

"No doubt you've got all the sense, and it's no wonder there ain't none left for me," said the lad.

But I must have done. When you read this, kind friends, the work will be nearly upon us again. May we hope for your sympathy? May we hope that you will pray that in good report or evil report we may still persevere, and that we may be so helped by the Giver of all grace and power, that in the highest and best sense we may have large success in our work among the hop-pickers.

CLEMENT FRANCIS COBB.



ART. IV.—DR. BIGG'S BAMPTON LECTURES.

The Christian Platonists of Alexandria. Eight Lectures preached before the University of Oxford in the year 1886, on the foundation of the late Rev. John Bampton, M.A. By CHARLES BIGG, D.D., Assistant Chaplain of Corpus Christi College, formerly Senior Student of Christ Church, Oxford. Oxford: at the Clarendon Press. 1886.

AMONG the questions which might be commended to the serious consideration of whomsoever they may practically concern, is that of the comparatively small proportion of "Bampton Lectures" which can be regarded as forming a permanent addition to our theological literature, or which indeed, have proved of practical use to any one, except perhaps the Lecturers. It is of but small comfort to know that the same, if not worse, may be said of other richly endowed Lectureships, notably of the "Hibbert Lectures" which were introduced to the learned world with such show of promise and pomp of announcement. To the curious in such matters it may be an interesting speculation what proportion the sums yielded by the endowments would bear to the market-value of the volumes produced, from the publisher's point of view. This, however, would be of comparatively small importance, if we could believe that the cause of solid learning had been advanced by these publications. But, with the exception of a limited number of well-known "Bampton Lectures" which have taken a permanent rank in theological literature, such has notoriously not been the case. This, at least so far as regards theology in the stricter sense, holds even more emphatically true in respect of the "Hibbert Lectures," which have mostly yielded only a not very forcible re-assertion in more or less popular language of what had been previously stated in more scientific manner—and fully discounted. On the other hand, it must be admitted that any possible uneasiness on the score of the paucity of readers of such volumes,

is happily counterbalanced by the certainty that the loss of knowledge involved in this abstinence on the part of the public is really not at all serious.

We have been led into these general remarks chiefly from the feeling that some protest was absolutely called for. With whomsoever the matter rests, it is high time that care be taken that the endowments provided by "the munificence of founders and benefactors" should, without respect to party or other feeling, be utilized for what will permanently advance theological study and literature. We hasten to add that if these strictures had applied to the volume before us we should perhaps have been more guarded in expressing them. Happily, such is not the case. Dr. Bigg's election to the Bampton Lectureship has been fully vindicated by the result. We welcome the publication of his Lectures with sincere satisfaction as the outcome of honest personal study of a period of deepest interest to everyone who concerns himself either with the history of the development of Christian thought, or the formation and growth of dogma. And they are written in so pleasant and clear a manner, and with such elegance of language as to render a subject of such importance in itself also attractive to general readers. The professional student may differ from Dr. Bigg on some points; on others he may reasonably desiderate a more full, deep, and satisfactory treatment; in short, he may be tempted to consider this in some respects rather as a contribution towards, than a final exhaustive treatment of the subject. But it would be unreasonable to demand more than the volume professes to give within its narrow compass, and certainly unjust and ungracious to refuse a hearty acknowledgment of what it presents for the instruction of general, perhaps more than for the information of scientific readers.

A more strange and fascinating history can scarcely be imagined than that of the Jewish colony attracted to Alexandria: and this, whether viewed by itself or in its influence upon Judaism and upon Christianity. Brought into contact with Greek thought, literature, and life, these Jewish wanderers became the founders of a new school of religious thinking. Jewish Hellenism, as finally and most fully represented by Philo, was only one outcome of it. Behind and underlying it was the desire to conciliate and combine heathen philosophic thought with the truths of Revelation. Truth could only be one. There was truth—deep and also holy truth—in the results presented by Greek philosophic thinking. Yet only broken rays of highest truth, of which the absolute fulness was in the Divine Revelation of the Old Testament. On the other hand, without a deeper understanding of it, we should have only the letter of Revelation: true, indeed, so far as it

went, but insufficient—sometimes even misleading. The task which Jewish Hellenism set to itself was to bring out this deeper spiritual meaning. Unhappily in the end it resolved itself into an attempt to discover Greek thinking under the language of the Old Testament. For this purpose the so-called allegorical mode of interpretation—often very wild, and generally inconsistent with itself—was invented, or, perhaps more accurately, applied to this department. Yet whatever exceptions may be taken to this direction as a whole, whether as regards its matter or its manner, its instincts at least were sound, and it was full of promise for the future. The Hellenistic kingdom of God, which had in view a great brotherhood of the “Therapeutes” of God, by the conciliation of Jew and Gentile in submission to the God of Israel, was indeed but a dream, wanting the elements of reality. But the idea underlying it was true. It pointed to the search after the primary bases of Divine truth, and further than this to that better union in the Church of Christ, in which the preparatory elements of truth at which mankind has arrived are neither to be ignored nor overlooked, but incorporated, and will be seen to tend towards that completeness which is in Him Who is “a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of His people Israel.”

Two other facts connected with Alexandrianism may here be briefly noticed. The first is, that much in Palestinian Rabbinic interpretation—in the so-called *Midrash*—was really derived from Alexandria, either by absolute—although no doubt often unconscious—transference, or else through the adoption of the same exegetical methods. The other and more important fact is, that Jewish Hellenism supplied many of the elements for the Alexandrian school of Church teachers with which the great names of Clement and Origen are identified. The importance of this school, alike in its influence on its own period and in its permanent results on Christian thinking, cannot be overrated. Dr. Bigg calls them “The Christian Platonists of Alexandria,” and, from his standpoint, rightly so. Yet it would perhaps be equally if not more correct to designate them “the Christian Hellenists.” For while from their basis of Christian fact, they were enabled in every respect to occupy more positive ground than their Jewish predecessors, and to avoid many of the errors and of the extravagances of the past, and while their thinking was more clear, consistent, and logical, yet many of their fundamental ideas as well as their general direction had their origin in the writings of Philo. Who these “Christian Platonists” were; what they wrote; what questions and controversies engaged them; and what was their influence, alike on their own times and permanently,

may best be learned from Dr. Bigg's volume. But here especially we have again to express the wish that Dr. Bigg had made more exhaustive study of the writings of Philo. In that case, he would assuredly have been able to trace back to him, as its source, much more in Christian Alexandrian teaching, notably as regards God, His manifestation, and our attainment of His knowledge, fellowship, and likeness.

It only remains to give a brief outline of the contents of this volume. The first Lecture is introductory, and deals with the rise of Jewish Hellenism generally, and specifically with the writings of its last and greatest representative Philo. So far as we can judge, Dr. Bigg has here too much followed the lead of previous writers. Dähne and Gfrörer are no longer of quite trustworthy authority, although the masterly analysis of Zeller in his "History of Greek Philosophy" (vol. iii.) supplies welcome assistance. But from the point of view of the relation of Philo to the "Christian Platonists of Alexandria," a comparatively fresh field is left to the inquirer, excepting perhaps in regard to the doctrine of the Logos. The Lecture concludes with a brief survey of Gnosticism. Lecture II. opens with a sketch of the Alexandrian Church, and of the life of Clement. The rest of the Lecture, as well as Lecture III., are devoted to a full examination of the views and teaching of Clement, where we specially mark the clear and orderly arrangement. Lectures IV., V., and VI. are devoted to Origen. Great interest attaches to Lecture VII. entitled "The Reformed Paganism," and which deals with Oriental Henotheism; with the Pythagoreans (Apollonius); and the Trinitarian (Numenius), and Unitarian Platonists. Here the reader will peruse with special interest the masterly analysis of Origen's great work against Celsus. The eighth and last Lecture gives a "summary" of the whole, and a general survey of the outcome of Alexandrian teaching, as well as of its relation to later doctrinal presentations. To some, the careful statement in this Lecture of the Alexandrian teaching concerning the "hereafter" will be specially welcome.

Here we must close. We have said sufficient to show that this is a volume which ought to find a place in even moderately well-furnished theological libraries. The scientific student also will desire to meet Dr. Bigg again on similar fields, hopeful that, when no longer confined to the narrow limits of a course of eight Lectures, he will be able to give to his subject that more full treatment, with larger use of the existing literature, of which the present volume gives such good promise.

