

severing search after the souls of men. If a minister so speaks and lives, so exhorts and teaches, that a multitude believe unto life eternal, he quickens his own faith and enters into the joy of his Lord. Notwithstanding all the dire temptations to deal with the mysteries of Divine Love in a professional and perfunctory spirit, yet no man with deep human sympathy and humility can absorb himself in these things and "continue in them," without being ready to admit his infinite indebtedness to the very calling itself. Thousands would allow that if they had not thus cared for others they might have lost their own souls.

H. R. REYNOLDS.

NOTES ON COMMENTARIES.

I REGRET to withdraw even a few pages of THE EXPOSITOR from the proper work of the Magazine,—that of expounding and illustrating Holy Scripture. But as I am often and urgently pressed to point out the Commentaries most likely to be useful to students of the Bible; as, moreover, I have promised¹ to indicate "the Commentaries which I myself have most constantly in use," and especially those—since these are most in demand—which the unlearned student of Scripture will find to be most helpful to him, I proceed very briefly to place the results of my experience at the disposal of my brethren. I must beg them to bear in mind, however, first, that I am about to speak only of books which I have had, or have, in constant use; and, secondly, that my library is necessarily a small one, and that for many years I have had no access to the well-stored shelves of such libraries as may be found in London or in the University towns:² so that my suggestions will have little value except for students of the humbler grades.

At the very outset I would warn the inexperienced student, especially if his books must needs be few, against any Commentary which professes to treat of the whole Bible, if at least it be written

¹ THE EXPOSITOR, vol. ii. p. 71.

² I think I have never gone so near to coveting my neighbours' goods as when I have stood in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge.

throughout by one and the same pen. Such Commentaries as those of Scott and Matthew Henry—once much in vogue—are simply worthless for purposes of serious study, though they may be very suitable, as Matthew Henry's commonly is, for devotional reading. No one man, however gifted, or learned, or devout, is capable of expounding the long series of books of which The Book consists. The best Commentaries are those written by men who have devoted the best years of their life to the study and exposition of a single Scripture, or of a limited portion of Scripture: others may be very useful, but none save these are of the first quality. Nor will *the student* find much help, if any, in popular manuals like those of Barnes. They will not only mislead him on points on which much labour, delicate scholarship, and profound spiritual insight are required; but they will also vitiate and deprave his very conception of what exposition may and ought to be.

Some Commentary which includes the whole Bible is indispensable, however, if only because on many Scriptures expositions of the highest kind are not to be had; and when expositions of the best and highest kind are out of reach, almost any scholarly exposition is better than none: the traditional interpretations may be learned from it at least, and what to avoid, if not what to imitate and pursue. And of such Commentaries I know of none more helpful, on the whole, for the student who is familiar with no language but his own than *Lange's* "Bible-work," an American translation of which is now being issued—most of the volumes have appeared—by Messrs. Clark of Edinburgh; and, for the student who has a decent acquaintance with Hebrew and Greek, the Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament of *Keil* and *Delitzsch*, an English translation of which is published by the same Firm; supplemented by *Meyer's* Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, a translation of which the same Firm has recently taken in hand. Of course, as these Commentaries contain the work of men of very different gifts and degrees of power, only long and intimate acquaintance with them will reveal where they are, and where they are not, of real value to the careful student. Unequal they must be, and at times the inequality is startlingly abrupt: as, for example, in *Lange's* "Bible-work," where a weak and jejune exposition of the Book of Joshua is immediately followed by a singularly fresh and masterly exposition of the Book of Judges.

A serious disadvantage in Lange's Commentaries, to the student who wishes to reach "the mind of the Spirit" and has but scanty leisure for mastering the true meaning and intention of Scripture, is the verbose style in which they are for the most part written, and the immense mass of doctrinal and ethical, homiletical and practical deductions with which the critical and exegetical suggestions are overlaid. Nevertheless there is much good matter in them, which, if the sieve be used vigorously,—as it generally needs to be with German Biblical literature,—may easily be riddled out; though now and then, remembering how much has been put into the sieve, one wonders a little to see how little is left. *Keil* is always sober, judicious, scholarly, if a little dull. *Delitzsch* combines with unusual learning a great gift of spiritual insight; and, though his work varies much in quality, he can hardly ever be consulted in vain. *Meyer's* work is so good that, to a surprising degree, it has already been absorbed and given out in new forms by our best English Commentators: it would be difficult to name any Commentary on the whole New Testament which is of such even and high exegetical value throughout.

If the student has provided himself with one or other of, or, better still, with both, these Commentaries on the whole Bible, he will then have to select those expositions of the several Scriptures which should be the main and constant instruments of his work. And here the real difficulty begins; for, owing to the immense advance in all departments of Biblical learning which has taken place during the last two or three decades even, the most valuable Commentaries for his purpose are those which have been recently written: and though there is no lack of modern expositions, there is often grave lack in them. The best books in any branch of literature are not numerous; and in the *English* branch of Biblical exegesis and exposition there are but few which competent judges would place in the first class, though there are happily a considerable number which stand high in the second class. Of such Commentaries these are those which I value most, and which I would advise the student to get at all costs:—Dr. Kalisch on the Pentateuch, Canon Cook on Job, Canon Perowne on the Psalms, Professor Plumptre on Proverbs, Dr. Morison on St. Matthew and St. Mark, Dr. Godet on St. Luke, Lewin on the Life and Epistles of St. Paul, and, before and above all, Canon Lightfoot on Galatians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. I do not mean to hint either that there are no other English Commentaries worthy to be

ranked with these, or that these are all of the same order of merit ; all I mean is, that, while I could find a substitute for most other English Commentaries which would serve my turn almost equally well, I should be puzzled to find substitutes for any one of these, and therefore would never willingly be without them.

On the *Pentateuch* no English book that I know is of equal value to the student with the work of Dr. Kalisch.¹ It is published in two forms : one, designed for purely English readers ; the other, for students acquainted with Hebrew. Written in slightly ornate English, with a somewhat too obvious strain after eloquence, it is learned, scientific, sceptical. But despite its scepticism, and the Jewish anti-Christian tone which one detects in it now and then, no sincere and devout student of the Bible should be without it. In his exposition Dr. Kalisch shirks no difficulty ; while the Introductions, and the dissertations on points of grave moment, are singularly able and elaborate. As yet it extends only to the end of Leviticus ; but Numbers and Deuteronomy are shortly to appear.

On *Genesis* both Keil and Lange may be consulted with advantage ; as may also, for Introduction, &c., two papers by the Dean of Canterbury, which appeared in the "Bible Educator," and which deal with the "documentary hypothesis" in the most admirably brief and convincing manner ; so, too, may the Introduction and Exposition contributed by the Bishop of Winchester to the "Speaker's Commentary."

And as I here for the first time mention the "Speaker's Commentary,"²—I could not include it among Commentaries on the whole Bible, by various hands, both because too little of it has yet been given to the public, and even that part of it already published has too recently come into my use,—it may be permitted me to say that, in my judgment, the Critics have done but scant justice to this important work. No doubt it is marked by many of the defects they have pointed out,—defects common to all joint-work and to every attempt to comment on the whole Bible. But every book, it is admitted, should be judged by its avowed purpose and aims. And a Commentary designed for the instruction of "men of ordinary culture" must of necessity omit much that men of more than ordinary culture would find instruc-

¹ "Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament, with a New Translation." By M. M. Kalisch, Phil. Doc., M.A. London : Longmans.

² "The Holy Bible, with an Explanatory and Critical Commentary, and a Revision of the Authorized Translation." By Bishops and other Clergy of the Anglican Church. Edited by Canon Cook. London : John Murray

tive. A Commentary intended for the average English reader must, also of necessity, be brief and compressed, and leave but little scope for the discussion of disputed and critical points. And a Commentary written "by bishops and other clergy of the Anglican Church," for the instruction of the members of that Church, is surely not to be blamed because it is conceived and written throughout from the orthodox point of view. I have found this work, I confess, not only what it professed to be, but, its design and method considered, much better than I thought it could be. Like all books which embrace the whole series of the Sacred Scriptures and are written by men of various gifts and different calibre, it varies greatly in value, the Commentators on most of the historical books of the Old Testament shewing to little advantage, for example; but, none the less, "men of ordinary culture" may certainly learn much from its weakest parts; while some parts—as, for instance, Canon Cook on Job, Professor Plumptre on Proverbs, and Dr. Payne Smith on Jeremiah are among the happiest specimens of popular exposition I have met. Indeed, all the learned Editor's work is so good that, had this adventure done nothing more than make his power as a Commentator generally known, it would have been worth the pains it has cost.

On *Exodus* I would recommend the student to study Kalisch first; then, for Chaps. i.–xix., Canon Cook (in the "Speaker's Commentary"); then Keil and Lange.

On *Leviticus* I know of nothing accessible to the English student of the first quality except Kalisch, which always needs to be read with care and watchfulness; on *Numbers*, *Deuteronomy*, and *Joshua*, nothing at all: these are among the instances in which one has to fall back on the Commentaries that cover the whole Bible. But on *Judges* there is a very fresh and lively, yet learned and sympathetic, exposition in Lange's "Bible-work," by Professor Steenstra. Of *Ruth* an exposition has appeared in the pages of this Magazine.

Of good English Commentaries on the *historical* Books of the Old Testament, indeed—on the Books of *Samuel*, *Kings*, *Chronicles*, *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and *Esther*, no less than on *Joshua* and *Judges*—it must be sorrowfully confessed that we are strangely destitute. It would be but natural to expect that these ancient historic documents, unparalleled in the literature of any other nation, appealing so directly to the popular imagination and heart, and

fraught with political and moral lessons of the gravest interest to a patriotic race like our own, would have engaged, even in an excessive measure, the attention of our best scholars and expositors. But of adequate English Commentaries on them, or even of English translations of such Commentaries, there are, so far as I know, absolutely none. Dean Stanley's "Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church" do something, indeed, to give the general reader the right point of view, to make him feel both that the men who pass before us in the glass of the Word are men of like passions with ourselves, and that God was ever more and more fully revealing his mind and will to them as the ages ran by. Ewald's "History of Israel"—of which a spirited translation has been recently published by Longmans—does far more to trace out the continuous story of the elect race, and to throw light both on its connection with the general history of the ancient world and on the sacred documents in which it is recorded. But Ewald, with all his learning and genius, is capricious, self-willed, arbitrary to a fault; his work is everywhere marred by those false principles of historical and literary criticism—"the *higher* criticism" as it gives itself out to be—to which, though he had deliberately adopted them, he was never consistently true. And, moreover, neither Ewald nor Stanley offer us that of which we are in search—a Commentary, and a Commentary addressed to readers of only ordinary cultivation and intelligence. That such Commentaries on the historical books are eagerly desired, the want of them keenly felt, I have some reason to know. From more than one manse in Scotland I have lately received letters, begging me to procure an able and popular exposition of these books for the pages of THE EXPOSITOR, assuring me that, should I do so, I should make it "the most popular magazine in England." *Dubito*: that is a pinnacle not easily reached. But there can be no doubt that such an exposition is urgently demanded. All I can say to those who have earnestly inquired where, among English books, they could find some Commentary likely to assist them in preparing lectures on the Old Testament histories, is that, for the present, they must be content with such help as they can get from the "Speaker's Commentary"—here at its weakest—from Lange, and from Keil.

EDITOR.