury in his "Metalogicus," ii. 7, says of the scholasticism of his day:—" *Fiunt itaque in puerilibus Academici senes; omnem dictorum aut scriptorum excutiunt syllabam, immo et literam; dubitantes ad omnia, quaerentes semper, sed nunquam ad scientiam pervenientes; et tandem convertuntur ad vaniloquium. . . . Compilant omnium opiniones, et ea quae etiam a vilissimis dicta vel scripta sunt, ab inopia iudicii scribunt et referunt: proponunt enim omnia, quia nesciunt praeferre meliora. Tanta est opinionum oppositionumque congeries ut vix suo nota esse possit auctori.*"

This, and more to the same effect, was written in the twelfth century. Is it not an exact description of many modern commentaries? What are we to say about commentaries on a single epistle which occupy nine hundred pages, and in which there is no proportion between the mass of chaff and the few grains of genuine wheat?

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