

When so accomplished and eminent a scholar as Dr. Vance Smith asked me whether I cared to have "the whole truth" concerning Romans ix. 5 placed before the readers of THE EXPOSITOR, and assured me that he was in possession of some "facts" relating to it "not known to the theological public," I could only respond to the challenge by saying that, since "the whole truth" was what we all desired, I should be delighted to lay any facts he had discovered before the readers of this Magazine.

At the same time I thought it would conduce to edification, and might bring out "the whole case" more completely, if I asked Canon Farrar, whose conclusion Dr. Vance Smith contested, and Dr. Sanday, whom he had referred to with much respect, to read his "Note," and to append to it their judgment of his facts and pleas. They have been good enough to respond to my invitation. And I have now the pleasure of presenting to the public both the "facts" discovered by Dr. Smith and the comments on them of Canon Farrar and Dr. Sanday. I trust and believe that if not "the whole truth" concerning this much-disputed passage, at least the means of arriving at as much of truth and certainty as can yet be reached, are now placed before the readers of this Magazine. Nor have I much doubt which way their vote will be cast.

EDITOR.

BRIEF NOTICES.

A COMMENTARY ON ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS. *By Joseph Agar Beet.* (London: Hodder and Stoughton.) It is long since we had the pleasure of welcoming the advent of a new and young expositor of such high promise as Mr. Beet. This one work, which we understand to be his first, is of itself, despite certain very obvious drawbacks, sufficient to give him a place in the front rank of Biblical Commentators. Of his scholarship Dr. Sanday, a most competent and impartial judge, has spoken in the present number of this Magazine (see p. 404), and that in terms which render further comment on it unnecessary. His capacity for hard, close, original thinking, is apparent on every page. Nor does he lack the power of eloquent and fervent expression where he cares to use it, as we hope to shew in at least one brief quotation. His interpretations of the great critical passages in the Epistle prove him to belong theologically to the broad Evangelical School; not to the broadest section of that

School, however, for he sometimes fails to put the widest interpretation on St. Paul's words which they will bear, although in dealing with an author of so large and generous a nature as the Apostle of the Gentiles, it is almost always safe to put the largest possible construction on his words. Altogether, it would be difficult to find any Commentary on the Romans so likely to be useful and stimulating to the English reader as this.

But, unhappily, Mr. Beet, either from want of literary tact and practice, or from a desire to economize space and cost by crowding as much as possible into every page, has taken as much pains to disguise the value of his work as most authors take to display and enhance the value of theirs. Not only does he print his Greek—of which, by the way, he gives as little as he can, in order to make his Commentary more widely serviceable—for the most part without accents and breathings; not only does he fling heaps of references into the body of his work, not separating them from the text by so much as a bracket; but he also sprinkles in every page abbreviations more atrocious and irritating than those of a lawyer's letter. "ap." for "Apostle," "ep." for "Epistle," "div." for "division," "arg.t" for "argument," "sp." for "spirit," "bapt.m" for "baptism," "interp." for "interpretation;" "circ.n," "crucif.n," "resur.n," "just.n," for "circumcision," "crucifixion," "resurrection," "justification;" "right.s" for "righteousness," and even "freq. doxx." for "frequent doxologies"—these, with many more, inflict a series of shocks on the delicate nerves of the eye that render it well-nigh impossible to read more than a few pages at a time of a book which otherwise it would be difficult to lay down till the end were reached.

Let no man, however fatigued he may be by tripping over these perpetual stumbling-blocks, suffer himself to be repelled by them: should he persevere, he will be amply rewarded for his pains before he has travelled far. But it would be well if, in future editions, or in future works—for we are happy to say that Mr. Beet has taken *all* St. Paul's Epistles for his province—these detestable abbreviations should be removed. If economy of space and cost has, as we suspect, been Mr. Beet's motive for employing them, he may rest assured that for work so good as his he will find an audience quite willing to pay any fair price; and that, by retaining them, he is likely to alienate the impatient general reader, and to force many an exclamation better avoided to the lips of students, who *must* read him, however tiresome the process may be.

A special and capital feature of this Commentary is that, after a

careful and scholarly exposition of the several paragraphs of the Epistle, Mr. Beet sums up its teaching in a few terse sentences; and that, at the end of the volume, he devotes a whole essay to the "doctrinal results" he has brought out. From one of his summaries we take our promised extract, selecting that on Chapter i. Verses 1-7, because the readers of this Magazine are being made familiar with the contents of those Verses by Dr. Morison's exposition of "The Christology of St. Paul in the Superscription of his Epistle to the Romans."

"Notice the beauty and symmetry of Paul's opening sentence. It is a crystal arch spanning the gulf between the Jew of Tarsus and the Christians at Rome. Paul begins by giving his name; he rises to the dignity of his office, and then to the gospel he proclaims. From the gospel he ascends to its great subject, to Him who is Son of David and Son of God. From this summit of his arch he passes on to the apostleship again, and to the nations for whose good he received it. Among these nations he finds the Christians at Rome. He began to build by laying down his own claims; he finishes by acknowledging theirs. The gulf is spanned. Across the waters of national separation Paul has flung an arch, whose firmly-knit segments are living truths, and whose keystone is the incarnate Son of God. Over this arch he hastens with words of greeting from his Father and their Father, from his Master and their Master.

"Every word increases the writer's claim upon the attention of his readers. He writes to them as one doing the work of the promised Messiah, who lived at Nazareth and died at Jerusalem. Among the servants of Christ he occupies no mean place, but has been solemnly called to the first rank. He has been set apart by God for the proclamation of those joyful tidings whose echoes from afar were heard by the ancient prophets, and still resound in the words of the sacred books. The divine mission of the prophets, and the sacredness of their writings, claim attention for one who announces as present what they foretold as future. This claim is strengthened by mention of Him who is the great matter of the good news. Paul proclaims the advent of a scion of the house to which eternal royalty was promised; of One who, by Divine power, by victory over the grave, has been separated from all others as the Son of God. This Son of David and Son of God is Paul's Master and theirs. By his personal call Paul has received the rank of an apostle. The office receives lustre from the grandeur of Him by whom it was conferred. The purpose of Paul's mission is that men in all nations may obey faith.

A further purpose is that the name of Christ, written in these verses in characters so splendid, may be revered and loved by all. Among these nations are Paul's readers. But he does not write to lead them to faith. Christ has already made them his own by a divine call. They are objects of God's love, and men whom God has claimed for Himself. Paul desires for them the smile of God, and the rest of spirit which only that smile can give. May it come to them from its only source, the common Father and the common Master!

"In these words there is no mere rambling among sacred topics; no running away after some great thought; no mere desire to put Christ's name into every sentence. But there is everywhere order and purpose. In Verse 5 we find Paul standing as an apostle on the level on which he stood in Verse 1. But how great an advance he has made. The long-foretold gospel has given importance to the man set apart to proclaim it. The Apostle has been into the presence of the Son of God, and the glory of that presence now irradiates the office received from One so great. He comes forth as an ambassador, claiming for his Master the allegiance of all nations.

"Observe in this section the facts and teachings assumed by St. Paul. He takes for granted the resurrection of Christ, and his own call by Christ; that Jesus claimed to be in a special sense the Son of God; that the prophets spoke from God; that their writings are sacred books; and that the gospel is a divine call by which Christ claims men for God."

ZECARIAH AND HIS PROPHECIES. (Bampton Lecture for 1878.)
By Charles Henry Hamilton Wright, B.D. (London: Hodder and Stoughton.) This elaborate and somewhat heavy work is characterized by sound scholarship, wide erudition, and sober judgment—qualities very necessary in handling the apocalyptic and eschatological visions of Zechariah. The great drawback of the book in its present form is that it is part Lecture and part Commentary. It is to be hoped that in future editions it may become as good in form as it is in substance. In some form it is indispensable to the student of this obscure and difficult Prophet.

EDITOR.
