

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

our view of the Atonement will neither degrade Him nor demoralize us, but will rather impel us to devote ourselves with new fervour to his service. For just as the once unprofitable but now penitent slave, on his return to Colosse, would strive to become very profitable to his master, both because he had once wronged him, and because he would thus please the Apostle who had reclaimed and befriended him; so we, if we believe in the forgiving love of God as revealed in his Son, cannot but give ourselves with new ardour to his service, both because we were sometime sinners against Him, and because we know that we shall thus please Him who died for our sins that we might be reconciled unto God.

In this simple story, then, we find an argument which clears away some of the perplexities which obscure our poor and partial conceptions of the Atonement wrought by Christ. But we ought also to find in it an appeal that shall touch and move our hearts. For if God *so* loved us, then surely

Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands our love, our life, our all.

S. E. C. T.

BRIEF NOTICES.

WHEN the first volume of *Bishop Ellicott's* NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY FOR ENGLISH READERS (Cassell and Co.) appeared, we hailed it as the very best of its kind, as the greatest boon yet offered to unlearned students of the Word of God. With natural disappointment and reluctance we have now to report that the second volume is not, on the whole, up to the high level of the first. In parts it is as good as heart could wish. Professor Plumptre has evidently found his true vocation. His expositions of Scripture shew that he is never so happy as when tracing an author's meaning from word to word, from clause to clause, from sentence to sentence, through a long and

connected writing, and under such constraints of space as compel him to study form and proportion. He has a rare gift for seizing on fine distinctions of thought, for detecting and grasping the subtler shades of meaning and intention in words or collocations of words. And with this gift he combines another almost as rare, that of bringing together, from the most distant and unexpected quarters, facts and phrases and usages of speech which illustrate the passage he has in hand. Whatever he has to say, moreover, he says in simple flexible English, while yet he can be as terse and compressed as he is select and happy in his style. And, no doubt, his wide study of the Bible, extending over most of the Scriptures both of the Old Testament and the New, and his long practice in authorship, contribute largely to the confidence and ease with which he moves. It is impossible to read his expositions of the *Acts of the Apostles* and the *Second Epistle to the Corinthians* in this volume without being afresh impressed with the conviction that, as an expositor for English readers, he stands almost unrivalled. His "Introduction" to the Acts, for example, is a model in its comprehensiveness, brevity, and delicacy of touch, to all who labour in the same field.

To assign the great theological treatise of the New Testament—the *Epistle to the Romans*—and that other Epistle—*Galatians*—which also contains an elaborate theological argument, to Dr. Sanday was hardly wise. Dr. Sanday has won his honours—and they are of the highest—in the school of criticism. Few men are happier than he in dealing with the critical and historical questions suggested by the New Testament Scriptures. But in theology he is comparatively, or at least he writes like, a novice; nor has he gained by long practice the special skill, or trick, of the skilled expositor. Hence, while his Introductions to both the Epistles assigned him are admirable, his exposition of them is questionable, and will no doubt be questioned by many of the ablest theologians of the day. He does not move among the "doctrines" stated or suggested by St. Paul with ease and freedom. His handling of them lacks force, his solutions breadth. Nor is he of the same theological school with Professors Plumptre and Watkins; and hence he introduces a discord into the tones of this Commentary which the learned editor seems to have taken no pains to reduce, much less to resolve.

The great mistake of this volume lies, however, and we say so with unfeigned regret, in assigning the *First Epistle to the Corinthians* to a man so busily occupied and preoccupied—as pastor, editor, preacher, chaplain—as the Rev. T. Teignmouth Shore. It really is

not difficult for any scholar with leisure at his command to write a respectable commentary on this Epistle, for none has been more frequently and ably discussed. But it is only too evident that Mr. Shore has not had sufficient leisure at his command to enable him to give us his best work. His exposition lacks the erudition, the scholarship, the grasp and breadth of thought, which would have brought it up to the level of the other contributions to this great work.

REUSS'S BIBLE.¹—The full title, given below, of the work to which Professor Reuss has devoted himself, sufficiently indicates its magnitude and importance. Hitherto, it seems, little has been done in this way for the service of French Protestantism. Commentaries upon single books of Scripture, original or translations, have been issued from the press during the last thirty years, but they have been modelled for the most part after the German type, and bristle with Greek and Hebrew quotations which repel the general reader. M. Reuss aims to do for the more intelligent Protestants of France what the "Speaker's Commentary" essays to do for a similar class in this country, but with this difference, that his aim and methods are more purely literary. The exposition is limited to putting the reader in possession of the meaning of the sacred text, without any attempt at edifying comment.

All who have made the acquaintance of M. Reuss through his "History of the Christian Theology of the Apostolic Age," will be ready to admit that he possesses high qualifications for the task he has undertaken. His scholarship and exegetical tact place him in the front rank of living commentators, and while his rationalistic point of view often leads him to conclusions from which the readers of THE EXPOSITOR will dissent, this does not detract very seriously from the value of his labours, since he commonly supplies the materials by which his errors may be corrected.

A translation of the entire Scriptures, with an accompanying comment from one mind, however richly stored and fully equipped for the task, may not seem to promise very valuable results. No man is equally at home in Greek and in Hebrew, in poetry and in prose; nor can any man so master the whole range of Scripture as to warrant

¹ *La Bible nouvellement traduite sur les textes originaux, avec une introduction à chaque livre, des notes explicatives sur l'ancien Testament, et un commentaire complet sur le nouveau Testament* ("The Bible newly translated from the Original Texts, with an Introduction to each book, Explanatory Notes upon the Old, and a complete Commentary upon the New, Testament"). Paris: Sandoz and Fischbacher.

him in writing a Commentary on the whole Bible. On the other hand, a certain homogeneity of aim and equality of execution are secured when the task of translating and annotating the Bible is essayed by a great scholar like De Wette or Reuss. This Bible is published by subscription, and the fact that it has already secured more than 1,100 subscribers, of various religious opinions, in different parts of Europe, whose names are published in periodical lists, is a proof of the estimation in which the Strasbourg professor is held, and of the expectations which his undertaking has excited.

The plan of the work is sufficiently original and curious to deserve being given entire. Even M. Reuss anticipates that it will surprise some of his readers. It shews how the literary spirit predominates in his work. After a *Preface and General Introduction*, the OLD TESTAMENT is laid out as follows:—First Part: *History of the Israelites from the Conquest of Palestine to the Exile* (Judges, Samuel, and Kings), one vol. Second Part: *The Prophets* (in chronological order), two vols. Third Part: * *The Sacred History of the Law* (Pentateuch and Joshua). Fourth Part: *The Ecclesiastical Chronicles of Jerusalem* (Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah), one vol. Fifth Part: *Lyrical Poetry*—First Section: *The Psalter*; Second Section: *Lamentations*, one vol.; * *Canticles* will form the Third Section of this part. Sixth Part: *Religious and Moral Philosophy* (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom, Moral Tales, Baruch &c.). Seventh Part: * *Political and Polemical Literature* (Ruth, Maccabees, Daniel, Esther, Judith, &c.).—THE NEW TESTAMENT is distributed thus:—First Part: *The Gospel History* (Synopsis of the first three Gospels). one vol. Second Part: *The Apostolic History* (Acts of the Apostles), one vol. Third Part: *The Pauline Epistles*, two vols. Fourth Part: *The Apocalypse*. Fifth Part: * *The Epistles to the Hebrews, James, Peter, and Jude*. Sixth Part: * *The Johannine Theology* (Gospel and Epistles).—Of these, those marked with an asterisk have not yet appeared. The work was commenced in 1874, and will probably be completed by the end of this year. It incorporates several smaller works previously published. The price of the whole is not to exceed one hundred francs. There will be about fourteen volumes of five hundred pages octavo.

The need of a new French translation of the Bible is very generally acknowledged by the Protestant Churches. It is only justice to M. Reuss, however, to say that he has entertained no idea of displacing by his work the time-honoured versions now in use. As he justly observes, "Exegesis is a science of too recent date in France

for the Church to be in a position to accept a new Bible from the hand of the first comer." His aim has been simply "to render service in the more modest sphere of the closet, and wherever a desire may exist for thorough and consecutive instruction upon the form and matter of the Scriptures." In the execution of the translation his object has been to give the exact sense of the original: style has been a secondary consideration. M. Reuss's mother-tongue is German, and his French is somewhat deficient in colour and vividness; but his version is lucid and flowing. His observations upon the happy mean to be observed between literalness and grace of style in translating such a book as the Bible seem to hit the mark exactly, and one can only hope that the spirit of them is controlling the work of our own Revisers. He says: "A translation must, of course, be faithful; but its fidelity consists in giving the reader of to-day a similar impression to that formerly received by a contemporary who spoke the language of the author. Now, the translator would miss this mark if he clung to the letter of an idiom entirely different from our own, and would actually create new difficulties for those he desired to assist in understanding the text, difficulties which probably would have no existence for the scholar. On the other hand, he must not forget that he has to deal with ancient documents, which, while they serve the wants of modern generations, belong, nevertheless, to history, and demand, on this ground alone, respect and discretion. In translating the Bible, the object is, not simply to propagate religious ideas and inculcate precepts of morality—this may be done in many other ways, without diminishing the native truth and intrinsic power of Biblical teaching—but to reveal the source whence this truth is drawn, and the particular form in which this power was first manifested. There are limits, then, to a translator's license. His work must present, not, certainly, a mere counterpart of Hebraic or Hellenistic syntax, which could only repel the reader, but a reflection of the original and authentic conception of the ancient authors, the faithful reproduction of their literary physiognomy—in a word, the image of their style. For, as between their time and ours, it is not only language that has changed; there is also a very perceptible difference in the working of the mind, in forms of thought and methods of instruction. There are images borrowed from remote scenes, allusions to conditions of society which no longer exist, figures of rhetoric scattered broadcast over even the simplest prose, bold flights of a poetry which is at once foreign and natural, and very many other things besides, which enter into the peculiar

genius of sacred literature, and which by turns arrest attention and call forth sympathy, shock our taste or awaken our admiration. A rendering which, in order to make the text easily intelligible to ordinary readers, obliterated these characteristic features, beating out into circumlocutions the crisp and pictorial diction of the original, would not deserve the name of translation."

The Introductions which M. Reuss has supplied to the several books are exceedingly instructive, and valuable, moreover, as furnishing an easily accessible account of the latest views entertained upon the date, authorship, and contents of the several sacred books by the school which claims to exercise the higher criticism. The easy and confident step with which M. Reuss sometimes advances along what seems to us, even from a literary point of view, a perilous path, is a wonder to see. The *naveté* of his dogmatism is amusing, and reminds one of Bunsen's achievements in Egyptology, related in his memoirs, when a single morning's work sufficed to find the solution of some of its most intricate problems. To take an instance from the Introduction to the Apocalypse. The question to be determined is the date of the book, and "this is how it is done."

"The capital built upon seven hills can be no other than Rome, which the Romans themselves loved to designate in this way. Its kings are the Roman emperors. Our author writes during the reign of the sixth, the first five belonging already to the past. After Augustus, Tiberius, Caius, Claudius, and Nero, we come to Galba. The total number of the emperors being determined by the analogy of the hills and of the heads (of the beast), and the duration of the empire, from the time at which the author was writing to the final catastrophe, being fixed, according to Daniel, at three years and a half (Chap. xi. 2, 3; xii. 14), and in a more general way in this book by the expression 'at hand' (Chap. i. 3, 4), we see at once how the author could say that the seventh king would only remain a little while, without inferring therefrom any reference to the historical event of Otho's reign (*supposed to be beyond his horizon*). The Apocalypse, then, was written in the reign of Galba, that is to say, in the interval between these two epochs—the time when the death of Nero, which happened on the 9th of June, 68, could be known in Asia, and the death of Galba, slain on the 16th of January, 69."

The riddle of the Apocalypse, the number of the beast, is solved, by scholars of M. Renan's school, by the name of Nero, taken in its Hebrew form. Professor Reuss treats this solution as a literary de-

monstration. While, however, he insists upon this as the meaning of the writer of the Apocalypse, he is obliged, of course, to admit that its predictions, interpreted in this sense, were falsified as soon as they were published. But see what the whole theory involves. Only six months elapse between the deaths of Nero and of Galba. During this brief interval, the report had to obtain currency in the Church that Nero was not really dead, but would reappear as Antichrist, and this rumour had to reach an obscure Christian at Ephesus, and become the motive of an elaborate apocalyptic work of the most intricate structure, and full of symbolical images, drawn chiefly from the Old Testament, but worked out with great minuteness of detail. No one could shew more successfully than M. Reuss has shewn the unity of this book, the elaborate skill with which it is constructed, and the degree to which it is saturated with Old Testament imagery; yet we are to believe that it was conceived, composed, and published beyond recall, within the brief interval of its author's first hearing of the death of Nero and the news reaching him of the subsequent death of Galba! This is just an example of how Professor Reuss's work sometimes supplies materials for refuting his own conclusions.

But it would be a very false impression of the value of these Introductions to infer that the kind of work just indicated is a predominant feature of them. The Introduction to the Book of Ecclesiastes, which will have a special interest for readers of *THE EXPOSITOR* this year, is full of information and sound reasoning: not less so the Introduction to Proverbs. Indeed, this remark is true even of the Introduction to the Apocalypse, to part of which exception has just been taken.

The Notes to the Old Testament abound with information which it would be hard to find elsewhere in a form so readily accessible. Any one who reads French will find them a storehouse of suggestions which only require a little discretion in their use to be highly serviceable. The character of the Commentary on the New Testament is precisely what M. Reuss's work on "The Christian Theology of the Apostolic Age" would lead us to expect: it is the quarry from which that work was dug, with its materials restored to their original place.

There can be no question as to the immense industry and reading shewn in *THE ENGLISHMAN'S CRITICAL AND EXPOSITORY BIBLE CYCLOPÆDIA*, by the *Rev. A. R. Fausset, M.A.*; but it may well be doubted whether that erudition and industry have not been ill-bestowed. "Unity of tone and aim" may, indeed, be secured by "unity of authorship," as Mr. Fausset pleads; but the gain is doubt-

ful, the loss only too certain. For it is quite impossible for any one man to be master of all the subjects treated in a Biblical Cyclopædia, or even so to get them up as not to fall into many errors. On many subjects he must borrow nearly all he seems to have from the works of scholars who gave themselves to original thought and research; and he should be very sure of the tone and bias of his own mind before he concludes that the work of other and abler men than himself will be improved by passing through it. If Mr. Fausset had been a little more emphatic in his acknowledgment of his debts to other men, he would have done himself no harm. But even the frankest employment and the frankest acknowledgment of the employment of the labours of others would not have enabled him to produce a Cyclopædia adapted to general use. For Mr. Fausset's dogmatic prepossessions are very strong and very narrow. He still believes in the *verbal* inspiration of Holy Writ; his doctrine of election is Calvinistic rather than Biblical; he has not grasped the fact that no man, no family, no race, no Church even, was ever yet elected for its own sake, but for the benefit of the world at large; and maintains, in the face of the New Testament teaching, that Christ died *sufficiently* for all, *efficiently* only for the elect! It is not likely, therefore, that beyond the bounds of a small and declining school of thought his Cyclopædia will find much acceptance, able as it is in its way, and full of labour. Kitto and Smith are in no danger as yet.

HAMARTIA: *An Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil* (Elliot Stock). We have read this thoughtful and fine-toned little essay with much interest and sympathy, and can heartily commend it to all students whose eschatological views have not yet run and hardened into the "orthodox" forms. Those who have made up their minds may be irritated by it, not benefited. But to as many as have been led to question "the traditions of the fathers" concerning the world to come, it will be very welcome,—reminding them now of Thomas Erskine and now of Andrew Jukes, especially of the latter.

To the same class of readers we may recommend a small book entitled, FUTURE PUNISHMENT NOT ETERNAL, by the *Rev. A. R. Symonds*. It contains a very sober and sensible statement of the argument for the ultimate reconciliation and subjection of all souls to God. The argument is so soberly and devoutly stated, indeed, that even those who differ most widely from the author's conclusion may yet read it without offence.