

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for February will contain an original and striking Sermon by the Rev. John Smith, M.A., of Edinburgh. Two texts are taken together—Luke i. 14, "Thou shalt have joy and gladness"; and Luke ii. 35, "A sword shall pierce through thine own soul".

In the report of an interview with the late Rev. J. A. Macfadyen, D.D., of Manchester, in the September *Quiver*, it was stated that Dr. Macfadyen distinguished two classes of sermons—in one of which the preacher is a herald, in the other most of a teacher. In the latter, which he called his expository sermons, he discussed and explained questions and subjects which a herald would naturally pass by. It was his practice, he said, to preach a sermon of each class on the Sunday; but, if he should preach but once, it was the expository sermon which he retained.

The Queen of Sheba "came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon". And now we have quite a succession of wise men who have penetrated as far as these uttermost parts to learn the wisdom of the Sabeans. The latest is Dr. Glaser. "Three times at the risk of his life he has explored a country of which our modern geographers still know so little, and almost alone, among Europeans, has stood among the ruins of Marib, or Mariaba, called by Strabo the Metropolis of the Sabeans. He has collected no less than 1031 inscriptions, many of them of the highest historical interest." The first-fruits of his discoveries

have been published in his *Sketches of Arabian History*, of which the first part has just appeared at Munich.

Professor Sayce gives an account of the book in the *Contemporary*. One thing it makes clear is that the Sabeans had once a great kingdom and a great history, and that both were obliterated by the advancing flood of Islam. The marks of the latter can only be painfully deciphered now from the few existing monuments.

The visit of the Queen of Sheba, says Professor Sayce, need no longer cause astonishment, notwithstanding the long journey by land, which lay between Palestine and the South of Arabia. One of the Minæan inscriptions, discovered by Dr. Glaser, mentions Gaza, and we now have abundant evidence that the power and culture of the Sabeans extended to the frontiers of Edom. Three thousand years ago, it was easier to travel through the length of Arabia than it is to-day.

In his new book, *Iris*, Dr. Delitzsch has also something to say about the Queen of Sheba. He devotes a whole chapter, indeed, to her and her famous riddle. A curious chapter it is, throwing a strong light upon Delitzsch's erudition. He is, so all agree, a most delightful companion to spend an evening with. For he too can speak "of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes". And here he speaks of riddles, as if the

middle ages had come back again, and it were all one whether you called him a professor of theology or a professor of conundrums.

Of that famous riddle which the Queen of Sheba is said to have propounded to Solomon, there are two forms which will always last. The one represents the Queen as offering a bunch of flowers, half natural and half artificial, and Solomon separates the one kind from the other by observing a bee which flits about amongst them. In the other, she presents a number of boys and girls dressed all alike, and Solomon distinguishes the sex by ordering a shallow basin of water to be brought. "The boys washed their faces like men without more ado, but the girls, with characteristic prudery, would scarcely touch the water with the tips of their fingers."

Professor Bruce, in the December *Expositor*, goes over to the ranks of the adversaries of the Revised Version. He directs his attack upon that which has generally been considered the strongest point in the Revision of 1881—its fidelity as a rendering of the original Greek. According to Principal Brown, himself one of the Revisers, it is this very thing which, being carried out with too great minuteness, has prevented it from superseding the Authorised Version in public use. But Professor Bruce flatly charges the Revisers with giving weight to certain considerations as to what might happen to an Apostle's infallibility if his language were rendered in a particular way; and thus of deciding between two possible renderings, not on the merits of the question, but on the ground of theological prudence.

Dr. Bruce makes this charge in the course of a discussion on the meaning of the Greek word *θυματήριον*, which occurs in Heb. ix. 4, and is translated in both English versions by the word "censer". It is the neuter of an adjective, and literally means "having to do with incense". In an early number of the *Expositor* a novel suggestion was made, that it might signify the "mercy-seat" itself. But the controversy really lies between "censer" and "altar of incense". The versions—Vulgate, Syriac, Arabic, Æthiopic—all have "censer"; but modern expositors, with scarcely a single first-rate exception, render it "altar of incense". The Greek word is

found in both meanings; but the latter has the best authority. In its favour is the fact that the writer enumerates only the principal articles of furniture in the tabernacle; it is unlikely that he would mention the censer, while it is almost incredible that he has omitted altogether the altar of incense.

But now comes in the prudential motive. The writer is describing the articles belonging to the Holy of Holies; and while the censer *may* have been kept within the inner veil, the altar of incense was certainly without, that is to say, in the Holy Place. Some exegetes have charged the writer with a blunder: and the point has been freely used in discussions as to the authorship and place of writing. Even Bleek belongs to those who found an error here. The Revisers avoid the possibility by translating the word "censer". "A clearer insight," says Professor Bruce, "into the mind of the writer would have shown them that this well-meant solicitude for his infallibility was uncalled for."

For, the truth is, the writer of the Epistle does not say that the *θυματήριον*, whatever it was, stood in the Holy of Holies. He does say that it had a very close connection with that innermost sanctuary. But he carefully chooses his words so as to imply this, and, at the same time, avoid saying that it was within. When describing the furniture of the Holy Place, he uses the words (*ἐν ᾗ*) "in which were". But here he changes the expression, and says (*ἔχουσα*) "having". "And this phrase," says Dr. Bruce, "is chosen with special reference to the altar of incense." Of all the other articles it might have been said "in which were," but not of it. Nothing more could be said than that it *belonged* to the Holy of Holies.

In saying that it belonged to the innermost sanctuary, the writer is in strict accordance with fact, for by its use it was connected closely with the mercy-seat, and so placed that the priests might have access to it without, and, at the same time, that the incense from off it might come up before God, "who dwelt between the Cherubim". He is also in strict accordance with Old Testament language. Besides what may be inferred from the "rubric," which gives its place and use in Exod. xxx. 6, there is a passage in 1 Kings immediately

in point. In 1 Kings vi. 22, we read, according to the English Version, "the whole altar that was by the oracle he overlaid with gold". But, as Professor A. B. Davidson in his Commentary at this place points out, correctly translated, the phrase (אֲשֶׁר לְהִבְרִיר) is "the whole altar *that belonged to the Holy of Holies*". This is exactly what our writer says. The resemblance is so close that it looks almost like a quotation.

The charge of "theological prudence" has lately been brought against the Revisers by another Professor of Divinity. This is Dr. Kendrick of New York, who contributes to the *Homiletic Review* a paper on Rom. ix. 3, "For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake". The words have been the cause of much anxious thought, and even of genuine distress. To one who has realised what it means to be blessed in Christ there is no expression so startling in the whole range of Scripture. But the original is, without doubt, more startling than either of the versions in English. Dr. Kendrick brings forward evidence to prove that the Revisers were moved by a desire to tone down the Apostle's language, and that the rendering which they give does not adequately express the words employed.

There is no doubt that we are always *safest* with the most accurate translation. It was, after all, the thing most urgently needed, and most confidently expected, when the Revision of 1881 was undertaken. Nor was the expectation disappointed. The Revisers did set themselves to this task courageously, and carried it out with a minuteness that appears to some needless, to others irritating. But their courage failed them in a few places; and there is reason to believe that the passage before us is one of them. All the more is this to be regretted, if, as Professor Kendrick holds, a correct translation opens the way to a natural and easy explanation of this verse, which completely removes the stumbling-block which it at present contains.

His complaint of inaccuracy has three points. First, that the verb in the original (εὔχομαι) does not express a mere wish, but has always the meaning of "pray" or "vow to God". Second, that the tense is incorrectly rendered, being the imperfect (ἠδύχομην). And thirdly, that the words "I myself"

(αὐτὸς ἐγώ) belong to the principal verb as its subject, and cannot grammatically be referred to the infinitive. He would therefore translate the verse thus: "I myself used to pray (or, once prayed) to be anathema from Christ".

Professor Kendrick believes that that is what the Apostle wrote. It is certainly stronger and more startling than the English version. How does he understand it? His explanation is not new, but it has some fresh points, and is sufficiently supported to demand a candid re-examination. For this is one of those passages on which we are ready to hail any beam of light that may fall. He holds, then, that the words which cause the trouble are a parenthesis. He translates the whole passage in this way: "I say the truth in Christ; I lie not, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart (for I myself once prayed to be anathema from Christ), on behalf of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh". The Apostle is recalling his past life, when he was "exceedingly mad" against the name of Christ. As his "kinsmen according to the flesh" called Jesus anathema, and imprecated upon themselves His avenging blood; as even Simon Peter, in one dreadful moment, "began to anathematise and swear" (ἤρξατο ἀναθεματίζειν καὶ ὀμνῆσαι—Mark xiv. 71); so Saul of Tarsus, in his frantic zeal, had once imprecated this terrible curse upon himself. The memory of that was a sufficient explanation of the great sorrow he felt for his similarly deluded countrymen, a sufficient and prevailing motive for the unceasing anguish of his heart on behalf of his brethren, his "kinsmen according to the flesh".

Professor Milligan's *Revelation* is criticised in two of the month's magazines. In the *Expositor* Principal Brown objects to his entire method of interpretation. "There are but two possible theories of what the Apocalypse was written for. It is either essentially *predictive* or purely *descriptive*. Its proper subject matter is either *events* or *ideas*." Dr. Milligan's theory is the descriptive, or idealist. The book deals with *principles* which are applicable to the Church in every age; it is not a history written beforehand of events either early, mediæval, or "last". Principal Brown agrees with

Professor Dods in objecting to this theory, because there was no sense in writing this book with such a motive, and no sense in the book after it is written.

In the *Theological Review* Professor A. B. Davidson subjects the same book to a more minute and searching criticism, both in its theory and its execution. Of the theory he says: "To obliterate from the pages of Isaiah Assyria, Moab, Zion, and the like, considering these mere symbols for general ideas, would not be to give an interpretation, but a dogmatic of his prophecies. And this is what Professor Milligan has done with the prophecy of John; his work is less an interpretation of the Revelation than a dogmatic of it."

In his criticism of the working out of the theory, Professor Davidson selects certain examples of interpretation, "because they illustrate what is the bane of exegesis, namely, what might be called interpretation according to etymology, instead of according to the *usage* of language". One example is that on the words "unto Him that loveth us and loosed us from our sins by (*év*) His blood," Dr. Milligan comments, "*in* rather than *by* the blood of Christ, for the blood of Christ is living blood, and in that life of His we are enfolded and enwrapped". On which Prof. Davidson remarks that "*in*" (*év*) here is the Hebrew *b* (ב), which has no such mystical sense, but simply expresses the means, or it may be the price, by which the loosing was effected. This example introduces a favourite subject of Dr. Milligan's—the *living* blood of Christ—upon which we hope to speak on another occasion.

But it illustrates the tendency to which Professor Davidson refers, and which he rightly calls the bane of exegesis. Truly wonderful are the feats sometimes performed by *etymological* exegetes. Even so deservedly popular an expositor as Dr. James Morison trips here, and sometimes falls outright. To take a single instance. In his *Commentary on Mark*, at chapter viii., verse 4, we read: "*To sit on the ground; or, to recline on the earth.* The word employed (*ἀνακλιθήτω*) very literally means, not to *fall down*, but to *fall up*; for, in assuming a recumbent posture, the body comes gradually in

contact with the ground from below upwardly. The upper part is the last that comes to rest."

So it may be found, italics and all, in good large print! What is to be said to it?

In the words of Professor Davidson, "we should protest in the name of common sense, were it not that common sense has ceased to have any part in this matter. She has long ago turned tail, 'an' aff an' up the Cowgate, fast, fast that day'."

The Welfare of Youth.

MONTHLY EXAMINATION PAPERS.

AN Examination Paper will be set monthly on the Life of David. The book recommended for use is *The Life of David*, by the Rev. P. Thomson, published by T. and T. Clark, price 6d. The name, age, and address of the Candidate must accompany the answers every month. Prizes will be given to successful Candidates monthly.

EXAMINER'S REPORT FOR DECEMBER.

Senior Section.

1. MARGARET LITTLEJOHN, Cot Town Lodge, Aberdeen.

Subsequent Order:—A. G. G. H. (Orkney), N. C. (Islay), M. S. (Islay), M. S. (Aberlour).

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1. LIZZIE ETTA GRANT, Killimster, Wick.

2. ANNA M. MUDIE, Orchardhill, Hamilton.

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Junior Section.

1. G. F. B. SIMPSON, 52 Queen Street, Edinburgh.

2. ANNIE EDGAR, Lochindaul Lighthouse, Port Charlotte, Islay.

Subsequent Order:—B. M. (Kingston-on-Spey), A. M. F. (Islay), N. H. (Aberdeen), E. G. (Kennethmont).

EXAMINATION PAPER, IV.

(Answers must be sent by the 13th January, to the Editor, Kinneff, Bervie.)

1. Explain the origin of the two names Baalperazim and Perezuzzah.

2. Name the chief nations against whom David had to wage war. Where did their territories lie?

3. Give Nathan's parable in your own words. What was its purpose, and how did it effect that purpose?