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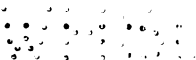
AN ACCOUNT
OF THE
LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF
JOHN DAVID MICHAELIS.

BY PROFESSOR J. G. EICHHORN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN,

BY PROFESSOR PATTON.



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AN ACCOUNT
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LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF
J. D. MICHAELIS.*

THE life of the man of letters, who attains to a good old age, seems, at its close, no longer to receive its merited recompense. At the death of the active man of business, both city and country are frequently immersed in grief. At the grave of the scholar, who finds an early tomb, loud lamentations are frequently heard. But around the remains of the grey-headed veteran in this honourable service, there reigns, for the most part, a dreary stillness. The multitude of those to whom his deserts are known, are not assembled around his bier; for these are scattered far and wide, in different countries, by the various allotments of Providence. The friends of his youth, who estimate their loss with enthusiastic ardour, in the language of poetry, can no longer bewail his death; for the greater number already slumber in the tomb, and the surviving few, oppressed with years, have only strength enough remaining to drop a silent tear over his grave. His influence upon the sciences, owing to their incessant changes, has diminished with his declining years. His earlier services operate imperceptibly, and in scattered

* Born, February 1717; died, August 1791.

rays, in the vast empire of truth, appreciable only by a devoted few. The tidings of his death were already long anticipated. How could the news of that event, under such circumstances, prostrate like a sudden and afflictive stroke? How could the distant feel his death like those who are near? The absent like the present? This would be contrary to the course of nature. An event, for some time anticipated, makes at last but a feeble impression. A remote event affects us not like one which is near; nor that removed from our sight, like that before our eyes; what is scattered operates more feebly than what is concentrated at one point. Time, however, makes amends for all; it gathers, weighs, compares, and estimates; and awards, at length, to greater merit, its appropriate praise.

Let this, then, be the consolation of all the friends and admirers of the illustrious Michaelis of unfading memory, (who ceased, on the 22d of August, to adorn Göttingen with his presence) although the tidings of his decease could not be expected to agitate all Germany, like a sudden shock. Exhausted of his bodily vigour for many years before his death, he sank away slowly and gradually, at an unusually advanced age, loaded with honours and with years; and even till the last week of his life, industriously employed in communicating oral and written instruction to his contemporaries and to posterity—a genuine teacher of Europe. Such a man needs not a noisy publication of his praise; greater than every other and far more eloquent, is the silent praise of his surviving merits. He needs no proud monument erected by friends and admirers; the most illustrious and lasting monument, he has himself erected, during his active life of seventy-four years—the honourable monument of his intellectual achievements.

To contemplate these achievements, to form a lively idea of his eminently industrious and meritorious life, and to recal thus the image of the man; to transport ourselves to the period at which his career commenced, and to estimate the difficulties with which he had to grapple; to ascertain the means by which he surmounted the ob-

stacles of education, and subdued the prejudices of his earlier and later contemporaries; to trace the footsteps of his discursive mind, and inquire how far he advanced and where he stopped; where we could only follow in his track, and where we could pass beyond him—this is all that he has left for us. This alone can be denominated honouring his name and celebrating his memory, according to his taste, in such a manner as he himself, if a departed spirit indulges solicitude for the concerns of earth, would regard with complacency. Shallow praises he would despise, as he despised them when on earth. He who was alive only to merited reputation, would now be gratified only by that praise which is his due. He who was unceasingly engaged in the investigation of what mankind denominate truth, would be gratified only with the truth concerning himself. He who found in literary employment his only satisfaction, and the only recreation of his declining years, would doubtless be delighted, if by recalling his example, we should animate ourselves to the like industry and activity.

Let this then be the offering which I deposit on his grave—a poor and trivial offering, it is true, compared with that which his other pupils or his older friends will bring. But even the smallest present, made with a fond and grateful heart, has its value and desert. No one, during his life, clung to him with a more devoted attachment, a more lively admiration of his greatness, and a greater degree of gratitude for his manifold services; nor shall any one surpass me now after his decease.

In tracing the development of his mind, no one could have assisted us better than Michaelis himself, if he had left a circumstantial and accurate history of every period of his life. His earlier friends might still, in part, supply the deficiency, who, as is the fact with some, enjoyed his friendship from his earliest youth; or, at least, were witnesses of his literary plans and connections, and of his method of study, during certain active periods of his life, or could furnish much pertaining to these subjects from his own mouth. I cannot avail myself of these satisfactory sources. I can only have recourse to a few leaves

which inform us of the more important revolutions of his life, and to my own recollection of scattered information which I have met with in his writings.

Michaelis received his whole education, up to the time of his first appearance in public as *Magister Legens* in the year 1739, in Halle, his native city, at that time not the most eligible place for the literary education of a theologian.*

The Orphan house, where he received his final preparation for the university, was the residence of a wild fanaticism. The school connected with the same, although at that period far superior to most of the similar institutions in Germany, embraced no regulations fully adapted to promote the solid education of the future university man of letters; for which situation his father, at an early period, seems to have intended him. The universally important study of the ancient classics flourished there only to a moderate degree and within narrow limits. The Latin authors, it is true, were explained,

* [The reader will doubtless be struck with the revolting manner in which the author of this life of Michaelis speaks of the venerable University of Halle, and of the piety for which it was so long and so eminently distinguished. The writer, it is presumed, is the celebrated Eichhorn, whose talents and attainments have placed him at the head of the present literati of his country. Those who have had any opportunity of becoming acquainted with his character, are aware of his laxity of sentiment, his contempt of practical piety, and his hardihood in trifling with the most sacred subjects. Such persons will not be surprised at his sneers at what he terms the extravagant fanaticism of Halle; and will be able to appreciate the value of all those remarks, with which the article abounds, relative to points in which religion or sound doctrine are concerned.]

Our reasons for inserting the article are, that its objectionable portions, when the character of its author are known, must be entirely harmless; and that the life of JOHN D. MICHAELIS fills a larger space in the literary history of Germany, for the 18th century, than that of any other individual. Living, as he did, during the period at which the great revolution in the opinions and mode of study of the theologians of that country was occurring, and being himself one of the most prominent actors in the scene, there is (apart from the varied and intrinsic merit of many of his works,) much, in the mere circumstances in which he lived, to secure the interest of every intelligent reader. ED.]

but were explained much too imperfectly. In regard to the Greek, they employed their grammatical drudgery upon the New Testament, as if there were no other Greek writings in the world; and, in general, all the instruction in the ancient languages was directed solely to the grammar and the lexicon, and not to the cultivation of taste, which should always remain the principal object.* On the other hand, absurd as it may seem, a full course of instruction in the philosophy of Wolf was given under the unsuspected sanction of the Orphan house; a course which no one, even at the university, would have ventured to give, because the curse of the Hallean theologians still rested upon it.

The peculiar situation of the university at that time was well adapted to cripple and discourage both heart and mind of the young theologian. The philosophy of Leibnitz as modified by Wolf, the best at that time known, was there decried as fraught with poison for every pious soul. Ecclesiastical history was at the service of fanaticism, and, in its genuine sources, and its whole extent, was a thing unknown. Exegetical learning was regarded as superfluous, and hostile to real piety. Buxtorf's Jewish-Christian chimeras prevailed here, as elsewhere, with tyrannical sway. The philologist Doctor Michaelis spun out tedious etymologies, and put in requisition all his wits for the comparison of Greek and German words with Arabic and Hebrew roots, without employing his philological learning for the interpretation of the Bible, or for the improvement of theology. In didactic theology, Lange's *Oeconomia Salutis* was an oracle universally esteemed; and in the department of Christian morals, they gave themselves up to an overstrained piety and an extravagant fanaticism. Whoever was dissatisfied with this state of things, or manifested a desire for more profound theological learning, was regarded as fallen from his first love, inasmuch as he wished to become wiser than his Saviour.

What direction could such a school afford to the young

* Life of Michaelis in Beyer's Magazine for Preachers, B. II. Art. 6, p. 2. Reiske's Life, p. 7.

theologian? What literary provision for the future life of letters? What seeds for future development? Michaelis left this school, as was naturally to be expected, mis-educated, miserably furnished, both in mind and heart; in a state of genuine literary and moral starvation. Baumgarten, indeed, whom the Orphan house had assisted to obtain the theological professorship, that he might in this situation promulgate his faith, was at that time, to the scandal of the Christian brethren, fallen from grace, and was engaged in teaching a philosophical and synoptical theology. Michaelis however could not entirely fancy this theology, and was not yet disposed to draw from the prolific source, which soon after proved so productive for many of the greatest theologians of the present day. It was a happy circumstance for the mind of Michaelis, that his prudent father still cherished in his bosom a fondness for the ancient classics, and still further confirmed it by the instruction he was called to give in this department at the Orphan house; and also, that he placed within his hands, for his individual study, the metaphysics of Wolf, and afforded him an opportunity of receiving oral instruction in mathematics, natural philosophy, and history. The direction which Chancellor Louis communicated to his mind, in the last mentioned department, was retained by him during the whole course of his life. As a theologian, however, he terminated his course at the university with his head full of prejudices, sadly deficient in genuine, theological, and exegetical learning, and, as is very manifest from some printed letters which were written about that time, deeply tinctured with the extravagance and fanaticism before alluded to, which entwined itself with his very nature.

A man whose education has been thus perverted, must, if he would not remain for ever useless, turn himself about and form himself entirely anew. I should not be able to mention a single individual of his proper contemporaries, those, to wit, who were mis-educated as he was, who felt, as he did, the necessity of his change, (for Baumgarten was somewhat earlier;) still less should I be able to point out an individual of this school at large,

who has actually undertaken thoroughly to reform himself. Michaelis took a direction which might afford an universal example. The prejudices of his earlier years, he succeeded, for the most part, in obliterating, at first in himself, and then in Germany. From an ignorant disciple of ignorant instructors, he became an immensely instructive teacher of others, both in his own and in other kindred departments, in Germany, and far beyond its limits. In regard to his overstrained piety, however, his reform did not succeed so well.

In this revolution, which affected his whole nature, his residence, during one year, in England, must claim the first share. On his return to Halle, in the year 1742, he prosecuted his lectures, as private teacher, with greater openness than formerly. The *awakened* soon discovered the great change that had been wrought in him, and rendered thanks to God, in secret ejaculations, that, by his call to Göttingen, they were rid of an apostate, from whom they had no new concessions to hope.*

What was begun in England was consummated in Göttingen, through the influence of the distinguished men into whose society he was thrown, in the year 1745; especially, if I correctly understand many passages of his writings, through the influence of Mosheim, Haller and Gesner. After a few years, (from about the year 1750,) he became what he continued to be through his whole life, a scholar, towards whom the eyes of half the world were directed. Ordinary men require a long time to reach their moderate elevation: great men rise always rapidly, formed, as it were, in the twinkling of an eye.

In no department did he deviate less from the direction he received at Halle, than in that of history; he advanced however further, with a manifest improvement. Through the influence of Chancellor Louis, of whom he spake, even in his latest years, with manifest pleasure, he had apprehended this department from a statistical point of view. But Louis certainly never had introduced him to the critical appreciation and discrimination of the ori-

* Semler's Life, Part I. p. 86.

ginal sources ; for he himself had scarcely dreamt as yet of historical criticism. But Michaelis advanced continually, resting on this sure support, from the time that he employed himself in his writings with historical investigations ; and he had, undoubtedly, at an earlier period, in his oral instructions, exercised this salutary criticism, at a time when it was much less frequent in Germany than it afterwards became ; for he manifests, from the very commencement, a decided familiarity with it in his writings. Whether he took the hint from earlier German works, which exhibit traces of a critical investigation of historical truth—from Gundling, for example, Mascov, Kohler, or even from its genuine originator, Peter Bayle ; or whether his own philosophical taste, entirely of itself, or perhaps from the most trivial suggestion of others, attained to this point of perfection, I am unable to decide.

It was during the first years of his public and active life, (in the year 1744,) that the *Universal History* appeared, by means of which, the name of Baumgarten, at that time universally revered, awakened an interest in this department throughout our country ; and gradually prepared the way for the revolution which, about twenty-five years afterwards, affected the study of history in Germany. It is manifest that by it Michaelis was led to extend his views from the history of individual kingdoms and states, to universal history ; that from the influence of this work, and from the observation of its gross offences against established truth, he arrived at that copiousness of ideas concerning history, which, through the medium of a school of oriental and exegetical learning, contributed to the earliest formation of some of the most eminent historical scholars of Germany.

Had it been his fate to labour principally in this department, he certainly would have formed, of himself, that epoch in the study of history, to which, as it was, he contributed only at a distance ; and would have united, in a close and amicable manner, inquiries after historical truth with a pragmatcal mode of presenting them. His notions on this subject were, to say the least, perfectly correct, pure, and manly ; equally averse from the affec-

tations of many modern, reputed writers of this class, and from the coarseness, stiffness, and pedantry with which most of our earlier historians have disgraced this noble department. But in regard to the merit of the ancient classical historians, in this respect, he was unjust in his decision, when he derided their interwoven orations. In our times, and in Germany, this pragmatism of presenting historical truths, would be, decidedly, a ridiculous affectation; but was it so in its own times, and in its origin? Eloquent statesmen were at that time the writers of history. Was it not natural, that in the midst of simple narration, they should be carried away into debate? Did they not describe revolutions which originated under the constant influence of this political eloquence? It is universally acknowledged to be a master-stroke of historical composition, to convert the readers into contemporaries of the delineated events, by means of the plan and copiousness of the narration; and to place the objects before them, in such a manner, that every thing may unfold itself before their eyes in its actual progress. Could better means have been devised for effecting this delusion, than the machinery of political eloquence? Had the ancient classical historians even the choice left of another form adapted to their nearest readers?

It is to be attributed solely to accident, under whose tyranny the scholar so often sighs, that Michaelis did not devote his life principally to history. His inclination and his talents were early determined that way. With it he had commenced his career as an university teacher; and he would have prosecuted the study uninterruptedly and with delight. But Münchhausen drew him aside from these pursuits, in order to reform, by means of him, the theology of Germany. Still, even in old age, he did not desert the friend of his youth. As a lover of history, he continued to range, without restraint, through her immeasurable fields; but as a profound inquirer, he limited himself solely to those districts which bordered the nearest on his own department; especially to the most ancient genealogy of nations—the most difficult point in

historical investigations ; which becomes continually more difficult and obscure the further we have to penetrate into antiquity ; which loses itself finally in a profound darkness, where a ray of genial light can scarcely penetrate. He was desirous of seeing a comparison of languages combined with the ancient traditions which we yet possess ; a noble thought of Leibnitz, adopted by Gundling, and applied by him, as far as his department permitted, imperfectly however, and like a novice, without a thorough insight into the peculiar nature of the languages. Being in the same place, and in connection with the same faculty, he was led soon after this, to an intimacy with Büttner, who was desirous of devoting the whole of his noiseless life to this thought of the German philosopher. The nearer connection with this learned philologist, strengthened and confirmed Michaelis in his design of illustrating, after this manner, the genealogical catalogue of Moses. The suggestions of Büttner are always, in the writings of Michaelis, designated by the mention of his name ; where this is not the case, we may rest assured we have the investigations of Michaelis himself. In his comparison of languages, he was never contented with a partial and frequently accidental resemblance between words ; but insisted, as was right, upon identity of grammatical structure, and regarded this alone as the most satisfactory proof of a kindred origin.

His historical and statistical views were expanded and improved into political reflections, at first through his long residence in England, and afterwards through his German contemporaries, who had awakened also in Germany a love for statistics and politics, by the success which attended their exertions to elevate them to permanent university sciences. It was now entirely in conformity with the spirit and plan of Michaelis, to keep pace with his contemporaries, in these pursuits also ; and to make the most worthy and noble use of these new and favourite sciences, for his own department, at a time when no other student of antiquities in Germany indulged a similar thought. In his "*Marriage Laws of Moses,*" we see already the dawn which brightened into the

day of his "*Mosaical laws*;" the plan, however, was conformed too much to a canonical theology, to permit a free political spirit to pervade it. This work, however, assisted to place him on the track, and served, at least, as a valuable preparation. For he advanced upon this from individual parts to the whole, and contemplated, in the spirit of Montesquieu, the legislative system and the political constitution of the Hebrews. The spirit of philosophical reflection vied, as it were, with his statistical, political and antiquarian researches, and led to the production of a work, in comparison with which, every earlier attempt, of a similar character, of antiquarians and politicians, dwindled into insignificance—an original work, with which we can scarcely compare a single work on any ancient or modern political constitution. Before his time, every thing on this subject had been thrown together promiscuously. Ancient laws and regulations interfered with modern; genuine mosaic ordinances were mingled with spurious, which had been introduced, or new moulded, or certainly altered, partly by Persians, partly by Greeks, partly by Romans; real laws alternated with the mere ordinances of individual Rabbins, which owed their origin, sometimes to an excessive solicitude, sometimes to an idle misapprehension. Credulity and political ignorance reigned in all their investigations and reflections. In the midst of this, Michaelis made his appearance. He commenced the work with historical criticism and a philosophical estimation of the original sources, and discarded every thing from which no genuine Mosaical institution could be obtained. He then removed the materials, to which, before his time, no eye but that of the antiquary had been directed, into a free political light; at every portion of the constitution he penetrated into the nature of its origin, and then illustrated it from similar regulations of other nations. Reflections upon the object and design of the laws and upon their consequences, upon their utility and the contrary, were mingled with remarks upon their local or temporal adaptedness, and with many others of this character, which, according to circumstances, might af-

ford employment or even instruction to the philosopher and the politician, the historian and the antiquary. Before this time, none were seen to meddle with those subjects but the industrious students of antiquity; now a philosophical critic familiarly acquainted with history and with politics was seen engaged in the pursuit. Before this time, blundering and credulous compilers; now a keen and critical inquirer. Before this, an intolerable political jargon was seen to prevail; now, political and philosophical reasoning. In this way he introduced sense and entertainment for the statesman, into a subject which, it was formerly believed, could furnish employment only to the timid, shy and secluded antiquary.

The work left but little more to be desired; less with regard to individual parts, here and there something more in regard to the whole. Sometimes, however, it seems to stray away into foreign regions and times, and to speculate upon effects which, from the circumstances of the case, Moses could not have regarded; sometimes we find, perhaps, a political castle in the air, without foundation, which the breath of historical criticism can demolish. And who does not regard this as perfectly natural and consistent with the progress of the human mind? Is it not in conformity with the situation of an author, who is desirous of bringing into reputation a science which has been disgraced by unworthy treatment, and of animating with new life the old inanimate mass? When industriously engaged in the search for political plans and designs, we are too prone to attribute to the law-giver secret plans and projects which never entered into his soul; or we connect, too refinedly, into a political system, those laws whose connection is much more loose and vague. It is a happy circumstance that Michaelis has distributed with so lavish a hand; we can now, more easily, remove what is superfluous. The humble tabernacle of Moses, with all its furniture, stands before us; should any article be yet too splendid, we can easily supply its place with a meaner one; the first erection of the building was the difficult and most important work. It remained perhaps, only to survey the

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whole once more with an unbiassed regard to the times in which it originated, to other systems of legislation, which proceeded, perhaps, from the same point, and to the degree of culture which Moses really possessed; and then in accordance with this, to appreciate the individual points. Thus revised, this portion of antiquity might be placed in the best possible light for the literature of our times. Posterity will provide for its own additional wants.

With his historical investigations, his geographical researches are closely connected. As far as it could be done, he placed the ancient names of countries and cities by the side of the modern; he determined, more accurately than was usually done, their situation together with their boundaries; and dwelt with pleasure upon their natural and political history. All his writings, it is true, abound with the results of these investigations; but we may form an acquaintance with his geographical manner, most satisfactorily, from his explanations appended to *Abulfeda's Geographical Description of Egypt*, which connect together the ancient, middle, and modern geography of the country. In the prosecution of those favourite researches, he derived immediate advantage from the instructions he had formerly received at the university. The study of the mathematics, which are altogether indispensable to every scholar, whether speculative or practical, and which, when neglected, wreak, sooner or later, ample vengeance,—this study had not been slighted by Michaelis. He had at least so much general mathematical knowledge, that he was enabled to assist himself in his inquiries, in order to discover, to correct, and even to avoid the errors of others in this department. Finally, his statistical taste did not desert him here, but preserved his investigations from an insipid dryness.

Michaelis prosecuted for the greatest length of time, and in the most distinguished manner, his inquiries concerning the geographical and genealogical catalogue of Moses, (Gen. x.), and concerning the passages which bore any relation to this in the writings of the Hebrews. Bochart had led the way illustriously, for, as to what could be ob-

tained, in relation to the names in this catalogue, from the ancient classics, from translators of the Bible, and from Arabians, he had left but little remaining to be done. There was, however, one source of illustration, already partially laid open, to wit, the modern journeys in the East, which he had despised; whereas he abounded in etymologies, and had frequently converted questions of history into purely etymological investigations. Finally, another abundant source of geographical discoveries, was, after Bochart, laid open by Asseman, of which no one as yet had been able to avail himself. Michaelis was determined now to ascertain how much light could be borrowed for this dark portion of antiquity from travels and from learned Syrians. He was desirous of examining critically the etymologies of Bochart, and of confining within narrower limits the use of the same in geographical investigations, and conforming these last again more nearly to the course of historical researches. A subordinate design also was to obliterate utterly the yet surviving notions of Rudbeck, according to which, information is to be found in Moses, concerning the origin of all the nations upon the wide earth, and in tracing the history of all nations we must commence our researches with Noah's ark. He limited therefore this catalogue to those nations which could be known to the Hebrews, through the medium of Arabia, Egypt and Phenicia, because in it were found merely names without explanation and accompanying places of residence; consequently nothing can be found in it which was unknown to its first readers.

Not a word more has since been said on the idle fancies of Rudbeck. As to other questions, many have been fully settled, others nearly so, and for the decision of others abundant materials have been collected. Michaelis rejected the idle dream, that the genealogies of nations, like those of individuals, can be traced back to one original ancestor, and regarded therefore the names of this catalogue, not as the names of individual persons, but as the names of whole tribes.

This whole mode of proceeding seems to be philoso-

phically correct, and probably met with universal approbation. Still, however, we cannot suppress within ourselves the doubt, whether this whole fragmentary relic has not been regarded too much in the light of modern times; and whether the want of uniformity in the mode of explaining and handling it, does not oppose this view of it. At the commencement, the names are regarded as the names of individual persons, (Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth); the succeeding names, although similarly constructed, are to be considered as the names of whole tribes; Gomer for example, of the Galatians; Madai, of the Medes; and Javan, of the Greeks. Is it not purely capricious, to treat similarly constructed names in so different a manner? Sometimes indeed, a city, a province, and a country bear the name of the individual. In the instance before us, however, this would have been the case in a long list of names of a whole genealogical table. How much probability then can this hypothesis claim for its support?

All this conducts us to another question, viz. whether the genealogical inquiries of nations, in their infancy, have not proceeded on the supposition, that every nation was to be derived from an original ancestor of the same name; and whether the names of such original ancestors were not first suggested by the names of the nations themselves. Mankind collectively were regarded as the descendants of one individual: and, in conformity with this, every nation was regarded as a smaller family, whose genealogical catalogue terminated also in the name of a single individual. The ancients regarded with admiration the depth of wisdom to which they had attained by this happy thought, and contrived a childish hypothesis under which to range some traditions which had been inherited by them. It was an hypothesis, however, fully consistent with the early childhood of historical investigations. Do we not daily, in all the sciences, construct in the same manner, hypotheses, out of the materials of our present thoughts? And why should we ridicule them, unmindful that a wiser posterity may also ridicule us? The genealogical table of Moses furnishes us with an ex-

position of the names of countries and of tribes known at that day. The ancient traditions were here made use of, and were laid at the foundation. These traditions are still extant. We receive them with gratitude from the hand of time, and we connect them, as far as practicable, with other traditions; but a man must be a dreamer indeed, who would search in them for correct geographical and genealogical information.

A fondness for more accurate geographical knowledge, and for his principal department, that of oriental learning, awakened in Michaelis the desire of possessing a better acquaintance with the moral, physical, and geographical situation of Arabia Felix. The defectiveness of the descriptions of this country, hitherto published, was attributed to the defective preparations of those whom mere accident had thrown into Arabia. Unacquainted with that which the scholar especially desires to know, and ignorant of what yet remains to be investigated, they had furnished merely what came within their notice, unsought, and uninvestigated; whereas, he alone returns richly laden from a journey, who entered upon it well supplied. It so happened that Michaelis was enabled to communicate his wishes to Count Bernstorff, an illustrious minister of state, and a man of cultivated science, who succeeded in procuring for them the encouragement of his King. The proposition of a learned expedition, previously prepared, and at the royal expense, was acceded to by the King of Denmark; and Michaelis was entrusted with all the necessary preparations—a royal reward for a successful and bold proposition, which contributed to spread, far and wide, the fame of Michaelis. The notoriety of the expedition; the number of scholars selected to accompany it, who embraced within their little circle the noblest departments of knowledge; the complete literary outfit; the instructions, composed with prudent foresight, and sanctioned by the royal authority; the invitations to the most celebrated Academies and Societies to take part in the expedition, by means of queries—all these circumstances spread the name of Michaelis far beyond the limits of his own country. Besides all this, he

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crowned the reputation which accrued to him from these causes, by the questions which he furnished for these learned travellers; many of which, owing to their matter and compass, might be denominated instructive treatises, rather than learned questions. They referred mostly to the physical portion of Biblical antiquity, yet so obscure; the names, to wit, and nature, of the beasts, plants, trees, and precious stones, which, as objects of science and as serving to illustrate many obscure passages in the Hebrew writings, could not but awaken a spirit of investigation. The exuberance of knowledge displayed by these questions in diverse branches of learning, at that time not expected in a philologist, proved, for the first time, to Germany, what Michaelis was. And as the work was at the same time published in French, it procured for him abroad also the fame of a most comprehensive scholar, whose reputation extended even to Spain. France now endeavoured to appropriate him to herself. The Academy of Inscriptions at Paris included him, for the present, in the number of their foreign correspondents, until they could reward him with a more distinguished honour, the situation of a *membre étranger*, the number of whom, at any one time, was restricted to eight. Seldom has such an honourable and rich reward followed so immediately upon desert, after so short a contest with envy. The reward, in this instance, was received from the hands of a king, from a foreign land, and from the noblest families abroad, who are seldom influenced by the most wily operations of a crafty jealousy, restricted, as it is in its effects, to the narrow circle of its pitiful connections in its own country.

If this literary expedition, with its extraordinary preparations, and the propitious circumstance of royal support, has not answered the expectations of all, the blame was certainly not to be attributed to the originator, but solely to the tyranny of accident and of death, which removed, in the midst of the journey, all excepting one of the scholars who were selected to accompany it. Niebuhr, however, has exceeded the proudest expectations; and his productions, on occasion of this journey, out-

weigh, in intrinsic importance, half a library of other travels in these lands.

Of these and the earlier travels in the East, Michaelis made a diligent use, for the purposes of Biblical learning. In pursuance of this object, he trod the path which others had already trodden before him; he pursued it, however, further, and in his own peculiar way. It had been observed already, before his time, that the manners and customs, such as they are represented by the Old Testament, from the time of the patriarchs downward, might receive more or less elucidation from the manners and customs of other nations of entirely different origin and language, and under entirely different climates,—from notices of America, India, Greenland, &c. The earlier collectors had thrown together into a promiscuous heap, resemblances, wherever they discovered them, without distinction of country or people. That much of this was apposite, was not to be denied; but Michaelis, accustomed to historical criticism, could not regard this mixture with approbation. He separated and discriminated, and without inquiring whence this resemblance in the case of nations so different in their origin, and under climates so various, might proceed; perhaps also because no ready solution of this difficulty suggested itself, he limited this mode of illustration entirely to the East and to the Semitic nations. By this mode of proceeding, the exegetical use of the travels became, to say the least, more sure; and, so long as it was only calculated for individual passages, it was certainly well founded. But in thus narrowing the limits, an important consideration escaped his otherwise so philosophical eye, to wit, the genuine source of the observed resemblances. He regarded them, perhaps, as merely accidental: an accident however which obtains so uniformly and extensively, can no longer be regarded as an accident. Thus the observation presses itself upon us, that a similar situation in regard to civilization and intellect, would lead us to expect a similar intellectual and moral character, and similar manners and customs; and that, if left to themselves, and undisturbed by foreign influence in their progress towards refinement,

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mankind universally elevate themselves according to the same laws, and advance by steps universally ascertained and well defined. This observation, confirmed by the progress of human culture in every period of history, seems to open entirely new avenues to remote antiquity ; and to conduct to results by which we are enabled, as it seems, to penetrate much deeper than formerly into the spirit of the Hebrew writings.

The Old Testament, when Michaelis engaged in the study of it, was shrouded in the darkness which Buxtorf had thrown around it. The day, it is true, that might have dispersed it, had already, a long time before, dawned upon Halle ; but it enlightened there the eyes of no student of the Bible. They thought, instructed, and wrote, as if they still lived in the midst of the deep darkness of that earlier night. A Bible with various readings had been printed at Halle, in the year 1720, and notwithstanding the use of the whole noble apparatus, they adhered still pertinaciously to the infallibility of the vulgar text. They had in their possession collations exhibiting various departures from the punctuation of the printed text ; and still they adhered obstinately to the divinity and absolute correctness of every point in the printed Bible. They had discovered, upon investigation, and exposed to view in this edition of the Bible, the contradictions of the Masora—the most satisfactory evidence of their fallibility ; and yet they had sworn, in as solemn a manner, to the absolute infallibility of the same, as they had sworn to their symbolical articles. They were verily blinded by the excess of light.

Michaelis, on his first appearance as a public teacher, was full, to overflowing, of this faith of his fathers. In the year 1739, he decked out, after his fashion, in a dissertation “ *de punctorum hebraicorum antiquitate* ” the whole fallacy of the so denominated divinity and sanctity of the Hebrew punctuation system, in all its extent. In the year 1740, he came forward in the disputation, *de Psalmo xxii.* as an advocate of the infallibility of the entire text ; and sought to establish anew the Jewish paralogisms, which before that time had been publicly defend-

ed. His journey abroad shook in no respect this faith received from his fathers : for the same chimeras, adapted to palsy both mind and soul, prevailed yet in England and Holland. Nay, in the year 1745, he composed a Hebrew Grammar, in which he arrayed in defence of this superstition, as it became a bold champion in the service, the whole host of grammatical sophistries. Had he continued to live and teach a longer time in Halle, he would still, for a long time, have remained of this sentiment ; for it would have raised there a frightful storm, and perhaps have cost even a martyrdom to the cause of Biblical criticism, to have declared himself publicly the advocate of another faith.

He came to Göttingen. He had lived, and taught, and prosecuted his studies here scarcely for the space of five years, remote from the constraining influence of the faith of the pious Jewish-Christian party, when all these prejudices took their flight. This mental crisis may be dated somewhere in the period from 1750 to 1752. We find him, since that time, fully engaged in critical philological studies, under the guidance of enlightened principles ; and preparing the way for that revolution which, from about the year 1760, he was enabled to effect in the department of biblical criticism and exegesis.

Until this time, the study of the Oriental languages had been prosecuted in Germany, almost without an object and with the most contracted partiality. At one time there reigned among the scholars of this department, a slavish deference for the Rabbinical Lexicon ; at another, a capricious changing and transposing of consonants, in order to unravel the meaning of an obscure word ; at another, mere conjecture, as to the meaning, from the connection of the words : always, however, a blind confidence in tradition. A few only—perhaps no one in Germany, studied the known Shemitic languages, in the connection in which Castell had previously set an illustrious example ; and those who followed him yet at a distance, followed him at least in his less satisfactory steps. This department received finally a distinguished assistance from two learned men, from Kromeyer, a German superintendent

and philologist ; and from the celebrated Albert Schultens ; both of whom made an excellent use of the Arabic in their Hebrew inquiries ; the former, as a scholar, in a small provincial town, with scanty and inconsiderable assistance ; the latter, with incomparably greater effect, as an university scholar, in the neighbourhood of the Leyden-library, abounding in manuscripts. Halle brought at length the Oriental languages into a closer union and connection with one another, than other German universities ; in which the Missionary institutions also had a remote share. The learned Doctor Michaelis was already more extensively and perfectly acquainted with them than the rest of his known contemporaries, but he manifested an attachment to many idle notions, and to etymological drudgery, which as soon as it is elevated to the principal rank, cripples both mind and soul of a philologist.

Michaelis brought with him, from the instructive school of his father, a multitude of nice philological observations—the richest portion which, as a theologian, he had received from the university. But it required years of time to digest them ; to separate the dross from the gold ; and to introduce, into the whole study of the languages, more philosophy, and derive from it more abundant advantage for the Old Testament. During the first ten years of his residence in Göttingen, he seems to have devoted his attention principally to the genuine sources of Hebrew philology, and to the writings of Albert Schultens. A result of this was his “ *critical examination of the means of becoming acquainted with the Hebrew language,*” which appeared in the year 1756, in which we everywhere discover the industrious and docile disciple of Schultens. In his critical course of instruction, he had conceived, in the year 1759, the design, among others, of further explaining the rules he had there expounded, by means of more abundant examples and proofs, drawn from his own researches. In the same year appeared, also, his work on the influence of languages upon the opinions of men, in which he elevated philological inquiries to the rank of philosophical investigations. In this spirit he continued his philological researches, without interruption, into his latest years ; he engaged in them, however, only occa-

sionally and individually, as was necessary, in order not thereby to oppress the mind. He scattered through all his writings a great portion of his results. In the evening of his days, he had leisure to collect and revise them, and to present the full and mature results of his long research—the philological harvest of almost half a century—in his “*Supplementa ad Lexica Hebræa*,” which work was left by him nearly completed, and is now almost through the press.* They form an acute, perpetual criticism upon the earlier Hebrew Dictionaries; upon the significations which they adopt; and upon the genealogies which they exhibit, composed according to the principles which he had adopted for himself in his years of maturity. How correct soever his theory may be considered, in regard to the application of it, we may still frequently differ in opinion. In his solicitude to avoid, in the comparison of Oriental dialects, a capricious change and transposition of letters, he despised it even in those cases, where Albert Schultens had already defended it from the charge of caprice by unobjectionable examples. He thus deprived himself of a valuable assistance, in the case of Hebrew words, which occur but seldom, or only once. His want of confidence in establishing the meanings from the connection, seems frequently to have withdrawn his attention from this connection, and to have led him to the adoption of meanings entirely at variance with it, drawn from the Oriental dialects. His confidence in the more correct philological views of the old translators of the Bible, in the case of difficult or rare words, seems frequently too unlimited, and not adequately moderated by the suspicion, which a bare inspection frequently confirms, that they, in such cases, might have been no better off than ourselves. These however are spots which ought not to come into consideration, when regarding such a master work; and serve, at most, to show that even the most vigilant attention sometimes flags in a work so barren and discouraging, and so oppressive both to soul and body. We are astonished rather, when we follow him step by step, at the admirable fidelity and care with which he availed himself of his sources; we are astonish-

* Published in 6 Parts, at Göttingen, in 1792.

ed, not that errors or inadvertencies sometimes surprise him, but that they have not much oftener surprised him ; that his ardent and vivacious mind, with such assiduity, perseverance and patience, was able to endure so oppressive, dry and meagre an employment. In his remarkably acute, critical, and correct use of those sources which were accessible to him, what could we have wished more, than that a free access had been permitted him to all. For this purpose, however, he must have lived in a place abounding with manuscripts, and not at Göttingen. As it was, he could extend his philological illustrations, drawn from the Oriental dialects, no further than the printed dictionaries enabled him. Neither Golius, however, nor Castell, nor Giggeo, nor yet the contributions of the richer Arabic scholars, even when gathered from their writings with the utmost care, suffice for the accurate and thorough survey of the various significations of Arabic words. It is frequently impossible to understand them satisfactorily, without the aid of Janhari, and Firauzabad, much less, then, to make use of them. Here a wide field, which promises a rich harvest, spreads itself before those scholars who have access to these sources. He performed what in his situation was possible, and he performed much ; let others, in more favourable circumstances, accomplish more.

¶ When entering, however, upon an inheritance, how rich soever it may be, the heirs may still have some wishes remaining. For the enlarging and enriching, therefore, of these lexicographical treasures, we could have wished that, in his latter years, before delivering over to the public this illustrious bequest, he had revised again the rich philological works of a Pocock, a Schultens, a Schröder, &c. in order, again, after the additional experience of so many years spent in philological studies, to estimate critically what, before this, he had despised. As it now is, his opinions clash with theirs in many instances where truth seems to incline to their side.

His accurate grammatical knowledge of the Syriac and Arabic, is abundantly attested by his grammars of those languages. Although in the theoretical part, they exhibit

but little that is new, after the thorough *Syriasmus* of Doctor Michaelis, and after the labours of Erpenius and of Schultens; still, they recommend themselves by clearness, and by a more intelligible exhibition of grammatical rules: and, in the historical part, by the results of nice investigations, in which other grammarians had not yet employed their minds, or for the prosecution of which they had not yet access to the original sources. His edition of *Castell's Syriac Lexicon* proves that, in his Syriac studies, he had advanced with his age; and his *Abulfeda on Egypt* shews that, next to Reiske, the greatest Arabic scholar of modern times, he has acquired the most deserved reputation as an expounder of the Arabic text of the Geographer.

Of the criticism of the Old Testament in Germany, he must be considered in the most proper sense of the word, the father. Before the appearance of the dissertations of Kennicott in the year 1752, the thought of a critical mode of proceeding in relation to the Old Testament, seems never to have been awakened in his bosom. Up to that time, at least, all his writings take for granted the absolute correctness of his text. It needed however only the feeble essay of Kennicott for this purpose, and Michaelis was immediately upon the right track; perhaps even on a better track than Kennicott himself. He was already fully ripe and prepared for such a direction; and, in all probability, he would, without the aid of Kennicott, in a short time, have adopted it of himself.

A short examination of the labours of his predecessors, convinced him where they failed in the critical treatment of the Old Testament. Capell was too bold, too deficient in industry, too ignorant of the Oriental languages; Kennicott, too much a novice in every thing pertaining to the business, too deficient in all the preparatory branches, and, notwithstanding his manifest ignorance, too presumptuous and too much inclined to alterations; Houbignant, too slightly acquainted with the Hebrew grammar, too lavish of his bold conjectures, too sparing of various readings, which, however, he might have furnished merely from the Paris manuscripts. Time has confirmed

the correctness of these opinions. Who has now, after the lapse of nearly forty years, any hesitation fully to subscribe to them?

In order to repair, as far as possible, this deficiency, and to expedite the progress of the criticism of the Old Testament, he commenced immediately a course of critical lectures on selected passages of the Old Testament, and published, a few years after, in the year 1759, as a specimen of the same, his critical course on the three most important Psalms concerning Christ. This production only verifies our experience, that we must first be accustomed to walk before we can walk safely. Thus every thing here also remained in its natural order. The attempt, however, attracted the universal attention which it deserved. No work, on the Old Testament, in any language, could be compared with it in richness, profundity and originality. Philological and critical learning tendered jointly their aid: the significations of the difficult words were etymologically investigated and classed, and the illustrations of the older translators collectively used for this purpose; the explanations both of words and of things, of the most esteemed Rabbins, were examined; the various readings of the manuscripts and old editions, as far as they were accessible at that time, were appreciated and exhibited, for such various readings might be sought for and estimated from the older translators. He even ventured upon conjectures, and found himself in the full use of all those critical and exegetical sources from which he continued afterwards, but with more solid experience, to draw. The completeness of the critical and exegetical apparatus, and a careful appreciation of it, were the principal objects of regard with him, in order to furnish in his work a model for future critical illustrations of the Old Testament.

Only a small portion, therefore,—three Psalms of moderate compass,—was subjected to a critical examination, so that the materials in all their extent could easily be surveyed at once; and the Psalms themselves were wisely selected. The theologians recovered from their panic. They had trembled lest the criticism of the Old Testa-

ment, now awaking from its slumbers, should subvert all doctrine, and exhibit another history of the Creation, another history of the Fall, and another doctrine concerning Christ. On the contrary, they found in this first critical essay on three Psalms pertaining to the Messiah, that from the assistance of criticism, even a confirmation of the system might be expected. And was not this the most glorious recommendation which this new science could receive on its first introduction to the public?

He longed for the appearance of Kennicott's collection of various readings from Masoretic manuscripts, the departures of which from the vulgar text seemed to be so numerous, that he was led to indulge sanguine expectations from this collection, in regard to the rectification of the Hebrew text. He indulged also the hope, that among the multitude of manuscripts collated, some, at least, of high antiquity, might be found, or transcripts of the same, of equal value. He promised himself, by means of them, the purification of the text from the most obvious errors of the transcribers; numerous corrections of the punctuation, if attention should ever be directed to the subject, as it then was to the consonants; and a system of criticism for the Old Testament, as well established and as sure, as that for the New. As it was not the business of Germany to encourage the undertaking, as the British did, by pecuniary contributions, he did as essential service to the cause, by awakening an enthusiasm in its favour. His word availed everywhere. Every one looked with longing expectations towards England. Men who had nothing to do with various readings, talked now of such collections. No name was more frequently mentioned than that of Kennicott. The enthusiasm impelled many to take part in the collation; for they ventured to hope, that the highly prized immortality of their names would be secured in the immortal work of Kennicott. In this manner Michaelis inspirited the collaters, in so barren an employment; and encouraged the zeal of Kennicott himself, and of his coadjutors. The result has not answered the great expectations that were formed; on the contrary, it has very much depreciated in our view

the value of the Masoretic manuscripts. It was well, however, that the contrary opinion formerly prevailed. To this error we are indebted for what we now possess. Michaelis himself, after the appearance of Kennicott's collection of various readings, acknowledged the poverty of the Masoretic manuscripts, and estimated them at no higher rate than they really deserve. Under the pressure of age, he made a use of the collective body of various readings, which only a few as yet had made. He traced the mutual relationship of the manuscripts among one another; investigated their connection with the Masora, passage by passage; and ascertained the value of individual readings.

Thus he continued to employ himself unceasingly in critical investigations even to his latest day, and remained always at the head of his contemporaries. The greatest number of his critical observations on the Hebrew text, are found in his *Oriental Magazine*, where he specifies the readings adopted or not adopted by him, with the grounds on which he proceeded. They constitute a rich collection of acute and ingenious conjectures, intermingled with a goodly number of emendations, which will doubtless maintain their ground against the assaults of time and a more improved criticism. Granting that conjectures and emendations are also exhibited, which might apparently have been dispensed with, which are rendered improbable by the connection, and by an accurate knowledge of the language, or by the period of the Hebrew literature to which the emended portion belongs; still, they continue to be, in another respect, valuable, by presenting inducements to the interpreter to remove the difficulties, by a better interpretation, by a satisfactory explanation drawn from the kindred dialects, or by any other method; and thus to render the further assistance of criticism unnecessary. We now possess, from the hand of Michaelis, a brief specimen of criticism on approved principles, applied to all the writings of the Old Testament. May others, who in future devote their attention to these writings themselves, or to his labours, continue to follow his example, and proceed with the same critical

judgment, correcting and completing them, advancing further, with more acuteness and certainty; first illustrating and then using the sources of criticism, and cherishing continually those nobler and more elevated aims, for which his age was not yet ripe. It is long continued exercise alone, and the matured experience accruing from this, which establish the course of criticism, and sharpen and correct the critical tact. Michaelis led the way and furnished the most noble contributions. If we have not attained this critical tact, the blame must rest with ourselves.

Of a work, in which he aimed to rise from mere verbal criticism, to one of a higher character, viz. his *complete Introduction to the Old Testament*, we have been deprived by his advanced age and his death—a serious loss, provided the materials for it should not be found among his papers, which, even in a fragmentary condition, would be worthy of publication. In the first part, which is already in our hands, on Moses and on Job, he could only revise his earlier investigations in relation to these writings, arrange them differently, and thus present them under a new aspect. In the volumes yet to follow, we may anticipate a rich harvest of original observations. This is probably the only work which he has left unfinished. It is the commencement of a great building, which serves to remind us that the experienced architect is no more.

His philological merits in regard to the New Testament are not so great as those in regard to the Old. In the latter he was under the necessity of creating every thing for himself, but in the former he could only help forward the good work already begun. Before his time, scholars, misled by commentators, drew their philological illustrations, for the most part, from the ancient classical authors of early Greece, from Homer, Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon, &c. About his time, Otte, Carpzov, Krebs and others, directed the attention to the Alexandrian school, and opened, for the first time, the genuine source of illustration. Michaelis was faithful to this source. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the history

of the Resurrection, and the first book of the Maccabees, he resorted most cheerfully to Philo, Josephus, the Septuagint, and the other Greek writers on the Old Testament, and kindly assisted Ernesti in promoting the good cause. His own contributions consisted of frequent comparisons of Syriac, Chaldaic and Talmudic words and expressions with the Greek, which none of his predecessors or contemporaries had furnished in such abundance, and for which purpose no individual had been able to use the collections of Wetstein in so masterly a manner. But where deep and extensive knowledge of the Greek was requisite, Ernesti and other moderns may have excelled him.

For the criticism, however, properly speaking, of the New Testament, in Germany, we are indebted for the most part to Michaelis: he received it poor and uncultivated; he left it rich and matured.

Down to the middle of the present century, the criticism of the New Testament was decried by almost all the German theologians. With what violence did the theological cabal attack even the pious Albert Bengel, when he first endeavoured to introduce it! How timidly did the father of Michaelis come forward in his work *de Variis N. T. lectionibus*! How poor and imperfect does it appear, even in the year 1750, in Michaelis' Introduction to the New Testament!

Still his heart doated upon this youthful work with the affection of a parent; he cherished and nourished it till his latest days, and thus it received at last its fixed and manly form. It would be unjust and ungrateful to inquire what it was at first. It is now what its title declares it to be, *an Introduction to the Study of the New Testament*, furnishing an easy general survey of the points of principal moment, in the criticism of the same, indispensable to every theologian—a genuine magazine of critical learning. Whatever was agitated, before and at the time of Michaelis, in relation to the criticism of the New Testament, with the exception of a few hypotheses, may be found here discussed, with a constant regard to the original sources; so that, under his hands, they become pro-

perly the results of his own study, deprived only of the merit of having been first announced by him. We see here recorded the history of his opinions, and of his progressive study of the New Testament; we see him here wavering, fluctuating, weighing, conjecturing and erring, until he arrived at the point which he thought he could maintain; we see here discussions in which, at every step, he subjected himself as well as others to a rigid criticism. The style of the work, it is true, is rendered thus more broken and heavy; but it becomes, on the other hand, more instructive for every one who wishes to commence his acquaintance with such investigations.

To him we are indebted for many new results. He dwelt, with the most pleasure, on the merits of the principal manuscripts and of the older translations. He furnishes here a rich supply of original observations, and displays his critical talents in all their excellence. For an example, we need only turn to his investigations concerning the Syriac translations; which are so novel, so rich, and so fruitful in inferences for every scholar in this department. Even where he pursues some favourite hypothesis of his own, which can hardly stand the test of criticism,—as in the case of the Hebrew original text of the Epistle to the Hebrews,—still, those who differ from him on the main point, will find other subordinate investigations, abounding in useful instruction, which we would gladly receive from his hand.

For a long time, however, he appears to have acted unjustly and ungratefully towards Semler, his profound and critical contemporary; and toward the bold elevation which he had given to criticism. But in his latter days he exonerated himself from this reproach, and discarded a number of notions which he had cherished during nearly half a century. The edition of his *Introduction*, prepared in the year 1788, estimates justly, together with Semler, the real value of the so styled Latinising manuscripts, and the high antiquity of their text. It purports to be an abstract of critical proceedings adapted to certain principal divisions of the general subject; made, however, in a peculiar manner, as Michaelis himself had

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always practised it. It establishes, also, more firmly than had heretofore been done, the authority of some of the writings of the New Testament ; those, for example, of Mark and of Luke. Thus the mind of Michaelis, contrary to the usual course of things, remained, even in his old age, so pliant as to admit an entire change of his early ideas.

The same critical materials might, it is true, in our day, have been disposed of in a more novel, free, and summary manner ; it is questionable, however, whether we should have obtained the same rich store of original results. But a capital consideration, which should not have been disregarded, has unfortunately been overlooked by Michaelis, viz. the inquiry into the religious notions of the Jews at the time of Christ and the Apostles, which would have enabled him to have seen, more satisfactorily, how Christianity arose out of Judaism ; with what wisdom Christ and the Apostles conducted themselves in the first establishment and promulgation of our religion ; how they connected their new doctrines with the old ones ; where they adhered to the old path ; where they advanced further ; and where they moulded every thing anew. In the present state of these researches, the distance between the Old and the New Testament, and the transition from the one to the other, appear too great.

Sound exegesis was a thing unknown when Michaelis commenced his career. It was even inferior to that which prevailed two centuries before.

At the period of the Reformation, all the arts of interpretation were in full exercise—a natural consequence of the enthusiasm, with which the study of the ancient classics had been prosecuted for nearly a century. This state of things was succeeded by the arts of controversy. Barbarism, however, as might naturally be expected, reigned in all the departments of theology, until within about fifty years of the present day. Grotius, indeed, who had grown up in the study of the ancient classics, made an effort to restore this state of things ; but his mild and benevolent voice was drowned amidst the barbarous yells of the German theologians, led on by Salov.

Meanwhile the study of the ancient languages was revived. The oriental languages established themselves at Halle, in the very school from which Michaelis came. But they lent no aid to the exegesis of the Bible. What was only the means, was regarded as the end. Philological learning was sought for, merely for its own sake, as if no nobler use of it could be conceived. An idle rummaging among words, tedious etymologies, and grammatical speculations, afforded the principal gratification. The philologists knew not how to turn their treasure to advantage. If they applied them to the Bible, they busied themselves eternally with mere words and phrases and syllabification, and laid immense stress upon every syllable, which was certainly never intended by the original author. They had not even a remote apprehension of that which gives life and fruitfulness to the business of interpretation, viz. penetrating views of the peculiarities of the ancient language, and of the course and connection of the thoughts in any work; the development of these from the spirit of the times, and from the character and prevailing sentiments of every period. As to the didactic theologians, they occupied too proud a station in their lordly systems, to condescend to enter the humble abodes of philology. They adhered to Luther's translation, and expounded it—the genuine protestant Vulgate of those days.

The progress of deism, which was sounding, throughout England, its loud scoffs at all positive religion, at length constrained the British theologians to defend their territories by means of a better study of the Bible. But they had among them, at that time, no philologist who could commence with grammatical-philological explanations. Their sagacity, however, provided a remedy. The significations of the words, and the sense of the whole, were elicited by an acute analysis of the whole connection; and the results were comprehended in verbose, and diffuse paraphrases—the most effectual method of concealing their ignorance of the original language, from themselves and others.

With this sort of exegesis, Michaelis became acquainted, during his residence in England. With all its imper-

fections, it was still more rich and instructive than the miserable mode which prevailed in his own country; and he thought it, therefore, worthy of imitation in Germany. To commence, he furnished Latin translations of English paraphrasts; of Benson, on James, in the year 1746; of Pierce, on the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the year 1747. He then proceeded to paraphrases of his own. In the year 1750, appeared his paraphrase of the minor epistles of Paul; in the year 1751, his poetical paraphrase of Ecclesiastes; and in the year 1762, his paraphrase of the epistle of Paul to the Hebrews. This mode of exegesis was now fairly introduced into Germany, and remained in favour till Michaelis led the way again to a new one. No one was sooner convinced of its inconveniencies and its unhappy consequences. It is too easily satisfied with remote philological evidences in support of the adopted meaning, and leads us astray from accurate grammatical interpretation, which alone can furnish satisfactory results; it makes no distinction between the ideas of the paraphrased author, and those of the paraphrast, and the reader is in danger of mistaking the latter for the former; it obliterates also all the spirit of the author, and communicates a spirit not his own. Michaelis, therefore, began with improving the English mode, and accompanied his paraphrases with rich philological observations, which especially adorn his epistle to the Hebrews; he finally abandoned it entirely, and preferred, what was decidedly better, accurate translations with explanatory observations.

The Germans, under his guidance, began again to interpret the Scriptures for themselves; to elicit their meaning, as was customary at the time of the Reformation, by means of grammatical interpretation; and also to investigate them historically, from the spirit of those ancient times, from history, antiquities, customs, opinions, and modes of thinking, and to furnish materials, thus approved, for a systematic theology. In the criticism of the Old Testament, he continued to lead the way alone; in that of the New Testament, however, he found in Ernesti, an active coadjutor.

With his *Commentary on the Bible*, if regarded in the

proper light, commences a new period of Biblical exegesis. If I mistake not, the translation was merely a subordinate concern; the observations constitute the principal and by far the richest portion of which the translation was only the vehicle.

The circumstances of the times, and the nature and compass of the work, prevented him from giving his translation a substantial and classical form. The period in which he was educated, was ill adapted to communicate to his German style, any degree of conciseness, flexibility and skill. After he had improved it, it was still too verbose for the concisely descriptive poetry of the Hebrews, and too fond of measured periods for their prose. In the poetry, he failed in a due measure of vigour and fulness; in the prose, he was deficient in thorough simplicity. A tasteful translation, however, is seldom the production of a philologist, absorbed in critical labours and buried amongst various readings. Weary and dispirited with his wanderings in the sandy desert of criticism, which must, of necessity, be passed; he must nevertheless elevate his mind with unwonted freedom, in order to conceive and express, in another language, every new shade of meaning in the ancient author, whose language differs from his so widely in spirit and character. A thorough proficient in the ancient languages, he must display an equal proficiency in modern languages also, in order to keep pace with his author in feeling, thinking, and expression. Abounding in learned philological researches, he must nevertheless lay aside his wealth, and find his greatness in a poverty and simplicity, to which he is not accustomed. How could a teacher at the university, occupied with a daily round of laborious employments, submit himself to the necessary task of examining, with rigid scrutiny, every word, in order to remain faithful to the original in their choice and collocation; and to communicate to the translation the same distribution of light and shade as the original possesses. And should he succeed in reconciling this with his ordinary employments, in a small portion of the Bible, could he be expected to make the sacrifice throughout the whole?

The learned interpreter is altogether a different person from the tasteful translator. The former amasses treasures for the use of the latter, that he may turn them to advantage in his own way. Each receives, however, his merited reward.

The design of the translation of Michaelis, accordingly, was merely to present, connectedly and comprehensively, the Hebrew writings, in the sense in which he understood them, and which he aimed to elicit, passage by passage, so that his readers might carry it along with them to the observations. To these he directed his principal exertions. In these he illustrated his text from manners and customs, from antiquities, and from natural and political history, with a fulness which could be expected only from the most erudite and comprehensive scholar. He then indulges in reflections on the intellectual and moral character of the ancient times; and on the doctrines and systems of faith which owe their origin to these times; and on moral and political maxims: which reflections evinced the scholar familiar with the ancient as well as the modern world, the experienced philosopher, politician and moralist, and the skilful theologian, all combined in one man. That portion, however, was the most important and the most abundant in original views, which derived its illustrations from antiquities, geography and modern travels. Here Michaelis was in his element. He was not so well versed in the intellectual and moral character of the ancient world. He conceived of those times, as in a condition of high intellectual and scientific cultivation. The Hebrew poets, especially, he considered as in possession of comprehensive natural knowledge, and of an abundance of other learning, which time, however, and accident, had at a later period obliterated. In this light he regarded Moses, and the philosophical poet, who speaks in Job, and the rest in order, according to their circumstances. The discoveries of Linnæus, Waller, Buffon and others, he supposed could now elucidate those ancient writings. This same knowledge, however, he imagined, was extant before, but was obliterated in process of time, and as is often the case in the world of science,

revived again by the ingenuity of modern times. There are other passages of the work, however, which oppose these views, in which he draws his illustration from the manners and customs of the Bedouins, and represents the early condition of mankind as characterised by extreme simplicity. For mind and manners go hand in hand. If the latter remain simple, the former continues the same, and unacquainted with scientific cultivation. These latter passages may serve, therefore, for the correction of the others. Michaelis would certainly not have liberated the human understanding at so early a period, from its swaddling-clothes, provided he had received his earliest education at a time, when opportunities were enjoyed of becoming acquainted with ancient Greece, its manners and customs, its mode of thinking, and its gradual refinement. But he had occasion to lament, even in his old age, the scantiness of this knowledge, both at the school and at the University.* Otherwise, when he made use of the travels, he would have directed his attention more to the progress of mankind, in order to obtain from the descriptions in these travels, a consistent picture of the primitive condition of the human understanding, which would necessarily have thrown a very different light upon the works of the Hebrews. But his early education rendered this impossible. Let not this defect, however, detract for a moment from his reputation and his immense desert. It is a duty we owe to historical justice, to contemplate every great man in his own times.

Many of his exegetical explanations of the Old Testament are obnoxious to the objection before mentioned. But the New Testament approached nearer to our own times, and has been well elucidated by contemporaries. Like an experienced master of his art, Michaelis knew how to avail himself of the raw materials furnished by Lightfoot, Schoettgen, and Wetstein, so as to present an admirable picture of the intellectual character of those times; he knew how to distribute, in a becoming manner, the light and the shade, and to mingle, in such a manner, the earlier and the later colouring, that it eventually be-

* Beyer's Magazine for Preachers, B. II. Art. 6. pp. 2, 6, 7.

came what was necessary for the illustration of the New Testament. We may, perhaps, desire something different in particular passages ; the work, however, as a whole, will still continue to sustain his reputation.

In the midst of this store of exegetical and historical learning, nothing but a knowledge of philosophy was wanting, to perfect in Michaelis the great theologian. He was not, however, entirely deficient in this department. With the philosophy of Leibnitz and Wolf, he had formed a more accurate and profound acquaintance, than many of its most distinguished advocates. It became his guide in the labyrinths of theology, a far better and safer guide than the philosophising didactic theologians of this school, entirely destitute of the aid of philological learning, and whose names now repose in quiet with their ashes.* Michaelis, however, with his peculiar exegetical acuteness, sought only to ascertain, in every case, what the Bible really taught. He examined rigidly the *dicta classica*, which, under his hand, vanished, with the exception of a few, much to the fright of the didactic theologians. He then weighed carefully, upon rational principles, what remained after this refining process of his exegesis, and assisted, to the utmost of his abilities, to do away the old complaints, that the Bible and reason could not dwell together in perfect harmony. His theological style and manner was rather popular than scholastic ; from which circumstance may be explained why, in the discussion of every doctrine, he did not connect exegesis and philosophy with history, for the purpose of eliciting from the spirit of the times, the origin and various forms of the doctrine in all its bearings ; and of placing its present form in the best possible light—the only means, if I am not mistaken, of rendering the young theologian skilful in every part of this science, and of rendering it, without any reference to a future office, an interesting study for the philosophical mind. It was not the design, however, of Michaelis, in adopting this popular manner, to underrate the other,

* His application of the philosophy of Wolf may be seen to the best advantage in his Thoughts on the Doctrines of Sin and Atonement.

which is altogether indispensable for genuine theological learning, although it be encumbered with the technical phraseology of the schools. He who was so substantial a promoter of solid learning, could never have designed to obstruct the avenue to the noble doctrinal works of the earlier period of the Reformation; which, happily for the reputation of a goodly number of modern theologians, are now no longer in general circulation.

He taught, generally speaking, the pure doctrines of the church; regarding, however, more the spirit of its symbolical books, than the exact letter; and he defended these doctrines, with a fund of theological learning, and in a manner, in which a few only, during the most efficient period of his life, were able to defend them.

His doctrinal views influenced powerfully the period in which he lived, and prepared the way for the present improvements in theology. This was owing, however, more to his exegetical writings, than to his manual of doctrinal theology. This last produced in Germany no general sensation; undoubtedly because it could not boast for its author, a man in a black coat, who had been dubbed a doctor of theology. In Sweden, much to the edification of the German zealots, a formal *auto da fe* was celebrated in consequence of it. Notwithstanding this, Michaelis triumphed also here with uncommon good fortune. Count Höpken, at that time Chancellor of the university at Upsala, who was led by the proceedings against the book to give it a perusal, expressed, in behalf of his nation, his chagrin at its treatment, and persuaded his king, eighteen years after this act of injustice, to make amends to the author for it, by conferring upon him the order of the Star.

Michaelis was not satisfied with the form which the didactic theology of Germany had assumed during the last twenty years. He was not pleased with the fashion, beginning to prevail, of throwing together what was ancient and what was modern, without any compacted system, although they were so widely different in nature and spirit; of giving with one hand, what was taken away again with the other; of destroying on one page, what had been es-

established on the preceding. And what man, of any intellectual strength and character, could regard with complacency this superficial and sophistical manner? Certain it is, this method is not the prevailing one in Germany; nor, from its very nature, can it ever come into general use, for any length of time. Still, there is reason to believe, that Michaelis regarded the condition of didactic theology as much worse than it really was. This was owing, perhaps, to the fact, that old age generally renders the mind more timid and scrupulous; or to the fact, that he could no longer embrace, within the compass of his reading, every thing which the modern investigations in theology had brought to light and established. Michaelis was, accordingly, in his later days, as much revered as the patriarch and support of the old faith, as he had been reviled and abused, in his younger days, as the leader of the reformers of theology. He could hardly have practised a deception in this case. This was not in his nature; his step also was too firm, and his tone much too decided, to permit us to indulge the suspicion. It was perhaps a pause in the progress of his intellectual illumination, fully consistent with the law of our intellectual nature. It fares, in this respect, with an individual as with mankind collectively. As there is a fixed point in the period of the existence of mankind collectively, with regard to their illumination, beyond which they cannot proceed, and in any attempt to advance beyond which they must pay dear for their temerity; so it is also with every individual man. He may indeed become more learned, but not more enlightened. Whereabouts, in every individual case, these limits commence, is frequently determined by accident, mode of life, place of residence, intercourse of earlier and later years, peculiar organization, and an innumerable aggregate of trivial circumstances. Michaelis, by the aid of his extraordinary talents, reached rapidly and early his highest point. Here his limit was set. It seems indeed to evince uncommon strength and skill in a mind, to be able to assume every form at every age of life; but we should often be deceived, if we attempted to test, by this standard, the powers of contem-

porary scholars. He who has marked out for himself an extensive sphere, can no longer, after a certain age, be present with his mind, in every part; while his neighbour finds himself easily at home in every part of his contracted circle. But which one deserves the greater admiration? How often is it the case that a scholar remains far in advance of his contemporaries, merely because he has had the good luck, and the science in which he labours the ill luck, to have been kept aloof, for a long time, from all men of talents; and that frequently, during whole generations, a curse seems to rest upon science. Praise and censure on the point are to be dispensed with much care. Let it suffice, that Michaelis continued at the head of his contemporaries, in many other departments, until his death. Could this be expected of him in all?

In the midst of all the dislike which he manifested toward a great portion of the latest improvements in didactic theology, he continued always tolerant. For myself at least, I do not recollect, at present, in his writings, any violence of expression, any malicious side-long glances at the later theologians; but merely open-hearted disapprobation of their doctrinal system, couched in serious language, such as is wont to accompany a man of intellectual firmness. Decidedly devoted, as he believed, to the system of doctrines of the symbolical books of his church, it was nevertheless entirely contrary to his views, to repress or forbid discussions concerning their contents. He expressed himself, in the last years of his life, on this subject, by word of mouth, before many witnesses, in a most decided and emphatic manner.

With his system of morals, my acquaintance, drawn from detached expressions of his translation of the Bible, is much too slight to enable me to characterize it fully. According to these expressions, it was deeply tinged with a rigid scrupulousness—undoubtedly a remnant of the over-strained piety of the school in which he was educated. He has left a work on this subject fully completed, which, according to his last will, is to appear in print before every other.

Michaelis thus embraced, in his capacious mind, many

departments, in a manner always peculiar and always eminent. In every one he communicated the tone for a long time, and in many, until his death. For this great superiority, he was indebted to the unceasing study of the sources of his sciences. He took no one at his word. He considered no investigations as closed, and regarded no magisterial assertions. Sometimes, indeed, this new labour was superfluous; but it was never entirely useless. The investigation received, at least, through him, a new direction; it became new to whatever point it was directed; and conducted to other subordinate points hitherto untouched. And if he sometimes neglected, (as was perhaps the fact,) to compare the labours of others, until his own investigations were brought to a close, still, no gap is left in his investigation, and no complaints can justly be indulged, of a proud disregard of earlier merit. He certainly availed himself willingly, in his researches, of the assistance and counsel of his friends at hand and at a distance. Every one also received credit for his own contribution, however trivial, as if it were a most important public concern; for every one found it again, with the mention of his name, in the writings of Michaelis.

Considering the striking peculiarity of his whole mind, the many new results with which his writings abounded, and his frequent opposition to prevailing notions, he could, in the ordinary course of events, scarcely count upon universal approbation. But what great man has not met with more opposition than applause from his contemporaries? A great and bold undertaking is not suited to the ordinary dimensions of human talents, and from this circumstance meets with opposition; but it does not follow from this that it should not meet with a merited reception from talents of the right grade.

He was less solicitous about the exterior decorations, than about the internal value of his works. His Latin style, during those years in which he was wont to polish with care, bore evident marks of a good knowledge of classical Latinity; and even in his later years, when old age enjoined a greater degree of haste, it still betrayed the good soil from which it sprang. With the improve-

ment of our vernacular language, which took place during his years of manhood, his own German style was also improved; and there was a period of his life, in which he was ambitious of the honour of being numbered amongst the wits of Germany; after a while the serious sciences pleased him better, and thenceforth he aimed in his writings more at the excellencies of a conversational manner, than at elaborate ornament and conciseness. On this account, he was wont to entangle his discourse with participial connections, and to interlard it with French words, even where they contributed, in clearness or strength, nothing more than the equivalent German expressions.

As an author, he resembled a prudent and devoted father, who is attentive to the wants of his offspring, and rigidly endeavours to supply them wherever they are observed. He made, continually, alterations and improvements in his works, and substituted new translations for old ones. Those who were not aware, from their own experience, of the labyrinth through which the human understanding must wind its cheerless way, were ready to complain, in his frequent and various retractions, of a neglect of earlier examination, and of the consequences of a censurable haste; an injustice which ingenious and inquisitive scholars must too often put up with from their meaner contemporaries, who have no resources beyond the meagre inheritance received from their instructors. Pertinacity of opinion in a scholar is generally the consequence of his stationariness in the sciences, which is already half a relapse.

All these distinguished excellencies of Michaelis are known to the German public at large; his pupils alone are acquainted with others, equally rare, which placed him in the number of the most eminent university teachers. With the exception, perhaps, of a slight excess of wit, he was free from most of the faults which attach themselves to that station. He always came forward after a full and previous preparation of the matter, and left merely the words to be supplied on the occasion. Filled with his subject, he spoke with order, clearness, life, fire, sometimes with inspiration, always with that interest, him-

self, in the subject, which awakens an interest in others even for the dryest communication. His preparation was always undertaken the day before. This afforded him time and opportunity for new investigations, much to the gain of his audience and the public; his style, however, lost that conciseness, which he would have given it, had he come forward immediately after his preparation. As it was, he was under the necessity of combining the thoughts of the preceding day with those last conceived, which were not very closely connected with the former; this frequently led, indeed, to new windings and combinations, but the thread was necessarily lengthened. Not unfrequently he engaged before his audience in full investigations, whose results merely he might have presented; by which means, the nobler minds learnt, from an experienced master, the art of research. The others, whose aims were lower, were satisfied with the naked result. All his studies and investigations had a bearing upon his business as an instructor, and hence his course of instruction was eminently learned, and became afterwards the proper source of his writings. His communications were never designed for mere amusement, and on this account were the better adapted to form a future taste for individual cultivation of the sciences. All Germany is aware how great a number of learned men, in his and the kindred departments, proceeded from his school. His whole soul was alive to the interests of his best scholars, as long as they were under his immediate direction; he assisted them with advice and encouragement, to the extent of his power and opportunities. As soon as they displayed abilities and disposition for a speculative life, he assisted them diligently in obtaining those places, where they might rapidly unfold themselves; and to this end he regarded a distant place the best adapted, where they might turn to advantage the instruction received from him, better than when nearer to him. As soon as he saw them established, he left them to themselves, to establish their own fame, and gave his sole attention to his younger scholars, who were still beneath his eye. He designed that they should be indebted to themselves and their abi-

lities, for the final establishment of their prosperity and reputation.

All this was accomplished by a single individual, for his scholars, for his contemporaries, and for posterity, by means of his high endowments and unwearied industry. He first aroused his own talents, and then awakened, developed and ennobled the endowments of others. He was the father and nurse, the fosterer and the patron of science, in a state of tender orphanage. Poor and needy, after receiving all the treasures which came to him by inheritance; and immensely rich in the fruits of his own labour, which descended, at his death, as an imperishable legacy, to posterity.

Such thou wast, revered instructor, and such, by thine own exertions, thou didst become; in the midst of all the obstacles of education, which thou didst successfully surmount; and all the difficulties of thy situation, which thou didst overcome; and all the follies of thy contemporaries, which thou didst bear with patience. Such were thy labours, although reviled from the commencement by thy ignorant contemporaries, and frequently persecuted and attacked by malicious envy and bitter malice; unappreciated in thy life-time by many of thy contemporaries, and now in death—unrequited. Unconcerned about the arts of thine enemies, the designs of thine enviers, and the malice of the ignorant; known and respected by kings, prized by their ministers, and admired by Europe; thou didst pursue thine untrodden way, for the enlargement of the kingdom of truth and of science, and didst bear, with thine own name, the name of *Georgia Augusta* far beyond the limits of Germany, into every civilized land of Europe.

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