

Upon the whole, then, we hold that the objections brought against this view of our passage are not insuperable, and are constrained to adopt it as the true interpretation. And, assuredly, it is of all views the most consolatory and sustaining. However mysterious the idea, we believe that Christ suffers in and with us, that He sympathizes in all our sorrows. There is a vital chord which unites Him with us, as the Head to the body. Though He has gone up on high, to reassume the glory He had with his Father before the world was, He feels for his suffering brethren on earth, and is not unmindful of their sorrows. The perfections of his divinity do not obliterate the sympathies of his humanity. "We have not," writes the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "a high priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but one who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

PATON J. GLOAG.

BRIEF NOTICES OF BOOKS.

A NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY FOR ENGLISH READERS. Vol. I. *Edited by C. F. Ellicott, D.D.* (London: Cassell and Co.) Much has been done of late, far more than ever before, to put the best results of scholarship and erudition at the service of those students of the Bible who command none but their mother tongue. Never were the Scriptures so much read as now; never was it so easy, at least for the unlearned, to read them "with the understanding." But of all the aids to an intelligent study of the Gospels none is comparable with this last addition to the commentaries on the New Testament. It may be doubted, indeed, whether even those who are familiar with both Greek and German possess, in any one volume, a commentary on the Gospels so valuable as this: certainly no commentary designed "for English readers" comes anywhere near it, whether for spiritual insight and suggestiveness, or exact scholarship, or wide erudition, or resolute handling of difficulties, or that fearless

freedom of interpretation which springs from an absolute confidence in the sanctity and power of truth.

The learned Editor is to be congratulated on having secured the services of a scholar of such eminence and proved ability, of gifts so varied and remarkable, as Professor Plumptre, who here annotates the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke. Never so happy, never at least so likely to win popular favour and confidence, as when he comments on an entire Scripture, the Professor has excelled himself in his "notes" on these three Gospels. For the Biblical and expository essays by which he has hitherto made himself most widely known, he has very naturally chosen recondite or out-of-the-way themes, not themes staled by perpetual handling; and in his treatment of these themes he has displayed so much ingenuity and subtlety of thought, he has traced so many slender and unsuspected threads of connection binding distant facts and passages together, as to give rise to an impression that his conjectures are apt to be too ingenious, his interpretations somewhat fanciful and far-fetched. Those who have yielded to this impression have forgotten that when a Biblical scholar of any power and originality of mind is free to choose his own themes, he is likely to prefer for public discussion, not topics which have been worn threadbare, but those which are most novel and striking, those in which he may hope a little to advance the lines of previous knowledge, or those which in his judgment most need illustration. And assuredly, as they read this exposition of the Synoptical Gospels, they will be compelled very largely to modify and supplement their impression of him. For while they will find in it all the old subtlety of thought, and the same power of seizing on delicate hints and detecting unsuspected connections, they will also find that he can tread the beaten path with a free and peculiar grace; that when he deals with texts and incidents the most familiar he is no less competent to handle them than passages and themes the most recondite: that he sheds new light upon them, and makes them fresh and quick and powerful without either forcing them from their natural bent or shewing any impatience of accepted and traditional interpretations. No difficulty is evaded in this volume, and no difficulty is created in order that it may be triumphantly solved. He neither perplexes us or wastes our attention by accumulating the opinions of previous commentators that he may dismiss them with lordly superiority; nor, on the other hand, does he shrink from discussing them when discussion is imperatively required. With remarkable breadth—apparent, above all, in his handling of the eschatological passages of our Lord's discourses,—he combines sobriety and reverence. His tone is high, generous,

devout. His style is succinct, yet full and suggestive. In fine, he here presents us with work so good, so unprecedentedly good, that for once the critic is beggared of his usual function and has nothing left him but to admire.

The Gospel of St. John has been assigned to Professor Watkins, who was, I believe, a favourite pupil of Dr. Plumptre's a few years since, and is now his friend and colleague. If it be true that in this commentary we have the work of a 'prentice hand, it must be admitted that the new, is a very valuable, addition to the scanty band of Biblical expositors who write "for the English reader." His style is not so finished as that of Dr. Plumptre's, nor his judgment so ripe, nor his erudition so wide; but he is endowed with a spiritual insight and a sensitiveness to all high and noble spiritual conceptions and impressions which singularly qualify him for expounding the "spiritual" or "heavenly" Gospel. For English readers there is no commentary on the fourth Gospel that can compete with his, which, in its general spirit and tone, indeed, bears a remarkable resemblance to those that precede it.

It is matter for regret that the Editor contributes to this volume nothing but an admirably written Preface, and that his name is not on the list of contributors to the forthcoming volume. Those who degraded Dr. Ellicott from a commentator to a bishop, and set him to rule a diocese instead of leaving him to write expositions which would have sensibly enriched the catholic Church throughout the world, have much to answer for. In his Preface, however, admirable as it is, the Bishop advances one claim to which I must demur. He claims for this commentary, or series of commentaries, that it is new—new in kind and aim—and makes this claim with some iteration and emphasis. Now, not to mention certain expositions of books, or parts, of Scripture which have appeared in this Magazine, I think I could name nearly a dozen commentaries, prior to this, yet constructed on very much the same lines, and aiming at the very ends which give their special character to the four most admirable commentaries contained in this volume.

I ought to add, perhaps, that the volume is an unusually handsome one; that type, paper, method of arrangement—its whole get up, in short, reflects great credit on the Firm which issues it.

It does not often fall to a critic to have two new and important works on his table at the same time which he can praise without reserve; but, for once, I find myself in that happy but uninteresting position. Volumes I., II., and III. of a COMMENTARY ON THE

GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN, *by Dr. F. Godet (of Neuchâtel), translated,* and thoroughly well translated, *by Frances Crombie and M. D. Cusin,* have recently been published by Messrs. T. and T. Clark, of Edinburgh. And, in its way, this work is equally admirable with the volume noticed above. But it is intended mainly, though not exclusively, for another class of readers. Only scholars can reap the full benefit of a book in which Hebrew and Greek are quoted and discussed whenever it is necessary. But it would be a mistake to suppose that even the English reader can derive no benefit from Godet's work. The main drift of his exposition may easily be gathered by those who read neither Greek nor Hebrew, as may that of most commentaries in which those languages are employed for use, and not for show. And it is well worth while to make an effort to secure so much as that. For as there are few living commentators whose works are so valuable as those of Professor Godet, so also there is no one of his works so valuable as this. He is here at his best; and it is the best of one of the best and best-furnished minds of the day. The readers of the EXPOSITOR have often had a taste of his quality. In the second volume of this Magazine, indeed, a translation was given of the elaborate and masterly disquisition on the Prologue of St. John's Gospel with which the commentary opens. All that follows is worthy of that noble opening. Let our readers but refer to this translation, and they will find far more in it to set them hungering and thirsting for the complete work than they could gather from any brief notice or review. I have just spoken of Professor Watkin's exposition of St. John as incomparable *for English readers*. But not only must the qualification of that sentence be borne in mind: it should also be pointed out that his commentary is in the form of notes, admirably full and suggestive indeed, but still notes, and notes of the briefest: whereas Professor Godet's is an elaborate commentary which deals with all difficulties at length, and which breaks out, at every touch of need, into a learned, elaborate, and masterly excursus.

I cannot break off without congratulating all ministers and preachers of the Word on the acquisition of a sufficient apparatus for the study of the Gospels. Ten years ago, strange to say, one knew not where to look for any accessible and really valuable exposition of any one of the Gospels. That reproach to our English Biblical literature is now, happily, taken away. Any lover of the Word who has Dr. Morison on St. Matthew and St. Mark, and Dr. Godet on St. Luke and St. John, and will add to these the New Testament Commentary

which Messrs. Cassell and Co. have just published, will find himself thoroughly furnished for the study of those priceless gifts from Heaven.

THE TALMUD. *By Joseph Barclay, D.D.* (London: John Murray.) This volume is not a treatise on the Talmud, as from its title one might expect it to be; nor is it, of course, a translation of the whole Talmud. It is simply a translation of certain treatises selected from the Mishna, with a few brief explanations drawn from the Gemara and from other sources. The treatises are selected, says the author or translator, with a view to "illustrate Bible teaching," and he has attempted "to present them in a literal and readable form." But the task has been too much for him. In his translation, as in the original, these treatises are wellnigh unreadable; and the one Biblical fact they illustrate above all others is the charge alleged or implied against the Rabbis in the New Testament, that they had imposed on the Law a series of tedious, burdensome, self-contradictory, and most undivine precepts which it was impossible that any man could bear. Some illustrations of the Mosaic ritual, as observed and depraved in subsequent generations, may indeed be derived from these insufferable treatises; and some fine sayings, now precious for their wit, and again for a tone of noble morality, may be picked up among the sayings of the Jewish Fathers, though the best of these are much more finely rendered by Dr. Deutsch than by Dr. Barclay. But in the whole volume I have only found two illustrations of Scripture, both of them given in footnotes, which are likely to be of much interest to the general reader, while the scholar, who *must* study the Talmud for himself, will of course prefer to go to the original.

These illustrations, the one on the offering of the first-fruits, and the other on the worship of Molech, I hope to cite in these pages before long. A few more such "notes" would have been worth far more than all the tedious and dreary translations on which Dr. Barclay has expended so much learning and labour.

S. COX.