

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF GENESIS.

The Literature of Genesis.

THERE is no book of the Old Testament, not even the Psalter itself, that is better provided with commentaries of the first rank than Genesis. Mr. Spurrell's *Notes on the Text of Genesis* should be used by the Hebrew student first. Mr. Spurrell tells us that the volume was undertaken at the suggestion of Professor Driver, and it is not unworthy to stand beside Dr. Driver's own *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel*, although it demands less knowledge of the language. The second edition, greatly improved, was published in 1896. (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press. 10s. 6d.).

Besides the great German commentaries, which of course work upon the Hebrew, mention should be made of Kalisch's *Historical and Grammatical Commentary on the Old Testament*. There is a purely English edition of the Genesis and the Exodus volumes, as well as the Hebrew and English one, but the latter is greatly superior. Kalisch has never taken the place he deserves. Scholars have difficulty in placing him, for he belongs to no school, and they mostly pass him by. The unlearned fear to put their trust in him. But he is not more often wrong than any other of the great commentators, and he is always suggestive—the supreme excellence of any commentator (Longmans. 18s.).

Of the German commentaries that have been translated into English, the best known is Delitzsch. The latest edition of Delitzsch's Genesis, which goes by the name of *A New Commentary on Genesis*, was skilfully translated into English by Miss Taylor, and published by T. & T. Clark, in two volumes, in 1888-89 (21s.). The value of Delitzsch's Genesis is very great; it is so full, so earnest, so religious. Yet if we were restricted to one commentary on Genesis, it is not Delitzsch we should choose but Dillmann. The wealth of learning which Dillmann's pages carry is amazing. One feels that everything is here—introduction, textual criticism, exegesis, exposition, archæology—and yet the work is easier to read and to use than even Delitzsch. But perhaps the most surprising thing in Dillmann is his *finality*. Even in matters of archæology he has seized the essential

things in the discoveries that have been made, and later discoveries have added somewhat to his illustrations, but never, so far as we have seen, overturned his conclusions. The English edition suffered from delay, but it is a good one now, and wherever the student or preacher has anything to do with Genesis, he will find Dillmann his best and only necessary guide (2 vols., 21s.).

It is the element of finality that is most conspicuously absent from our largest English commentaries, such as the 'Speaker' (Browne), 'Ellicott' (Payne Smith), and the 'Pulpit' (Whitelaw). If he is to live for ever, the commentator, as well as the poet, must be a genius. For, like the poet, he has to separate truth from convenience, and even from conventionality. But there are smaller books that deserve mention, especially F. W. Robertson's *Notes on Genesis*, which will never grow old; and Marcus Dods' *Genesis* in the 'Handbooks for Bible Classes,' and in the 'Expositor's Bible.'

GENESIS i. 1.

'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.'

EXPOSITION.

'In the beginning.'—This is the rendering of the versions and most commentators. The phrase must not be taken relatively, *i.e.* *first of all*, in opposition to a second or third which might follow, for this is against the sense as heaven and earth include all. But it must be taken absolutely: 'at first.'—DELITZSCH.

'God.'—The Hebrew is *Elohim*, the usual designation of God among the Hebrews. It is hardly to be derived from the specifically Arabic *'aliha*, 'to be timid, to be anxious,' as if it meant 'object of fear.' On the whole it is not to be separated from (the older) *El*, and the use of *El* in Gn 31²⁹ favours most the rendering 'Might.'—DILLMANN.

'Created.'—In this and the following chapter four words are used to express God's action in creation. They may be represented by our words *create, make, form, build*. Not even the first of these (which is the word used in this verse) can be said to express, certainly and invariably, the idea of creation out of nothing. It originally or etymologically expresses the *hewing and cutting* by which, *e.g.*, a forest is cleared (Jos 17¹⁵⁻¹⁸), and it is sometimes used synonymously with *make* or *form* (Is 45¹⁸ 43⁷). But it is true, as Moses Stuart says, that 'if this word does not mean to create in the highest sense, then the Hebrews had no word by which they

could designate this idea.' And very significantly one part of this verb (the part here employed) is never used of human action, but is appropriated to Divine agency. It would seem, however, as if the idea of creation out of nothing were not here in view. The writer merely desires to refer the origin of the known world, *the heaven and the earth*, to God; and he does not consider the eternity of matter.—DODS.

'**The heaven and the earth.**'—Among the Hebrews, as among other peoples, this is the usual designation of the conception *world*, for which the Old Testament has no single expression.—DILLMANN.

'**The earth and the heavens**' always mean the terrestrial globe with its aërial firmament.—WHITELEW.

METHODS OF TREATMENT.

I.

Faith in a Creator.

By Canon H. P. Liddon, D.D.

1. What is meant by Creation? Nothing less than the giving being to that which before was not. The Hebrew word used here does not preclude the idea of some pre-existing material ready to the hand of the Creator. But the text as a whole does preclude such an idea. For 'the heavens and the earth' includes all that is not God. Its form is taken from man's point of view; but the word 'heavens' includes not merely the material bodies which astronomy has in view, but also the immaterial essences that are older than man, and whose existence was gradually revealed to Israel. This is the Jewish interpretation and the interpretation of early Christianity.

2. Belief in the creation of the universe out of nothing is the only account of its origin that is compatible with belief in a personal and moral God. There are four ways of conceiving of the relation between God and the world.

(a) The world (that is, the thinking part of the world) is the creator of God. But a purely subjective Deity is no Deity at all.

(b) God and the world are identical. That is, there is a point in the self-development of the infinite when it reaches self-consciousness, and it is called God. But such a Deity is neither personal nor moral.

(c) God and the world, though distinct, are eternally coexistent. But it is of the very essence of Deity that He possess solitary self-existence. As Tertullian says, 'He who asserts the eternity of matter really asserts two Gods.'

(d) If, therefore, we are to believe in God's

self-existent, personal, moral life, it is necessary to believe in the creation of the universe out of nothing. But this faith in God's original act of creation does not exclude belief in some subsequent modification of His works through a progressive development, guided by more or less ascertainable law. It is this belief also that gives us faith in God's Providence and in Redemption. God created the world in His freedom. Why? we accordingly ask. Revelation answers, Because He would communicate His life—that generous attribute which is goodness in relation to things, love in relation to persons.

II.

Beginning with God.

By the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse.

'In the beginning God.'—So all begins with God. Not from nature up to God am I to move, but from God down to nature. And so at the outset the Word demands my faith. And the record of the triumphs of faith in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews begins here: 'Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.' It is possible to get at God by reason, a logical First Cause, but not at our gracious and loving Father. I cannot kneel down to the First Cause and speak to Him.

'God created the heaven and the earth.' So then I am a God-made man in a God-made world. My soul, give thanks that the devil had no hand in the making of anything. Lift up thyself with nothing within thee, nothing about thee, but that which God can hallow and sanctify and use.

1. Think of the desolate earth hearing of some fair sister world, brilliantly shining, decked with beauty, while within herself through dreadful darkness waves sweep restlessly. What hope has she? Can she bid a sun to shine? Then God the Almighty bends over her. He speaks, and the dreary waste becomes a Paradise. So do we despair if we look within. All is dark, empty, desolate. We look away at the great lights above us. If we were only like such a one, we sigh, so good, so noble, so devoted! Then to us also God comes, the Almighty. He puts forth His gracious power within us and saves us.

2. Again, the earth appeals to its Creator. He

had created it; will He now leave it, cast it off forlorn, deserted? And God preserves the earth and works His will in it. So our soul, rescued from the chaos of evil, pleads with God to continue the good work He has begun. And he sees to it that all things work together for good to them that love Him; for whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate *to be conformed to the image of His Son*.

3. And the earth, rising out of chaos, dreams of Paradise, grassy slope and fruitful grove, with flowers scenting all the air and happy songs of birds. But it is so far off, and the throes and agonies that the earth suffers now are enough to blot the vision out. But upon the earth there dawns the dream of Paradise, when the fulness of the time has come. And so when the vision comes to the heart of man of that rest that remaineth, that city which hath foundations, the present evil heart of unbelief seems to blot it out, or make it merely a dream. But the man Christ Jesus comes from the Paradise of God, and returns not alone. Now we know not what we shall be, but we know that we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

MOSES does not attempt to prove the existence of God. A proof that God existed was redundant—in Moses' time mankind admitted too many gods. Instead of beginning with nature, and climbing laboriously up on a ladder constructed by the cunning hands of logic to nature's God, the writer boldly begins at the other end—at the top, with God; and from this infinite height, with swift wing, descends to God's works. Instead of the creation demonstrating God, God explains the creation. The Being of God is a primary truth, and in Holy Writ is everywhere taken for granted. He holds the same place in the moral world that axioms do in mathematics—He is self-evident, fundamental, necessary, not supported by, but supporting, every other truth.

Moses writes no explanatory introduction, offers no humble apology. But having been on the mount with God, like an eagle he swoops down upon us majestically. From the loftiest altitude, from the sublimest verity, he comes down with transfigured countenance, dazzling his readers with the white light of eternal truth: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' How much grander is that, and more impressive, than if he had carefully welded together small syllogisms to enable us painfully to reach the conclusion that there is a God. Moses' way is the Divine way. Only small, carping, peddling minds it is that demand a proof. If God condescends to demonstrate to us His existence, it will be, not by logic, but by revelation.—J. C. JONES.

THERE are men who look into this book, expecting it to teach them all the truth respecting God's creation; but they find that the records God has given in nature, drawn out and systematized in the science of geology, cannot cohere with the account of Moses. Upon this there have been two or three modes of evasion tried: first, that of those who refused to recognize at all what this science taught; secondly, that of those who, by spreading the six days of creation over an unlimited surface, and making them represent any space of time, would have compromised the matter; the third, and I believe the last, expedient is to allow a chasm between the first and second verses, between which time is given for all that geology requires. But we need not resort to methods such as these. There are two revelations: one God has written on the page of creation, to be ascertained by investigation, and it is just as inspired, just as true, just as much to be received as God's word as the handwriting on the wall at Babylon; the other revelation is written in the page of Scripture. The first belongs to physical phenomena, the second to the spiritual dealings of God with man. For instance, we are told that God created the firmament, and placed it between the waters above and the waters below. The account tells, in accordance with the knowledge of the time, what the firmament then seemed to men; it does not pretend to state what it actually is. It uses the language of the day; and if God had a revelation to make now, it would be given in the expression of the day; it would say 'the sun rises,' though that is not scientifically correct. But this inconsistency with physical truth does not invalidate the great broad spiritual truths which revelation is meant to teach. Does it alter or weaken the spiritual facts revealed in this account of creation: that God does all by degrees, that He is the moral governor of the world; the spiritual truth that the introduction of a sinful will produces immense gain in point of knowledge, and immense loss in point of purity; that the man who has done wrong feels naked and ashamed in the sight of God?—F. W. ROBERTSON.

IF you are yourself but a particle of a huge and unconscious universe—a particle which, like a flake of foam, or a drop of rain, or a gnat, or a beetle, lasts its brief space, and then yields up its substance to be moulded into some new creature; if there is no power that understands you and sympathizes with you, and makes provision for your instincts, your aspirations, your capabilities; if man is himself the highest intelligence, and if all things are the purposeless result of physical forces; if, in short, there is no God, no consciousness at the beginning as at the end of all things, then nothing can be more melancholy than our position.—MARCUS DODS.

ATHANASIUS KIRCHER, the celebrated German astronomer, had an acquaintance whom he much esteemed, but who was unfortunately infected by atheistical principles, and denied the very existence of a God. Kircher, sincerely desirous to rescue his friend from his mistaken and ruinous opinion, determined to try to convince him of his error upon his own principles of reasoning. He first procured a globe of the heavens, handsomely decorated, and of conspicuous size, and placed it in a situation in his study where it would be

immediately observed. He then called upon his friend with an invitation to visit him, which was readily responded to, and on his arrival he was shown into the study. It happened exactly as Kircher had planned. His friend no sooner observed it than he inquired whence it had come and to whom it belonged. 'Shall I tell you, my friend,' said Kircher, 'that it belongs to no one, that it was never made by anyone, but came here by mere chance?' 'That,' replied the atheist, 'is impossible; you jest.' This was Kircher's golden opportunity, and he promptly and wisely availed himself of it. 'You will not, with good reason, believe that this small globe originated in mere chance, and yet you will contend that those vast heavenly bodies, of which this is but a faint diminutive resemblance, came into existence without either order, design, or a creation!' His friend was first confounded, then convinced, and ultimately abandoning all his former scepticisms, he gladly united with all who reverence and love God in acknowledging the glory and adoring the majesty of the great Creator of the heavens and earth and all their host.—W. M. TAYLOR.

THERE is a remarkable sentence or two in the preface to John Wesley's first volume of sermons, in which that great evangelist gives us the secret of his method of Bible-study. 'Here am I,' he says, 'far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone; only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His Book; for this end, to find the way to heaven. Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift my heart to the Father of Lights. I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. And what I thus learn, that I teach.' To Wesley, then, there were two great

realities—the visible *Book*, and its invisible but ever-present *Author*; and to a man of his training and spiritual susceptibilities the one would have been a perfect enigma without the other. He saw *God* at the beginning of every section of Holy Scripture.—W. MIDDLETON.

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The Historical Background of the Epistle to the Philippians.

BY THE REV. H. A. A. KENNEDY, M.A., D.Sc., CALLANDER.

CONSIDERABLE vagueness has prevailed as to the order in which 'Philippians' stands among the Epistles of the Captivity. Lightfoot and Hort have lent the weight of their authority to the opinion which would place it first in the series. Meyer, Weiss, Lipsius, Holtzmann, and others are equally decided in assigning to it the last place. We do not intend at present to examine the arguments on either side. We wish rather to discover as clearly as possible what the Epistle itself has to say of the circumstances in which it was written, of the historical background which lies behind it. We believe that the situation is to be gathered rather

from a few casual hints than from any direct statement.

It is admitted on all hands that the undertone of the whole Epistle is joy, a hopeful joy, which is only now and then overshadowed by a more sober mood. Now this joy is by no means accidental. It comes persistently into view. Nothing is allowed to mar it. Is it not, then, Paul's deliberate intention to write to the Philippians in a cheerful tone, and must not this be done with the express purpose of correcting some erroneous impressions which they had formed? From the personal nature of the joy which he emphasizes, these