

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for June will contain a reply to Professor Graetz's recent article in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, on the "Origin and Date of the Septuagint," by the Rev. H. B. Swete, D.D., Bishop Westcott's successor as Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge. Professor Ryle's second paper will also appear next month.

We publish to-day Professor Davison's recent address upon Inspiration and Biblical Criticism. It has received much attention, and it is very noteworthy, both because it is the work of one of our ripest and most trustworthy scholars, and because, as the *Rock* expresses it, "the paper is not the case of one man taking up a position in advance of the other members of his communion, but simply a barometric indication of the position which had already been assumed by the principal Methodist thinkers." Professor Davison has carefully revised and corrected the paper for THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

We may be permitted further to invite the attention of our more scholarly readers to Principal McClellan's article upon the reading "daily bread" in the Lord's Prayer. They who use his important volume on the Four Gospels will understand that he is well equipped for so difficult an investigation, and they will know not to look for anything that would have even the remotest tendency towards impairing the authority and spirituality of Scripture. It was largely expected that the Revisers would change the translation of the difficult Greek word in question, but they went no further than to

suggest an alternative rendering in the margin. Their attitude was due to the powerful influence of the late Bishop Lightfoot, who was then considered practically to have settled the point in favour of the authorised rendering by his elaborate essay on the word "daily" in the volume *On a Fresh Revision of the New Testament*, issued just before the Revisers began to sit.

By the death of Dr. Howard Crosby, the *Homiletic Review* loses one of its most original contributors. Always interesting, because independent, his short expository papers have often been stimulating and instructive, and we shall miss them not a little. In front of the oldest and stiffest exegetical problems, he manifested a courageous hopefulness which invigorated one like a fresh northern breeze. There is an instance in the very latest issue of the *Homiletic Review*. The subject is the sun and the moon standing still (Josh. x. 12-14). Calling to his aid the new science of biblical archæology as well as the old science of Hebrew lexicography, he comes to the conclusion that the miracle did not consist in the standing still of the sun and of the moon for a whole day, thus adding a day as it were to the calendar, but in their abiding steadfast in the heavens for some period (say, two or three hours) of the day in sight of the army of Israel, an effect which he thinks God may have accomplished by making use of the laws of refraction. Then, when the purpose was accomplished of giving the army a token that they would gain the victory, the refraction ceased, and the heavenly bodies returned to

their rightful places. The current conception of the miracle is that the day was nearly done, and Joshua in his zeal craved the continuance of the light that he might see to rout the enemy. But Dr. Crosby believes that the miracle took place in the morning. The recently identified sites of Ajalon and Gibeon make that, he thinks, certain. And as for the wording of the narrative, the only obstacle lies in the thirteenth verse, which he would prefer to translate "hasted not to go down as a perfect day" rather than "hasted not to go down about a whole day."

Who was Melchizedek? Dr. John Henry Hopkins tells us, in the *American Church Review* for January (New York, 4s.), that he has had it in mind for a long time to write a book which should answer that question. But it is only one of several books which have been waiting to be born, some of them for more than forty years, and, life having become too short in the prospect, for such a parentage, Dr. Hopkins selects fifteen of them, and presents their titles and leading ideas as probably his last contribution to the literature of the Church. "Who was Melchizedek?" is the title of one of these "unwritten books."

The late Dean of Wells made us familiar with the "ideal" biography, and charming they were to read and think about. But as Dr. Spence truly says in the current issue of *Good Words*, they were "somewhat untrustworthy." A biography of Melchizedek, which should fill a volume, seeing that all our knowledge of him is contained in three verses of the book of Genesis, a verse of the 110th Psalm, and four verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews, must have been surely, if it had been written, an addition to] Dr. Plumtre's "ideal" library, and somewhat untrustworthy. We can well believe, however, that it would have been pleasant to read, for that and more can be said of the five-and-a-half pages which its leading ideas fill in the *Church Review*.

Before offering a new interpretation of a passage, one should show that the old is untenable. Dr. Hopkins remembers this. If we consult the general run of commentaries, he says, we find

that Melchizedek was a petty Canaanitish prince, who had preserved the faith in the true and only God in the midst of a number of other nations, all of whom were Pagans and idolaters of the worst description; and that this Melchizedek was a priest of the Most High God as well as a king; also that the seat of his kingdom was Salem, afterwards known as Jerusalem. When we are told of him that he was without father, without mother, without descent (or genealogy), without beginning of days or end of life, the explanation given us of these words is, that no record is found of the name of his father or mother or ancestors, or of his birth or death. Yet we are required to believe that this petty ruler of a petty Canaanitish town, this Gentile of unknown genealogy, was spiritually so superior to Abraham, the friend of God and father of the faithful, that Abraham paid him the tithes in acknowledgment of his nearer approach to God, and received the blessing as the less is blessed of the better. Dr. Hopkins' short and emphatic comment is, "It is impossible!"

Who, then, was Melchizedek? Dr. Hopkins examines the Scripture evidence, making his way from the Epistle to the Hebrews back to Genesis. "Abideth a priest continually"—how are we to understand this? Can we say that "abideth a priest continually" means that he died within a few years at the most, and that there was no other priest of his order until Christ was born, nearly two thousand years after? Again, "Here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them of whom it is witnessed that he *liveth*." Can that mean that Melchizedek died just like the others? Moreover, Christ, who is after the similitude of Melchizedek, is also *after the power of an endless life*. Where is the "similitude of Melchizedek" if he too was not after the power of an *endless life*? Is this not the point of the reference in the 110th Psalm? "Thou art a priest *forever*, after the order of Melchizedek." And thus returning to Genesis, Dr. Hopkins points out that there is no evidence of the existence of any town or city or kingdom, in Abraham's time, in all Palestine, that was true to the worship of Jehovah. To Abraham and to his seed God promises the whole land as a possession, "from the river of Egypt unto the great river,

the river Euphrates." If there was a nation or even a city within it with a king spiritually so superior to Abraham, "can we for a moment suppose that God would have lumped them in with the most heathen in the world?" And where was this Salem? Where later Jerusalem stood? Abraham passed and repassed near the site of Jerusalem, but we never read of his meeting Melchizedek again. It was on Mount Moriah, within a few furlongs of Melchizedek's supposed residence, that Abraham offered up Isaac. Where was this priestly superior then when such a sacrifice was being laid upon the altar?

"This Melchizedek, King of Salem, Priest of the Most High God, . . . first being by interpretation King of Righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is King of Peace"—Dr. Hopkins believes that he was none other than the Son of God Himself, who appeared to Abraham in that visible form in which He afterwards dwelt among us in the flesh. He holds that only with this interpretation can Scripture be brought into harmony. He who was a priest to Abraham was "a priest forever" according to the Psalmist, He alone has "the power of an endless life" of the Epistle to the Hebrews. And this, therefore, he thinks, was the occasion referred to when Christ said to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad."

Dr. Hopkins seeks to strengthen his interpretations by a number of interesting particulars. The word translated "order" is in the Hebrew a derivative of דָּבָר (*dabar*), which is the precise equivalent for the Greek λόγος (*logos*), the Word, "whose profound depth of signification is given to us in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel." And the *i*, which is found at the end of the Hebrew word, he believes to be the pronominal suffix *my*. The same suffix occurs in the word Melchizedek itself. Of that name the first part, *Melch*, means king, and *zedek*, righteousness; and if the *i* means *my*, then the whole verse of this Psalm cx. would run literally, "Thou art a priest forever according to My Word of My King of Righteousness." "What," he asks, "becomes of the petty Canaanitish princeling on this understanding?"

Now it may be admitted that that translation of Psalm cx. 4 is grammatically possible. As respects the principal phrase, competent translators, like Herder and Geiger, have already so rendered it, though the meaning which they find in it is very different from that of Dr. Hopkins. It is grammatically possible, but both the usage of language and the authority of the versions are against it, and it is therefore in too great need of support itself to be set as a support to something else. Will Dr. Hopkins' identification of Melchizedek with the pre-incarnate Son of God stand alone then? We do not think so. Much as there seems to be in its favour, there is also much against it. In particular, there is one serious objection to it which careful students of the theology of the Old Testament will best appreciate. Let us give it on the testimony of Delitzsch.

There has recently been published in Germany a series of letters which passed between Delitzsch and Hofmann when they were together in Erlangen, and the editor of the *Expositor* has translated a few of them for his April number. The few translated deal with the descent of Christ into Hades. Hofmann refuses to attach any great weight to that clause of the creed, if he even believes it true in the popular sense at all. Delitzsch, on the other hand, not only finds evidence in Scripture for the Descent, but holds that it is an important link in the great work of redemption. He relies, however,—indeed Hofmann drives him into relying,—upon his own interpretation of the greatly debated passage (1 Peter iii. 19) respecting the spirits in prison. The most interesting letter in the series is Delitzsch's last. There he attacks the interpretation of that passage which makes it refer to a message of Christ during the 120 years of grace to the generation of the Flood. His objection is a forcible one, and it applies with even more force to the identification of Melchizedek with the Son of God. "Preaching," he says, "is a personal action. But Jesus Christ is pre-existent in Old Testament history only in Jehovah the God of redemption, whose purpose it is to become Incarnate, and in the angel of Jehovah, who, as a manifestation of God, is Himself a pre-revelation of the Incarnation. This is the explanation of such sayings as that Isaiah saw Jesus Christ (chap. vi.);

that the spirit of Christ was in the prophets; that Moses chose the shame of Christ rather than the treasures of Egypt; that Christ was the rock which followed Israel." And he adds, "*You and I agree that Christ was not otherwise pre-existent in Old Testament history than in Jehovah, who had the Incarnation already in view.*" This position, which is well founded, whatever may be its bearing upon the passage in 1 Peter, is fatal to Dr. Hopkins' interpretation of the passages which deal with Melchizedek.

Having touched upon the 110th Psalm, it is impossible to pass away from it without some reference to recent exposition, and to the place it occupies in that question which is now so keenly debated amongst us. Its place in that controversy is quite unique. It is the 110th Psalm and our Lord's words in reference to it that have caused many an one not merely to hesitate in front of the claims of the Historical Criticism, but absolutely to refuse to look at these claims or the grounds upon which they are made. We have just received Archdeacon Denison's speech in Convocation last February, on *Lux Mundi* (Longmans 1891, 6d.). What strength it has rests upon its appeal to Christ's use of the Old Testament, the Appendix of our Lord's quotations from the Old Testament being scarcely needed to show this. But Archdeacon Denison's speech is not comparable for power and persuasiveness to a speech delivered by Archdeacon Perowne at the late Islington Conference, and reported fully in the *Record*. And again, its almost irresistible appeal finds its climax in Christ's quotation of the 110th Psalm. That quotation, and the argument founded upon it, seems to Dr. Perowne to leave no opening whatever to any criticism of the authorship of the psalm in its direct Messianic application.

What, then, does recent criticism say of the 110th Psalm? Take three typical examples. Kuenen admits no complete Davidic psalms in the Psalter. There may be Davidic passages in some of the Psalms of the first and second books, but he is convinced that the three last books contain nothing whatever by David. Any one who looks at the Revised Version will see that Psalm cx. belongs to Book V., and therefore it is in Kuenen's judgment

wholly non-Davidic, the product most probably of the post-exilic period.

Let Orelli be heard next, as the representative of a more conservative criticism. Following Ewald, Orelli attributes Psalm cx. to the time of David, but not to David himself; probably to Nathan the prophet. He cannot believe that David was himself the author, because the words of the Psalm are directly addressed to a second person who is described as both priest and king. This person must, in the first reference, have been the then reigning monarch; there is no other instance, and he will not allow that this is an instance, in which the Messiah is referred to first and last, singled out at once and made definite and personal before the writer's mind. "We cannot persuade ourselves," these are his words, "to consider David as the prophet speaking, because in that view another higher ruler would be addressed by him—namely, the perfect Messiah to come. Such a conscious distinction between his own person and the true Messiah, to whom David was so constantly subject that he could call him his lord, finds no sufficient support either in 2 Samuel xxiii. or in any other psalm" (*Old Testament Prophecy*, p. 154).

Now turn to Delitzsch. In his just published *Messianic Prophecies* (p. 90), Delitzsch not only accepts Psalm cx. as written by David, but finds no difficulty in believing that its reference is immediately and directly to the future Messiah. "The New Testament Scriptures presuppose that David speaks in this psalm of another rather than of himself, that, as if he had descended from his throne, he bows himself before the One who is at the same time his Son and his Lord, and that therefore, so to speak, the type lays his crown at the feet of the antitype; and we know no counter proofs which compel us to correct this view of the psalm, with which the argument of the Lord (Mark xii. 35-37, and parallels) stands or falls as untrue, or only indirectly true." Such is Delitzsch's final judgment, the judgment of a higher critic. It may not be the final judgment of all criticism; but even if it were a solitary opinion, which it is not, it will always carry the weight of a great name, and it may well give confidence for many a day to those who cannot investigate the problem for themselves.