

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

FURTHER papers of considerable interest have been received which consider the meaning of our Lord's Prayer in Gethsemane. We hope to publish some of them next month.

As we go to press, the report comes of the papers read at the Norwich Church Congress. Some of them demand attention, but cannot be touched this month. To those who are interested and in a hurry the report in the *Record* for October 11 may be recommended. Reports are found also in the *Times*, the *Guardian*, and elsewhere, but nowhere so accurately, it seems, as in the *Record*.

There is no man in America, perhaps there is no man here, who has done more for the scientific study of the Bible than Dr. W. R. Harper, the President of the University of Chicago. When he speaks on that subject we know that his words are wrung from a long experience. When, therefore, he tells us, in *The Biblical World* for September, that the greatest defect in our religious organisation is the lack of teachers of the Bible, we are bound to hear him respectfully.

But his words are hard to bear. For he says that 'nine-tenths of the teaching in the Sunday school is, as teaching, a farce.' He says that the work of our so-called Sunday-school teachers, if judged upon the standard of ordinary principles of

pedagogy, is both ludicrous and criminal. It is ludicrous to call it teaching. It is criminal to send innocent pupils to suffer from it. He says that for a long time people have compelled their children to attend the Sunday school from a sense of duty. Now from a sense of duty they allow them to stay at home.

For Dr. Harper says that ordinarily the only person connected with the church who is at all capable of giving instruction in the Bible is the minister, and the minister is frequently the last man who feels an obligation resting upon him to do it. 'That which is most fundamental to the interests of the church, that which is its most vital part, he generously turns over to a few uneducated, unskilled, and sometimes unconsecrated, teachers; and he does not even trouble himself to see that these teachers associate themselves to help each other. The condition of things in most of our churches is in fact appalling, when we remember that in these days the Bible is not studied in the family as in former days. And when we come to understand the character of the instruction which is furnished as a substitute, we need not be surprised at the pitifully meagre results.'

Nor is this all. If the minister does not teach the Bible in the Sunday school, neither does he preach it in the congregation. The average

sermon, says Dr. Harper,—he speaks of America; do his words carry truth here also?—the average sermon, he says, contains less and less of biblical material, more and more of that which comes from outside the Bible.

And he has a reason for it. The modern minister does not know the Bible. He does not know the Bible; he knows innumerable things better than the Bible,—and so he speaks that he does know, and testifies that he has seen. As a matter of fact, says Dr. Harper,—but he speaks of America, remember,—the confessions of ministers themselves touching their ignorance of this book, and the exhibitions of ignorance which they make on all occasions where such ignorance may be detected, are sufficient to confirm what is rapidly coming to be the popular impression.

Therefore Dr. Harper holds that the greatest need of our day is the need of teachers of the Bible. They are needed for our colleges and institutions, which have so long neglected this the most important part of their work. They are needed for conducting lecture courses on Bible subjects in various places throughout the year. They are needed for regular instruction in our churches. 'This is indeed *a new calling*. The man who follows it will be in some cases a public lecturer, in others a college professor, in others a Sunday-school superintendent, in still others an assistant pastor. His work will be simply and solely to teach the Bible,—a new calling, and truly a glorious calling.'

A new calling, and truly a glorious calling,—but not an easy one. For since Dr. Harper has it in mind that this new calling will be one of highest rank and dignity, and since he realises that the work will make the most severe demands upon those who undertake it, he suggests the following things as necessary to the Bible teacher's equipment:—(1) A thorough college course, including Greek; (2) a graduate course of study, which shall include the languages of the Old Testament

and cognate languages; (3) an acquaintance with the Old Testament literature, in its various forms of legislation, prophecy, and wisdom; (4) a knowledge of the origin and growth of the canon, of the texts, and of the principles of Old Testament interpretation; (5) a familiarity with the history of the Hebrew religion, and the development of the theological ideas of the Hebrews; (6) a study of the documents of the New Testament texts, and the principles of textual criticism; (7) the history of the New Testament times in Palestine in the Greek and Roman world; (8) the history of the Apostolic Age of the Church; (9) the life and teaching of Jesus Christ; (10) such other departments or divisions of biblical work as will be found of special interest.

Who is sufficient for these things? Few are sufficient at present, says Dr. Harper. But many may make themselves so. The country has hundreds and thousands of men and women who have by long effort prepared themselves to teach the English language, the modern languages, or mathematics. We wait now for the men and women who will undertake like special preparation to enable them to teach the Bible.

But there is nothing new under the sun. Our new calling of professor of the Bible—what is it but the old office of the reader, once so highly honoured in the Christian Church; then dishonoured and driven out, lost even to sight till Harnack rediscovered it for us? The new professorship—it is the old readership equipped for modern necessities.

On the 30th of January 1894, a paper was read before the Liverpool Baptist Union by the Rev. Sidney W. Bowser, M.A., of Birkenhead, of which the title was 'Proposals for a Denominational Guild of Bible Study.' The paper was afterwards published in the *Freeman* of February 23, and we read it there with interest. For it touched very closely that subject which of all others seems to us most imperative at the present day—the study

as distinguished from the mere reading of the Bible. But inasmuch as the proposals were for a *denominational* Guild, and they were yet but proposals, it seemed best to direct no more public attention to them than they had already received, until they had opportunity of bearing fruit in their own way.

We had no communication on the subject with Mr. Bowser until this month, when he kindly sent us the first annual 'Report of the Guild of Bible Study in connexion with the Liverpool Baptist Union.' But in the paper which contained the original proposals, the statement was frankly made that the idea came from 'The Expository Times Guild of Bible Study.' 'Readers of that most admirable and stimulating monthly magazine, THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, are aware that the Editor has established a Guild of Bible Study, which is doing good service, both in Scotland and in England' . . . and 'a brief quotation from its prospectus might very well serve to suggest the main ideas which our own proposed Guild should seek to realise.' Thereupon Mr. Bowser quoted some sentences, emphasising the characteristic of the Guild, that it seeks to encourage the systematic study as distinguished from the mere reading of Scripture. And then, 'this scheme,' he added, 'is capable of great expansion and elaboration, and in this paper only the principal features can be considered, not the details and their elaboration.'

The 'principal features' are three:—(1) The Special Need. 'It is surely not unjust to say'—this sentence occurs near the beginning—'that beyond a fair acquaintance with the principal biographies of the Old Testament, and the gospel history, and a slight knowledge of a few favourite psalms and prophecies, the Bible is still practically a sealed book to the great majority of Christians, in spite of all their private and public reading of its Scriptures. What is wanted, therefore, is a new Bible Society. Not to supersede the old. But a new Bible Society whose aim shall be, not the mere circulation of the Bible throughout the world, but

its more real and more general study on the part of those who already peruse it. There exist to-day many interesting literary societies for the special study of the works of great English authors—the Chaucer Society, the Shakespeare Society, the Browning Society, the Ruskin Society—why should there not be similar societies for the special study of the works of Isaiah, Ezekiel, St. Paul, and St. John?'

But it is not dilettante literary societies that we need for the study of the Bible, as Mr. Bowser very well knows and earnestly urges. 'Viewed as the record of the revelation of God, and of His counsels of wisdom and grace to men, the Bible deserves the most careful, systematic, and prayerful study from all.' And so there follows (2) the Method, under which full suggestions are found as to time of study, books, examinations, and the like; while a closing paragraph indicates (3) the probable beneficial results of it all. 'The prevailing ignorance of the English Bible would disappear; a more enlightened appreciation of Christian doctrine and a more consistent Christian character and practice would obtain; a more loyal Christian spirit and service would be manifest. The life and work of the Church would be quickened and strengthened beyond all present conception. In more enlightened knowledge the best defence would be provided against the influence of the fanciful vagaries of extreme critics and sceptics. The coming generation would be saved from having to unlearn—a most difficult and painful process—that which is demonstrably false in the traditional views of the contents and growth and inspiration of the Bible; and it would be characterised by far less of the unsettlement, indifference, and unbelief which too widely prevail to-day.'

Well, the Liverpool Union listened and decided to try the Guild, and the first annual report has just been issued. It contains the Constitution and Bye-Laws, together with a record of the session's work. During this first session, the number of registered members reached 133. Of

these 23 presented themselves at the end of the session for examination in the prescribed subjects at fixed centres. Dr. Maclaren set the questions, and the answers were examined by Professor Marshall of Manchester and Professor Glass of Rawdon. Dr. Maclaren's questions are not found here. But the examiners more than hint that they were sufficiently difficult. 'In fact,' says Professor Marshall, 'no more searching set of questions could well have been required from those ignorant of Hebrew.' Nevertheless, some did well, and all did creditably. Why only 23 out of 133 came forward is explained by the Secretary (Mr. J. W. Macguire, B.A., 123 Kingsley Road, Liverpool). He says that a large proportion of the members consists of those over thirty years of age, to many of whom the idea of an examination, if not altogether out of the question, has more terror than to those under that age.

But the portion of the Report of deepest present interest is the page which contains the Constitution and Bye-Laws. Its leading points are these. The object is emphasised again—the study, not the mere reading of Scripture. And the method—a commentary to be used, and time fixed. Also, all members under thirty are expected to enter the examination. (Perhaps that should be left quite optional, just as it is optional whether, under 'The Expository Times Guild,' papers should be sent or not.) Prizes and certificates of honour are awarded after examination. Moreover, two titles are promised: 'Associate of the Guild' to those who pass two examinations in each Testament; and 'Fellow of the Guild' to those who pass four. The membership is open to all persons above fifteen years of age. An annual fee of one shilling meets expenses. Then follow the officers, consisting of a Dean, a Vice-Dean, a Board of Studies, a Treasurer, and a Registrar and Secretary.

There is a department of Bible study of the most serviceable nature which any man may engage in if he has patience and a Greek concord-

ance. We have an example of it in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for this quarter. There, in less than two pages, Mr. W. E. C. Wright gives a scientific and complete account of the use of the words 'Kingdom' and 'Church' in the New Testament. In our hymnology, he says, we use these words indiscriminately. They are not used indiscriminately in the New Testament. He accepts Dr. Fairbairn's generalisation, that 'the kingdom is the immanent church, the church the explicated kingdom.' And he gives us the meaning of that generalisation when he adds: 'In the Sermon on the Mount, and elsewhere, Christ spoke of the kingdom in order to set forth the ideal which He came into the world to make actual; and that ideal began to be realised in the local Christian assemblies, so that the apostles speak of the actual concrete church or churches oftener than of the ideal kingdom.'

And then he gives the examples. In the Gospels the word 'kingdom' occurs more than a hundred times; 'church' is found in none of them except Matthew, and there in but two passages. On the other hand, in the Acts and the Pauline Epistles, exclusive of the Pastoral Epistles, 'kingdom' occurs but nineteen times, while 'church' is found seventy-nine times. And he says, 'The drift of usage was very rapid in preference of the shorter word; and emphasis was increasingly put on the word "church" in the post-apostolic time, until the accepted saying came, "There is no salvation outside the Church."'

But when the word 'church' occurs, does it mean the local or the universal church? Mr. Wright's useful note answers that also. Of the two occurrences of the word 'church' in St. Matthew, in Matt. xviii. 7 Christ makes the local church or congregation the final court of appeal in the case of an offending brother; in Matt. xvi. 18 Christ tells Peter, 'On this rock I will build my Church,' where the word kingdom would fit so well that even Thayer does not hesitate in his *Lexicon* to suggest a misquotation. Of the twenty-

one times the word 'church' occurs in the Book of Acts, all except ix. 31 can be understood of the local congregation, and only three or four others can possibly be taken in any wider sense. In Acts xx. 28, 'The Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood,' the word is more naturally taken of the church universal; and so perhaps viii. 3, 'made havoc of the Church.' But in ix. 31 the best MSS. leave no doubt of this meaning, for they read, 'then had the Church rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria.'

In the Epistle to the Romans, the word 'church' occurs five times. They are all in the sixteenth chapter, and all with the local meaning. Of twenty-two occurrences in 1 Corinthians, only two have the distinctively larger sense: x. 32, 'Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the Church of God;' and xii. 28, 'God hath set some in the Church, first apostles,' and so on. Two other passages may, however, be taken in the more extended meaning: xi. 22, 'Or despise ye the Church of God'; and xv. 9, 'I persecuted the Church of God.' In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, 'church' occurs nine times, always of the local body. In Galatians it is three times found, twice with the local application; once, i. 13, 'I persecuted the Church of God,' it points rather to the universal church than to the local church in Jerusalem. And two references in each of the Epistles to the Thessalonians are simply to the local church or churches. But when we pass to the Epistles of the Captivity, the proportion gradually changes. In Philippians there is one reference to the local and one to the universal church. In Colossians two are local; two speak of the church as the body of Christ, and must be universal. In Ephesians the universal meaning is found nine times, the local not at all.

Whereupon Mr. Wright draws these two inferences. If the Gospels had been written in the post-apostolic age, their writers were surely supernaturally gifted to eschew the word 'church,'

which had become so common then. And since some, if not all, of the Gospels are later than some, if not all, of the Pauline Epistles, it witnesses to the fidelity of their narratives that they uniformly use the word 'kingdom,' which Jesus used, in preference to the word 'church' which was gradually taking its place.

We like Mr. Wright's facts better than his inferences. There is no evidence that the evangelists were supernaturally gifted to overleap the thought and language of their circle. If St. John wrote his Gospel in Ephesus at the end of his long life, and did not use the word 'Church,' which had then become so common there, it will not do to say he was supernaturally gifted to eschew it. We need an explanation more consonant with the other things we know than that. Perhaps we need to ask again, and earnestly, if St. John really wrote this Gospel *in his old age*.

Professor Findlay has published a third edition of his excellent handbook to St. Paul's Epistles (C. H. Kelly, 2s. 6d.), with additions and corrections. The most important addition is a 'Postscript' on *The Locality of St. Paul's 'Galatia.'* For since the issue of the first edition, Professor Ramsay's *Church in the Roman Empire* has appeared, in which the view is advocated that the 'Galatians' to whom St. Paul addressed his Epistle were the inhabitants of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and the like, in *Southern Galatia*. And as Professor Findlay wrote his handbook, working on the old opinion that they were inhabitants of Galatia in the far north, the district of which Ancyra was the capital, he must either defend that position or abandon it.

He does not abandon it. He believes that Professor Ramsay is wrong. He still holds that St. Paul's 'foolish Galatians' dwelt in and around Ancyra in the north of Asia Minor. And in a few pages he subjects Professor Ramsay's theory to a sharper criticism than it has yet received.

Professor Findlay does not believe that St. Paul's 'Galatians' dwelt in Southern Galatia. He gives six reasons which tell against that theory. 1. The language of Acts xvi. 6 is against it. In the Revised Version (which he prefers to the Authorized) that language is, 'And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.' 'The region of Phrygia and Galatia' points to a new region of travel distinct from that already described. But there was no new region to which the title would apply except the country lying north and north-east of Antioch in Pisidia, 'where the highlands inhabited by the old Phrygian population stretched to and overlapped the borders of Galatia proper.'

2. The connexion between the Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans is against it. In the Epistle to the Galatians (i. 9, iv. 13), St. Paul says that he had then been only twice amongst his readers. This Epistle, therefore, if Professor Ramsay is right, must have been written before the third missionary journey; for, according to Professor Ramsay's theory, St. Paul then traversed the country of these Galatians for the third time. Accordingly, Professor Ramsay removes the Epistle to the Galatians from its accepted place beside the Epistle to the Romans, holds that it was written two years earlier than the latter (and he ought to have said four years, hints Professor Findlay in a parenthesis), and groups it beside the Epistles to the Thessalonians. 'But if internal evidence proves anything, it proves that Galatians and Romans are neighbouring Epistles, the offspring of one birth in the writer's mind.'

3. St. Paul's character is against it. For if the Galatia of the Epistle is South Galatia, then Barnabas had also a hand in the preaching of the gospel there. But in the Epistle itself St. Paul claims an undivided authority over the Galatians. Thrice he mentions Barnabas. But it is never to suggest that the Galatians knew him or owed him anything. Once it is even in condemnation. Now,

St. Paul was particularly sensitive on this point. He speaks elsewhere of those who 'stretch themselves overmuch,' and 'build on another's foundation.' It is highly improbable that he would himself be guilty of this discourtesy, and allow his own contempt to return upon himself.

4. Professor Findlay admits that we hear much in the Acts of South Galatia and little of North. But it does not follow that St. Paul did not know North Galatia, and did not write his Letter to its Christian Church. Why should he have written his Letters only to churches of the first rank? Colossæ was a second-rate provincial town, yet it received one of the profoundest of the Apostle's writings. And that the gospel did reach North Galatia early is proved by the fact that even when 1 Peter was written it had spread beyond it into Pontus. Nay, St. Paul himself must have broken ground north of the Syrian high-road, and put the gospel in the way of reaching the whole of Asia Minor, else (and this is argument the fifth) he boasts too much when he writes to the Romans (xv. 19) of 'having fulfilled the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum.' And as for St. Luke's passing over the campaign in North Galatia, St. Paul himself may supply us with the explanation of that. We have only to suppose that the defection of the Northern Galatians, which he so passionately laments in his Epistle, continued till this region was lost to the Pauline mission. This is argument the sixth and last. And it is strengthened by the fact that St. Luke makes no pretence of giving a complete and uniform account of St. Paul's missionary career. 'What do we know of the "noble" Church of Berea, of the churches of Cilicia, or of the churches of the Gentile mission in Syria outside of Antioch? It is possible to press too far the correspondence between the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. Paul.'

Books, like men, have often their hardest battle to fight with the outward and the accidental. If Mr. Balfour's *Foundations of Faith* had been de-

layed in the publication, it would have fallen flat in the turmoil of the general election. If Beyschlag's *New Testament Theology* had not been immediately preceded and overshadowed by the brilliancy of Wendt's *Teaching of Jesus*, it would have compelled a wider and more adequate recognition. But a book of worth can afford to wait. 'Bishop,' said Carlyle suddenly, 'have you a creed?' 'Yes,' was the answer of the late Bishop Wilberforce; 'and what is more, the older I grow the firmer that creed becomes under my feet. There is only one thing that staggers me.' 'What is that?' asked Carlyle. 'The slow progress that creed makes in the world.' Carlyle remained silent for a second or two, and then said slowly and seriously, 'Ah! but if you have a creed, you can afford to wait!'

A book that has a creed can also afford to wait. Already Beyschlag is coming to his inheritance. That most pointed reference in Dr. Horton's new book (*The Teaching of Jesus*. Isbister, 3s. 6d.) will cause inquiry to be made. And those who are fortunate enough to see the masterly article which Professor Peake has contributed to the current issue of the *Primitive Methodist Quarterly* will have no rest till they find the book and read it.

Not that either Dr. Horton or Mr. Peake sees nothing in the book but good. Dr. Horton speaks of the 'great defect' of Wendt's *The Teaching of Jesus*, and Beyschlag's failure to supply it. His aim is, 'to pass on the splendid spoil which these scholars have carried away from the study of years'; but as he does so, to endeavour to remove 'their great defect.' And Professor Peake is no less outspoken, whether in hearty commendation or in sincere dissent.

The defect they both discover is the same. It touches the Person of Christ. Beyschlag earnestly protests against the easy classification which would label him a Unitarian. 'In thus conceiving God,' he says, 'I am, like Schleiermacher, a Modalistic Trinitarian, but not a Unitarian.' Nevertheless, both Dr. Horton and Mr. Peake perceive that

Beyschlag refuses us one essential element in the true Godhead of the Son, and both perceive that that element is His pre-existence.

Now, the simple method by which the thoroughgoing Unitarian believes in Jesus and denies His pre-existence is to reject the sayings which affirm it. This also is Wendt's method, though with a keener sense of responsibility. But Beyschlag does not so. He takes the record of the Synoptists as it stands. He accepts the Johannine authorship of the Fourth Gospel, and the authenticity of the sayings it records. Beyschlag's rejection of Christ's pre-existence is therefore no easy undertaking. First, he says that there are two kinds of pre-existence, an ideal and a real. Pre-existence was an idea familiar to the Jews, and applied to the Kingdom of God as well as to other things, and Jesus would apply the idea to Himself as the bearer of the Kingdom of Heaven. This pre-existence is simply an ideal pre-existence in the mind of God, the concrete form given to an 'ideal conception.'

Thus there is the passage (John vi. 62), 'If then ye behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before?' This, says Beyschlag, is no more than the pre-existence of the *Son of Man*; it is not the pre-existence of Jesus. In Dan. vii. 13 the Son of Man appears in the clouds of heaven, before He descends to earth invested with power and glory. Jesus claims to be this ideal Man. Again, there is the passage, 'Before Abraham was, I am' (John viii. 58). Jesus has affirmed that Abraham rejoiced to see His day. The Jews have replied that He was not yet fifty, and cannot have seen Abraham. 'Then the feeling of eternity flashed up in Him, and made Him answer them majestically: "Before Abraham was, I am."' He does not say 'I was'; His point is not His having been before, but His eternal being. Abraham is only a transient appearance—He is the 'Eternal in time.' But there is a third passage: 'And now, Father, glorify thou Me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world

was' (John xvii. 5), upon which Beyschlag's comment is a question: 'If Jesus had really possessed the divine glory before His incarnation, how could He have asked it back as a reward for His work on earth?'

Now, this ideal pre-existence is a 'fine modern thought,' but it will not stand the test of honest exegesis. When that same question occurs again and again, and, whatever its context, always suggests the same meaning, it is difficult to show that that meaning is not right. In every instance the first meaning which these passages suggest is the actual pre-existence of Jesus Christ. And if any one of these passages loses its point when the question is otherwise interpreted, the proof that it is rightly interpreted is made more sure. Now, as Mr. Peake points out, the whole relevancy of Christ's answer to the Jews is lost if it did not assert His personal existence before Abraham.

And Beyschlag knows that his exegesis does not remove the pre-existence of Jesus from the Gospels. He admits that besides this ideal pre-existence there is also a real pre-existence there. But the passages which assert the real pre-existence either belong 'to the very agitated moments of the closing days of our Lord's life,' when He was not able to distinguish the actual from the visionary, or else they belong to the evangelist who wrote them down.

Thus Dr. Horton and Professor Peake have both discovered the weakness of Beyschlag's *New Testament Theology*, and mercilessly laid it bare. But they both are in haste to pass from it. For with that one weakness the book has been to both more than they are able to express. They did well to expose its weakness. But they did well to speak of it also as Professor Peake does, and say that 'it is not only very able, but a truly valuable contribution to its subject,' and that 'no one who takes upon himself to expound the deep things of God, as set forth by the New Testament writers, should neglect to make an earnest study

of it, and thus enrich their ministrations of the Word.'

Of the books of the month, the most notable perhaps (excluding Moore and Sanday) is an unpretending volume of sermons by the Rev. W. A. Gray of Elgin. It goes by the title of *Laws and Landmarks of the Spiritual Life*, and it is published at the Wesleyan Book-Room. But the author is not a Wesleyan. In five neighbouring parishes in Aberdeenshire, sons were born to the ministers of the Free Church. Three of these sons of the manse are dead. Their names were W. Robertson Smith, W. Gray Elmslie, and Alexander Mackay. They died in the prime of manhood. Two are yet alive. Their names are W. Robertson Nicoll and W. A. Gray. Least known as yet of all the five, the last will be brought into wider acquaintance by this new volume. It is fitting that he should dedicate it to W. Robertson Nicoll.

Mr. Gray's *Laws and Landmarks* is a volume of sermons, and nothing more. But there is a greater variety of accomplishment covered by the expression 'a volume of sermons' than by any other. The average level is not very high, though it is higher than some would call it. That it is as high as it is, is due to books like this.

It contains both 'laws' and 'landmarks.' The first of the laws is the 'Law of the Higher Vision.' Its text is, 'We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen' (2 Cor. iv. 18); and its divisions are these three: (1) the seen exists in the midst of the unseen; (2) the unseen is sometimes concealed and sometimes revealed by the seen; (3) whether there be concealing or revealing, it is our duty to pass beyond the seen and look at the things that are unseen—(a) from the seen trial to the unseen support, (b) from seen vicissitudes to unseen possessions, (c) from the seen reflections to the unseen substances. 'We have no new commandment to give you, but that which you have heard from the

beginning. Think more about the unseen world. Read more. Read in the Bible first and foremost, and in the best religious meditations of the best religious minds. Have your conversation in heaven, through direct and earnest prayer. Be on the watch, too, for every passing disclosure. Be on the outlook for every transient hint. These disclosures will grow. These hints will multiply and expand. I remember once standing on the *col* of a high Swiss pass, the ledge of a perpendicular precipice, where I waited for the morning view. There was nothing as I gazed ahead but mist,—mist puffing, circling, swirling, like steam from the depths of some tremendous caldron. But I watched, and there was a break

for a moment far down to the left, and a flash of emerald green; it was meadowland. Then there was a break to the right, and a cluster of houses appeared, with a white church steeple you could almost have hit with a well-aimed stone. Then they were covered, and the mist hid the scene as before, till it parted again, this time in front; and there was blue sky, and against the blue sky a vision of glittering snow-peaks. So it went on, peep after peep, rift after rift, here a little and there a little, till at last, as if worked on unseen pulleys, the mist curtain slowly drew up, and from east even unto west there stretched the chain of the Italian Alps, sun-smitten, glorious, white as no fuller on earth could white them.'

The Seven Heavens.

AN EARLY JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN BELIEF.

BY THE REV. R. H. CHARLES, M.A., EXETER COLLEGE, OXFORD.

VARIOUS conceptions of the Seven Heavens prevailed largely in the ancient world alike in the far East and in the West. With these we shall deal only in so far as they influenced, or were in any degree akin to, the views that prevailed on this subject among the Jews and early Christians.

For the sake of clearness, it may be well to indicate the direction our investigations will take. We shall first set forth or merely mention the beliefs of this nature that prevailed among the Babylonians and the followers of Zoroaster in the East, and the speculations of certain great philosophers in the West. We shall next touch briefly on certain indications in the Old Testament that point in the direction of a plurality of the heavens, and show that Israel was not unaffected by the prevailing traditions of the ancient world. That we have not misinterpreted such phenomena in the Old Testament we are assured, when we descend to Jewish apocalyptic writings, such as the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Slavonic Enoch,¹ 4 Ezra, and to the Talmud and

the Mandäish Religion. Having thus shown that speculations or definitely formulated views on the plurality of the heavens were rife in the very cradle of Christendom and throughout its entire environment, we have next to consider whether Christian conceptions of heaven were shaped or in any degree modified by already existing ideas on this subject. We shall then find that there is undoubted evidence of the belief in the plurality or sevenfold division of the heavens in the Pauline Epistles, in Hebrews, and in the Apocalypse. In early Christian literature such ideas soon gained clearer utterance in Christian Apocalypses, such as the Ascension of Isaiah, the Apocalypses of Moses, Ezra, John, Isaac, Jacob, and the Acts of Callistratus. Such writers also as Clement of Alexandria and Origen are more or less favourably inclined to such conceptions. But shortly after this date, these views fall into the background, discredited undoubtedly by the exaggerations and imbecilities with which they were accompanied. And thus though a Philastrius declares disbelief in a plurality of the heavens a heresy, Chrysostom is so violently affected against such a conception that he denies any such plurality at all. Finally, such conceptions, failing in the course of the next few

¹ An edition of this recently discovered work will be issued by the Clarendon Press towards the end of October. This *editio princeps* is based on a translation of Mr. W. R. Morfill from the Slavonic MSS.