

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

continually, no more to eat and drink till the end. The prophet tries to console her and reason with her, in vain; but "while I was talking with her, her face shined exceedingly, so that I was afraid of her, and suddenly she made a great cry very fearful, so that the earth shook at the noise, and I looked, and behold, the woman appeared unto me no more, but there was a *City* builded." The woman and the city no doubt represented Sion, which the seer loved from the days of old; but was it still Sion in the narrow and national limitation? Or was there in his mind some dawning of the vision of that greater city, the invisible foundations of which were even then being laid in every people around—a city bounded by no walls, circumscribed by no charter, vassal to no land of earth; a city whose gates stand four-square, and are open day and night continually, that the righteous nation may enter in; and yet, as it should seem, may enter not wholly, as he once thought, because of their righteousness, for the many-tongued "people that dwell therein are forgiven their iniquity"?

A. TAYLOR INNES.

ADVICE ABOUT COMMENTARIES.

I. THE PENTATEUCH AND JOSHUA.

SEVERAL papers entitled "Notes on Commentaries," appeared some ten years ago in the pages of *THE EXPOSITOR*, and it has been considered desirable to include in the present series a few articles on the aids available for the use of the student, in the shape of commentaries and subsidiary works upon the books of the Old Testament. The object of the present article is to introduce the subject by giving a sketch of the literature on the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua, especially in relation to the controversies still pending with respect to the composition and authorship of those books.

Dr. Samuel Cox took occasion, in the former set of papers, to warn at the outset "the inexperienced student" of the inutility

of consulting for purposes of real Biblical study the general commentaries on the Bible (popular still in some quarters) by Matthew Henry, Gill, Thomas Scott, Adam Clarke, Albert Barnes, etc. The writer of the present article must endorse Dr. Cox's opinion on this point. It may be admitted that there is a distinct value, especially from a devotional standpoint, in having the whole of the Sacred Books expounded by a single commentator. But the books of the Bible are so varied in their scope and import, and touch upon such a vast range of subjects, that it is impossible for a single commentator to do them at all adequate justice, especially when viewed in the light of modern investigation.

Dr. Christopher Wordsworth, late Bishop of Lincoln, when Canon of Westminster, was the last man of mark to undertake the Herculean task of writing singlehanded a commentary on all the books of the Bible. As a New Testament scholar, Bishop Wordsworth occupied a high position, and his commentary on the books of the Old Testament, even when erroneous from a rigidly exegetical or critical point of view, often contains suggestive thoughts. The student preparing popular addresses will scarcely ever fail to consult Bishop Wordsworth's commentary without profit, although he may be startled at the extraordinary manner in which the text is sometimes interpreted. The good Bishop, after the manner of the ancient Rabbis, not unfrequently discovers "miracles" in places where the ordinary reader would not suspect their existence, and the naive way in which he constantly ventilates his theories of "apostolical succession" and "sacramental grace," while commenting on the historical narratives of the Old Testament, is often amusing. There are, however, occasionally important notes, even upon the results of the modern critical school. But the reader will not unfrequently fall into serious blunders if he attempts to judge the great modern critics from the allusions which Bishop Wordsworth makes to their writings, or fancies himself able to rebut the arguments of the theologians of the modern school of criticism from the materials furnished in the Bishop's commentary. That commentary is, however, in many respects valuable, and not least because of the information given as to the patristic interpretations of the Old Testament. It is unnecessary to say that it is pervaded by a deep reverence for the Sacred Writings.

Several laudable attempts have been made in England to pro-

duce, by the combined efforts of a number of scholars, a high class commentary on the books of the Bible. The final results as yet attained have not been altogether so successful as expected. The execution of all such tasks is beset with more difficulties than is generally imagined. An editor has to secure the co-operation of a number of able scholars among whom the work has to be portioned. In the effort to obtain scholars whose names and position might serve as a guarantee to the public, it has not unfrequently happened that men have been pressed into the service who were really unable, by reason of the pressure of other occupations, to discharge the task, or who were sometimes even unqualified for it. A scholar may attain high eminence in one department of theology, and yet be disqualified by taste or training for the work of a commentator. To attain excellence in any department it is necessary that a writer should possess a real interest and enthusiasm for the work in which he may be engaged. It has been well said of old, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned" (Cant. viii. 7). It is not easy to secure real enthusiasm. Contract work rarely attains the excellence reached by books which are the natural outcome of a scholar's natural tastes and love for the subject. An able theologian may be induced by the pressure of some editor to turn aside from his favourite pursuits to engage in some uncongenial task. He may flatter himself that in doing so he will be able to revive an acquaintance with studies long laid aside on the shelf or generally abandoned. But the result of such work will rarely prove to be of the highest class, even though the scholar himself be a man of eminence.

The publication of the first parts of Bishop Colenso's work, *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua*, London, 1862, following as that work did immediately after the excitement produced in England by the issue of the *Essays and Reviews* (1861), gave a shock to the religious public, and an impetus to Biblical studies throughout the country. A revered Christian champion of by-gone days, Professor Dr. Augustus Tholuck, remarked to the writer, when he visited him at Halle in 1863, that although he did not agree with Bishop Colenso, he was convinced that the publication of his work would prove a real blessing to England. Nothing short of the alarm caused by such publications would suffice, in Professor

Tholuck's opinion, to stir up the religious public in England to the importance of thorough Biblical research. The publication of the concluding portions of Bishop Colenso's work, which was completed in 1879, were little noticed by the general public. But the early parts burst like an avalanche on the English public, and aroused quite a religious storm.

Old Testament studies had fallen at that time so far into arrear, that it was impossible that such an onslaught on the Old Testament could be received with composure. The attack was for the time felt to be stronger than the defence. So intense was the general excitement, that in 1863 the then Speaker of the House of Commons consulted several of the English Bishops as to the best way of supplying the deficiency which was felt to exist in English Biblical literature. The result was that the Archbishop of York undertook to organize a plan for producing a high-class commentary on the Bible by the co-operation of scholars specially selected for their Biblical learning. The editorship of the work was ultimately committed into the hands of the Rev. Canon F. C. Cook, and the first volumes of the commentary, embracing the Pentateuch, were published by Mr. Murray, in 1871. It was distinctly stated in the prospectus of the work that "the great object of such a commentary must be to put the general reader in full possession of whatever information may be requisite to enable him to understand the Holy Scripture, to give him, as far as possible, the same advantages as the scholar, and to supply him with satisfactory answers to objections resting upon misrepresentation of the text."

The *Speaker's Commentary* was thus specially designed from the outset to be distinctly apologetic. Its object was not so much to expound the meaning of the sacred writers, as to defend their writings from the attacks of modern sceptics. The object with which the work was undertaken was one of the causes of its comparative failure. A high-class commentary ought to have a higher aim than to defend the Scriptures from attack. It must be noted that the force of all such attacks is in most cases exhausted before it is possible to produce any effective reply. Moreover Bishop Colenso's objections could not be thoroughly replied to in the notes of a popular commentary. Hastily composed as was the work of Colenso, and coarsely defiant and polemical as was its tone, it was not abreast of the state of Pentateuch investigation.

The most damaging answer to that work, from the standpoint of the scholar, would have been to have pointed out that fact, and thus to have exposed the presumption of the assailant. But to do so efficiently, it would have been necessary to concede more than the religious public (uninformed as they were on the subject) were then prepared to surrender. It is peculiarly unpleasant for a scholar who comes forward as a defender of Holy Writ, to be assailed himself with the charge of "Rationalism." The *Speaker's Commentary* was compelled, of course, to attempt the defence of popular views, although its writers seem to have felt in many places the weakness of that position. The commentary, therefore, was fated to disappoint all parties concerned. The student desiderated more information and a bolder grasp of the subject, while the general public wanted short and easily understood replies to the novel objections raised against the Pentateuch. The bulky volumes of *Bishop Colenso's Life* by the Rev. Sir G. W. Cox, Bart., just issued from the press, are likely to revive this controversy; especially as that work contains very concise summaries of the Bishop's argumentation; and it is unquestionable that, however wrong-headed Colenso may have been, there was much innate nobility in his character.

A scholar is often compelled to admit that on certain points his information extends but a little way. Although he may be convinced of the creed he professes, it is impossible to assert facts when little or no evidence can be adduced in their favour, or when such evidence as is available appears for the moment to tell in the other direction. Like a skilful general his duty is to defend some position which is really strong, rather than invite defeat and disaster by extending his forces over too wide an area in defence of a number of weak positions. The believing critic is often terribly hampered in the defence of Scripture by the ignorance which many of the clergy exhibit of the first elements of Biblical criticism. The infallibility of every "jot and tittle" of the Bible has been too often asserted by popular preachers, without the smallest comprehension of the suicidal nature of such a dogma in controversy with sceptics. The dogma is suicidal, because it makes the truth of Scripture to be involved in the discussion of every point, however immaterial in itself, on which Scripture may come into any collision, real or apparent, with the discoveries of modern days.

And although in some instances it may be possible for a commentator dexterously to evade such issues, and quietly to shirk many difficulties by keeping silence, yet such an artifice (unfortunately too common) is certain in the long run to tell against those who employ it, and to damage the truth itself.

We are not at all surprised that the *Speaker's Commentary*, though it has decided merits of its own, proved on the whole disappointing. The promise given in the prospectus that "the general reader" should be given "the same advantages as the scholar" could not be fulfilled. The qualifying clause which had been added in the prospectus, namely, "as far as possible," was forgotten by the public. The prospectus had raised hopes which were doomed to be deceptive.

The best portion of the *Speaker's Commentary* on the Pentateuch perhaps is that on the Book of *Genesis*. The author of those notes was Dr. Harold Browne, then Bishop of Ely, now Bishop of Winchester. The notes on the Book of *Exodus* are by Canon Cook and Rev. S. Clark. In that volume the notes on the earlier portion are superior to those on the later chapters. The notes on *Leviticus* are on the whole sadly defective. This is apparent when they are compared with the work of Dr. M. M. Kalisch on the same portion of Scripture, written from a decidedly "Rationalistic" point of view. The first volume of Kalisch's book on *Leviticus* appeared several years before the issue of the *Speaker's Commentary* on that book. Whatever qualifications Mr. Espin had for being selected as one of the annotators on *Numbers*, *Deuteronomy*, and *Joshua*, his colleague, the late Rev. J. F. Thrupp (though possessed of some merits as an expositor) was deficient in Hebrew scholarship, as his extraordinary translations of Ps. xlv. and lxviii. in his *Introduction to the Psalms* are alone amply sufficient to show.

The *Speaker's Commentary* on the Pentateuch ought not to be neglected by the general reader of the Bible. It has not, however, supplied the wants of the English student. It would greatly tend to the real advance of Pentateuchal studies, and materially assist the defence of the ancient Scriptures, if an impartial *resumé* were drawn up of the arguments adduced on both sides. The scholars on each side are too much disposed to ignore the arguments of the side opposed to their conclusions. The evil results of following such a plan are, however, more detrimental to the

defenders than to the assailants of Scripture. Among the commentaries on the entire Bible, issued somewhat earlier than the *Speaker's Commentary*, the *Critical, Experimental, and Practical Commentary*, published by W. Collins & Sons, of Glasgow (6 vols., 1862-1869), holds an honourable position. The Old Testament portion, in four vols., was edited by Rev. Robert Jamieson, D.D. (Genesis to Esther), and Rev. A. R. Faussett, M.A. (Job to Malachi). The New Testament was annotated by Rev. Principal David Brown and Rev. A. R. Faussett. But there is no advance here to be noted in the exposition of the Pentateuch.

Prior to the publication of the *Speaker's Commentary*, Messrs. T. & T. Clark, of Edinburgh, had already begun the issue of an English translation of Lange's *Bibelwerk*. The work begun in this country was ultimately taken up in the United States, and under the able editorship of Dr. Philip Schaff brought to a comparatively speedy conclusion. It was published simultaneously in New York and Edinburgh. Professor J. P. Lange had obtained the co-operation of a very competent staff of scholars, and his *Bibelwerk*, whether in German or English, will always retain a permanent value as a work of Biblical exegesis. But the plan of that work did not admit of the discussion of many subjects necessary for the full elucidation of the Pentateuch, and inasmuch as the work was primarily intended to be an assistance for clergymen in their pulpit preparations, the Biblical student will always complain of space allotted to the homiletical portion of the volumes. The critical notes added by the American scholars are often of value, but, in the portion which treats of the Pentateuch, the remarks of the late Professor Tayler Lewis (notwithstanding the respect due to his piety and general ability) require to be received with the greatest caution. However able, Professor Tayler Lewis is by no means a competent guide on points of Hebrew grammar or philology.

Not inferior in some respects to the *Speaker's Commentary*, and superior in several books of the Bible to that work, is the *Old Testament Commentary for English Readers, by Various Writers*, edited by the distinguished New Testament critic Dr. Ellicott, Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol (London: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, 1882). The first volume contains commentaries on *Genesis* by Dr. R. Payne Smith, Dean of Canterbury; on *Exodus* by Rev. Professor Rawlinson; on *Leviticus* by Dr. C. D. Ginsburg; and on

Numbers by the late Rev. C. J. Elliott, Canon of Christ Church, Oxon. The second volume (issued in 1883) comprises the Books of *Deuteronomy* and *Joshua*, explained by Rev. C. H. Waller, M.A., now Principal of the London College of Divinity. The portions on *Genesis* and *Exodus* were executed by competent scholars, and afford much information of value to the student, but the notes are too brief, the introductions too curtailed to satisfy the student. The authors were cramped by the conditions under which their work had to be performed. The notes on the Book of *Deuteronomy* do not pretend even to grapple with the critical difficulties connected with that book. The writer confesses he had no time to consult modern commentaries. His great authority is the commentary of Rashi. The theories of Kuenen and Wellhausen are altogether ignored. The work, for aught it contains new, might have appeared fifty years ago. Some of the remarks are good and useful, but as a commentary on *Deuteronomy* the work is far behind the scholarship of the present day.

The *Pulpit Commentary*, edited by Rev. Canon Spence, M.A., and Rev. Joseph Exell, M.A., has realized much of what was expected from its prospectus. The weakness of that work, as in the case of Lange's *Bibelwerk*, lies in the enormous mass of homilies which accompany it, which far exceeds in bulk anything in Lange's *Bibelwerk*. The homiletics may occasionally be helpful to a preacher, but even for that purpose they are much overdone. The student is annoyed by the perpetual reiteration of the same thoughts in various forms, and often offended by the shallow dogmatism on questions of criticism displayed by the homilists. On the other hand, it must be borne in mind, much as one might wish that the clergy would dispense with such questionable assistance, that such "helps" are only too popular, and publishers cater for the wants of the public. It is to be regretted that the number of those who buy solid critical works is small in our country. The average Biblical student has to be treated with homœopathic doses of criticism, plentifully diluted with lighter matter. The critic with us has often to "dance in chains" along with the homilist. The partners may occasionally be well matched, and the "dance" may go off well, but in general the reverse is the case.

The Pentateuch occupies in the *Pulpit Commentary* five bulky volumes, and the Book of *Joshua* another volume of equal size.

The expositor of *Genesis* is Rev. Thomas Whitelaw, M.A. The volume on *Genesis* appeared in 1881. Professor Rawlinson, who wrote the brief notes on *Exodus* for Bishop Ellicott's commentary, has in the *Pulpit Commentary* given a more detailed exposition of that book, which was published in 1882. In that year also the commentary on *Leviticus* was issued, which was mainly performed by Rev. F. Meyrick, M.A. Mr. Meyrick is a well-known scholar and voluminous writer. We cannot say we have examined his work with attention. But it does not augur well, looking from a student's standpoint, that while he cites H. Bonar as one of the commentators on the book, he has taken no notice of Kalisch's volumes, which ought to have been specially noticed and replied to, not to speak of numerous treatises by German scholars. The Book of *Numbers* is annotated by a clergyman of the Scotch Episcopal Church, Rev. R. Winterbotham, M.A., LL.B. That on *Deuteronomy* is by Rev. W. L. Alexander, D.D., who notices some of the views propounded by Wellhausen, and advocated in this country by Dr. W. Robertson Smith, now University Librarian at Cambridge. The volume on *Joshua* was mainly the work of Rev. J. J. Lias, M.A. It is unnecessary here to give the names of the homilists.

Homiletical commentaries seem to be at present the most popular in our country. For, independently of those already mentioned, a special *Homiletical Commentary* has also appeared under the competent editorship of Rev. J. S. Exell, published by Dickenson, London, 1855. The volumes we have seen are those on *Genesis* ch. i.-viii., by Rev. J. S. Exell; ch. ix.-l., by Rev. T. H. Leale, of King's College, London. The second volume, on *Exodus*, is by Rev. J. S. Exell; and a third, on *Numbers*, by Rev. T. Jones. These commentaries are also provided with a number of critical notes. The latter is a good sign, for it shows that, however backward we are yet in Old Testament literature, some progress has been made when compared with the general state of things twenty years ago. More homiletical and often highly suggestive are the volumes on the Pentateuch of the *People's Bible* by Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D. It would be impossible here to note all the books worth mentioning in this line.

The excellent series of handy commentaries published in the *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, edited by Dr. J. J. S. Perowne, Dean of Peterborough, does not yet include the books

of the Pentateuch. The commentary on *Genesis* for that series was to have been written by Dr. W. Robertson Smith, but his place has been taken by the Dean of Canterbury. Dr. C. D. Ginsburg has undertaken to supply the volumes on *Exodus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*. The name of the writer on *Leviticus* has, as far as we know, not yet been announced.

Not inferior to the Cambridge series is the set of *Handbooks for Bible Classes and Private Students*, published by Messrs. T. & T. Clark, of Edinburgh, which promises to embrace ultimately commentaries on the whole Bible. The only book of the Pentateuch which has as yet been commented on in the series is *The Book of Genesis, with Introduction and Notes*, by Marcus Dods, D.D. This little commentary is, for its size, most valuable. Its information is up to date, and its tone admirable. It is thoroughly reverential in spirit, but it does not ignore the fact of the composite origin of the Book of Genesis.

Dr. Cunningham Geikie's *Hours with the Bible, or The Scriptures in the Light of Modern Discovery and Knowledge*, is a sort of commentary on the Old Testament. The earlier volumes on the Pentateuch, which were published in 1882, contain a considerable amount of new information put before the public in a very readable form. The work appears to be creditably performed, though, as might be expected, it contains little original matter. The author's avowed object is to popularise the researches of others.

Dr. M. M. Kalisch commenced the issue in 1855 of what was intended to be a *Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament, with a New Translation*, by the publication of a *Commentary on Exodus*, with the Hebrew text and critical and explanatory notes. This, although not faultless, still remains the ablest English commentary on that book. The work is written in the main from the orthodox standpoint. In proof of this we may refer to the notes on the plagues of Egypt. The volume on the *Book of Genesis*, published in 1858, is also of considerable value. Dr. Kalisch in the latter volume inclines more towards views regarded in England as "Rationalistic"; but the work is by no means ultra, and contains a vast amount of information on all points bearing on the Book of Genesis. In the two subsequent volumes of his work, namely, those on the *Book of Leviticus*, Dr. Kalisch takes up definitely a position on the side represented by Renan, Strauss, and Colenso. The first volume (published in 1867) contains a

remarkable essay on the *Sacrifices of the Hebrews and of other Nations*, which occupies more than 450 pp., while the second volume, published in 1872, contains equally important essays on the laws of diet, matrimony, the Jewish festivals and the Day of Atonement, the Monotheism of the Bible, etc. All these treatises, as well as the notes on Leviticus, are written from a "Rationalistic" point of view. No equally able work on such subjects has yet appeared on the orthodox side.

Dr. Kalisch's commentary was never finished. His *Bible Studies*, Part I., "The Prophecies of Balaam, or the Hebrew and the Heathen," were published in 1877. Part II. "The Book of Jonah, preceded by a Treatise on the Hebrew and the Stranger," published in 1878, brought to an end his Biblical labours. Whatever may be the opinion entertained as to his theological opinions, which resulted in an eclecticism set forth in his *Path and Goal: a Discussion on the Elements of Civilization and the Conditions of Happiness*,—which book contains a translation of the Book of Ecclesiastes, and was published in 1880—Dr. Kalisch did much by his works to promote the cause of Old Testament studies in this country. His death, which took place in 1885, removed from our midst one who was by no means "a dry, cold Rationalist," but a man of genial sympathy, as all who knew him even slightly, as the writer did, can willingly testify. His learning was unquestionable, his devotion to Biblical study intense. Would that we could point out equally productive scholars among the ranks of the orthodox! It is to be regretted that, with a few exceptions, orthodox English scholars have given themselves up to the production of small popular books on the Old Testament, rather than to the production of thoroughly critical and scientific works on Sacred Scripture. But in an army heavy dragoons are needed as well as light cavalry. The former cannot easily be extemporised when needed. So also scientific works are needed for the elucidation and defence of Scripture as well as popular hand-books, and we have too few of the former, inasmuch as they do not in general bring any profit to writers or publishers.

Thus far we have noticed only the leading general commentaries on the Old Testament. Our list is by no means exhaustive. We have yet to speak of the works published upon the individual books of the Pentateuch, of the numerous *Introductions*, and of monographs on subjects connected with such studies. Meanwhile

we venture to call the attention of scholars to the *Kurzgefasster Kommentar zu den Alt. u. Neuen Test.*, now being published in Germany under the editorship of Prof. Dr. H. L. Strack of Berlin, and Prof. Dr. Otto Zöckler of Greifswald, both eminently able and orthodox scholars. The volumes which have already appeared on *The Books of Samuel and Kings* with notes by Prof. Dr. A. Klostermann of Kiel, and on *Isaiah and Jeremiah*, by Prof. C. von Orelli of Basel, lead us to expect much from this series, more especially as the Books of *Genesis*, *Exodus*, and *Leviticus* have been undertaken by Prof. Strack himself.

CHARLES H. H. WRIGHT.

(To be continued.)

BREVIA.

The Revolution in Tanner's Lane.—Some years ago we ventured to commend to the readers of THE EXPOSITOR two very remarkable books, *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford* and *Mark Rutherford's Deliverance*. Since then an almost daily converse with the volumes has only served to deepen our sense of their great beauty and power and wisdom. It is with no common gratitude that we announce the appearance of a companion fit to stand with them, in *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*, recently published by Messrs. Trübner. It might be out of place here to comment on the extraordinary excellence of the author's style, or on the structural faults which mar the book as a mere story. Like his previous works, it has no message for the fortunate or the shallow, and they will pass it by. Its spell is that its writer has seen the true Gorgon head—and lived. For those who have been shaken to the centre by problems of time and eternity, it is a book to place with the dear and tried few that never fail to soothe and fortify the soul. “‘From the horns of the wild oxen’ that correction had often been precious to Zachariah. When at the point of being pinned to the ground—so he understood it—help had arisen; risen up from the earth, and might again arise.” This is the key-note of the book; it is written by one who has been often in the last extremity, “face to face with