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Commentaries on the Old and New Testaments.

BY PROFESSOR ARTHUR S. PEAKE, D.D., MANCHESTER.

I.

IN offering advice upon commentaries I exclude all works which are primarily devotional or homiletical. I do this not because I disdain them—indeed, I think if they are good of their kind they may be very helpful—but because my acquaintance with this type of literature is slender. Nor do I propose to touch on the older commentaries. So far as these were dominated by the allegorical method, they are of more value to students of the history of theology than to those who are concerned with reaching the actual meaning of the Biblical writers. And even where this is not the case, those for whom I am writing will be better served if they lay their exegetical foundation by study of recent commentaries written from the modern point of view and uncontrolled by the necessity of adjusting their exegesis to any scheme of theology. Jerome and Theodore, Calvin and Maldonatus, Grotius and Vitranga, to select only a few names, did a great work for the interpretation of Scripture, and it remains valuable to this day. But the field of Biblical interpretation is vast; exegesis is only one section of Biblical study; and most of my readers will have other studies to follow in the time that is left them when their primary responsibilities have been discharged.

The preacher or teacher needs the commentator in order that he may reach a full and exact interpretation of the particular passage on which he is engaged. I have perhaps no right to teach the preacher how he is to do his work; though the pew provides an angle which it is greatly to be wished that preachers might more frequently occupy. I will only say that it has occasionally been my lot to hear sermons based upon particular texts, when I have felt that there was nothing much to object to in the sermon except that it ought not to have been preached in that connexion. But, of course, no *ad hoc* exegesis can supply what the preacher needs. We recognize that a text must not be divorced from its context; but that context, again, must not be divorced from its larger context—the personality of the writer, the totality of his utterance as it has been preserved to us, the situation to which it was addressed, the people to whom he spoke. And this, again, must stand in the larger context of the whole movement of revelation. The

student must therefore be continually working at the whole Biblical field, criticism, history, and, above all, the history of the religion. And all the time it is good to keep up the close continuous study of at least one section of the Bible—preferably two, one in the Old Testament and one in the New—and for this the commentary is indispensable. Here, however, I should put in a warning. I do not believe that it is ever safe for the student to limit himself to one commentary on a book, even though it should by common consent be the best. His work will also be greatly facilitated if he has an adequate linguistic equipment. I mean by this a working knowledge of the original languages and of German and French. In modern Biblical scholarship it is only bare justice to say that the Germans have done more than the rest of the world put together, and that the Biblical scholarship of our own writers has been fertilized by their labours to a quite extraordinary degree.

The day has gone for commentaries on the whole Bible by a single hand. Nor is it desirable to have a commentary on the New Testament by one scholar. It is usual for a commentary on the Bible or the New Testament to be published in a series to which a large number of scholars contribute. It is inevitable that a series should be unequal; and in this connexion another general remark which may be made is that, disregarding the inevitable exceptions, the quality of a British Commentary on the Bible is, as a rule, higher in the Old Testament than in the New Testament volumes. This is partly due to the fact that expositors are less hampered in dealing with the Hebrew Bible than with the classical documents of their own religion.

The chief commentary in English is the *International Critical Commentary*. It is written by British and American scholars. The text is not printed, but the poetical parts of the Old Testament are translated in full, and a translation of the Book of Revelation is supplied by Dr. Charles. Full introductions to the books are given. The commentary itself consists of the general exposition of the particular section followed by small-type notes dealing mainly with philological and textual points. The general standard of the series is high,

more consistently so in the Old Testament than in the New, though there are exceptions in both. The parts which have not yet appeared are Exodus, Leviticus, Joshua, Kings, Ruth and Canticles, Isaiah xxviii.-lxvi., Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Acts, and the Gospel of John, which, however, is in the press.

It is unfortunate that a number of the volumes were published so long ago that though they are still serviceable and in some cases indispensable, they no longer represent the present position of the subject. Necessarily the standpoint varies, but speaking quite generally, it is the same as that of Hastings' *Dictionary*; if two typical names might be mentioned as indicating it, Driver might be selected for the Old Testament and Sanday for the New, or perhaps one might better say Sanday down to 1912.

The *Cambridge Bible* is in course of revision. In the later instalments the commentary is adjusted to the Revised Version, and the introductions and expositions have been revised. In some cases the old commentary has been replaced by a new work by another contributor. When this process is complete we ought to have a work of sterling merit and, at least in its latest portions, fairly up to date. Unfortunately, a piecemeal revision means that some of the volumes are continually dropping behind, even though at the time of publication they may have been fully abreast of the research and interpretation of their day. There is one point in which I wish this and other series would break with tradition. It is no doubt convenient to have the text printed above the notes. But under present conditions the disadvantages are grave. It inevitably adds greatly to the cost both of printing and paper. This did not matter so much before the war; but with prices of production so much higher and with the means to purchase in many cases so seriously retrenched, circulation is inevitably restricted and preachers and teachers are less adequately equipped for their work. The other drawback is that in the case of long books so much space is occupied with the printing of the text, usually in much larger type than the notes, that the commentary has either to be too severely abbreviated or the book has to be much bulkier and dearer than it need have been. If the publishers of all the series would make up their minds to assume that every reader will keep the Revised Version open before him, and cut the text clean out, they would render a great service, especially to impecunious readers. And the contributors who in the case of the longer books are often sorely cramped for space would feel that they were able

to do fuller justice to the text and to themselves. Still, we must take things as they are, and, reverting to the *Cambridge Bible*, I may say that in its more recent issues it maintains a high level. But it is greatly to be wished that where the obsolete volumes have not been replaced this should be done as speedily as possible.

With reference to the *Westminster Commentaries*, the editor, Dr. Lock, said: 'The series will be less elementary than the *Cambridge Bible for Schools*, less critical than the *International Critical Commentary*, less didactic than the *Expositor's Bible*.' For such a series there was certainly a place. But in some instances the contributor has failed to reach the editor's ideal. The most glaring example is perhaps the commentary on Ezekiel, which, although it costs 12s. 6d., is much less valuable than the far cheaper exposition in the *Cambridge Bible* or the *Century Bible*. One of the serious drawbacks in the *Westminster Commentaries* is the price; and while they contain several excellent issues, the purchaser of slender means would be in several instances equally well suited and in some better suited with the *Cambridge Bible* or the *Century Bible*, and both together might often be bought at a lower cost. It is greatly to be wished that the publishers would take this to heart. A teacher requiring a text-book for his students or recommending commentaries to preachers will not feel justified in advising purchase, though he may counsel consultation. And as compared with the *International Critical Commentary* the volumes published before the war are very much fuller and often cheaper than the corresponding volumes in the *Westminster* series if these have been published during the last ten years. There is so much good matter in some of the *Westminster* commentaries that I regret to have to point out these rather serious disadvantages.

The *Century Bible* is cheap and often very good. The volumes are published at a uniform price, and this means that the shorter books, where a whole volume is devoted to them, can be expounded much more fully. The whole of the text is printed as in the *Cambridge Bible* and the *Westminster Commentaries*; but in the New Testament a good deal of space was wasted by printing the Authorized Version of the New Testament in addition. This practice was abandoned in the Old Testament section. The character of the commentary was originally designed to be more elementary and popular; but some of the New Testament contributors lifted the standard, and this was maintained in the Old Testament, which, on the whole,

is better done than the New. At its best this series is very good indeed. The Four Gospels have been issued in revised editions.

The *Expositor's Bible* falls into a different category from any of the preceding, and for the most part it lies outside the scope of these articles. It is a very unequal series; but some of the expositions included in it will call for mention when I am speaking of the commentaries on particular books.

Of the one-volume commentaries it is perhaps better that I should not speak, as I am too closely identified with one of them to make any comment seemly. In addition to the two already before the public, two more are on the way, one for which the English Church Union is responsible (the contributors all belong to that Church); the other an American work, but international and interconfessional in the range of its contributors.

All of the commentaries of which I have spoken embrace the New as well as the Old Testament. But there are some New Testament commentaries which must be mentioned at this point. The *Expositor's Greek Testament* has scarcely perhaps been accorded its just place. This may have been partly due to the impression in some quarters that it was a revision of Alford's Greek Testament. One of the most eminent New Testament scholars in Germany, when I had explained to him what it really was, told me he had understood that it was a revised Alford and that he had not concerned himself about it in consequence. I do not know whether the same impression prevailed in Great Britain, but I have been surprised to miss references to it in bibliographies and discussions where it was certainly to be expected. Like every other composite work it is unequal; but on certain books it was better than anything we had in English. It was a bad mistake to print the Textus Receptus, as was done in the first two volumes on what the editor took to be the best advice; but I succeeded in getting the rule altered for the third and subsequent volumes, so that the contributors were allowed to construct their own text.

I need not linger on the *Cambridge Greek Testament*. In most instances the commentary is by the editor of the book in the *Cambridge Bible*; but for those who can read Greek it is much to be preferred, as the comment is based on the original text, and questions of philology, textual criticism, and the exact meaning of the words used can be much more effectively discussed than when the commentator is limited to the English text.

I might at this point call attention to Bengel's *Gnomon*. An English translation of it was made

by Fausset; but those who can do so should use the Latin original. Bengel had a singular power of concise and pregnant expression, and Latin lent itself better than any other language to the lapidary quality of his style. He had deep spiritual insight, and—leaving the Apocalypse aside—he was a very sane interpreter.

I turn now to series in German. For the Old Testament, omitting Keil and Delitzsch, there are five series which may be mentioned. The first of these is the *Exegetisches Handbuch*. This was at one time the leading series, but it no longer comes out in new editions. Dillmann on the Hexateuch, Job, and Isaiah are still in use. The last of these has been rather thoroughly worked over by Kittel, and Exodus and Leviticus by Ryssel. The Commentary on Genesis has been translated into English. Dillmann was a very eminent Semitist, in particular a great authority on Ethiopic; he was also a master of the whole range of Old Testament scholarship. His commentaries are notable for their great wealth of material and the sobriety rather than piercing insight of the exegesis. So far as the criticism of the Pentateuch was concerned, while fully accepting the Four Document hypothesis, he refused to the last to admit the correctness of the Grafian view that the Priestly Code was later than Deuteronomy and Ezekiel. I need not linger to discuss other contributions to this series.

The other four series are written from the Grafian standpoint, though with a rather marked difference between the first and the second pair. They are the *Handkommentar*, edited by Nowack; the *Kurzer Handkommentar*, edited by Marti; the *Kommentar zum Alten Testament*, edited by Sellin; and *Die Schriften des Alten Testaments in Auswahl*. As to the first two, we might say that while both occupy on the whole a fairly advanced position, Nowack's series is less drastic than Marti's. Budde and Duhm contribute to both. Budde's treatment of Job in Nowack is reactionary compared with Duhm's treatment in Marti. Duhm's commentary on Isaiah in Nowack displayed a hitherto unprecedented radicalism; but Marti, while slavishly following Duhm at several points, took up a position still more extreme. Sellin represents a reaction towards a higher estimate of the early religion of Israel and the greater historical trustworthiness of our records. His own critical position may be seen from his *Introduction to the Old Testament*; but I should recommend those who desire to get a clear idea of the points at issue between Sellin and his group of scholars and those who have worked with Nowack and Marti, to

study the admirable statement contributed by Professor McFadyen to *The People and the Book*. Sellin has, in common with the band of scholars who are responsible for *Die Schriften des Alten Testaments*, the feeling that the older scholars have taken altogether too little account of the international background, the heritage of religion and culture which Israel received from Babylon and Egypt and other surrounding countries and also from Canaan itself. But Sellin writes from a more definitely religious point of view, with more stress on the element of revelation in the literature, and less on the pagan parallels.

Nowack's series is on a larger scale than Marti's, but it includes a new translation from a critically emended text. On the whole the work has been done with great thoroughness, and it contains some of the most outstanding examples of modern Old Testament exegesis, including Gunkel's *Genesis* and *Psalms*, Duhm's *Isaiah*, Budde's *Job*, and Baentsch's *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, and *Numbers*. The general standard of the series is very high; it can never be safely neglected, and in several instances it offers the best commentary available in any language.

Marti's series also maintains a high level. The contributions by Holzinger, Bertholet, Budde, and Benzinger are compact and admirable. The editor himself was responsible for *Isaiah*, the *Twelve Prophets*, and *Daniel*. They contain much valuable and solid matter, though the critical position is, as already indicated, extreme. Duhm has written on three of the most important books. His commentary on *Job* and considerable sections of that on *Jeremiah* show him at his best; his exposition of the *Psalms* often at his worst. As Duhm is so outstanding a figure, I may perhaps quote what I have recently written about him: 'It is easy to criticise Duhm and often impossible to agree with him. But few of our scholars have been so rich in stimulus, so original, so suggestive. As an interpreter he is at times perverse; and when his author does not enlist his sympathy, he may be both provoking and unsatisfying. Where a Biblical writer is not lucky enough to please him, he may be so occupied with scolding him for his incompetence, his bad Hebrew, his slipshod style, his odious feelings, or his objectionable ideas, that he almost forgets to expound the text he has in front of him. But where he feels himself to be in contact with a great and noble spirit, gifted in utterance, fertile in ideas, rich and deep in his religious experience, then one may expect from him a singularly fresh, sympathetic, and penetrating exposition.'

Sellin's commentary gives a translation from a critically revised text. It devotes a good deal of attention to lower and higher criticism as well as to the exposition. The volumes vary in extent and in quality; but any series would be notable which included such expositions as Volz's *Jeremiah*, Sellin's *Minor Prophets*, and Kittel's *Psalms*. A good deal of the work, however, is as yet unpublished.

Die Schriften des Alten Testaments is a valuable series. The contributors are Gunkel, Staerk, Volz, Gressmann, Hans Schmidt, and Haller. It contains a translation of a large part, though not the whole, of the Old Testament, accompanied by a continuous exposition. Unlike the series already mentioned, it is popular in its appeal and presupposes no knowledge of Hebrew.

The German New Testament series are Meyer's commentary; the *Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament*; *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*; the *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament*; *Zahn's Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*. Originally, H. A. W. Meyer wrote by far the larger part of his commentary, the rest being supplied by Lünemann, Huther, and Düsterdieck. In the later editions, however, the work has been done by a considerable number of scholars, and while the old name is retained the commentaries are entirely new. In several cases we already have a third exposition of a particular book which is completely new. The old Meyer, apart from the Apocalypse, was translated into English. Its characteristics were a very full account and discussion of the exegesis throughout the history of interpretation; great stress on the grammatical side, which was handled with excessive rigidity; and on the whole a fairly conservative critical and theological standpoint. In its more recent forms far less space is devoted to interpretations which have only an historical interest; the latest philological researches are taken into account, and the critical and theological standpoint is frequently much more advanced. Among its more notable issues I might specially single out J. Weiss's *I Corinthians*, Haupt's *Imprisonment Epistles*, and Bousset's *Revelation of John*.

The *Handkommentar* was the work of four scholars, Holtzmann, Lipsius, Von Soden, and Schmiedel. They represented an advanced criticism, and this came to expression specially in Holtzmann's work on the Synoptists, the Acts, and the Johannine literature. It was the work of quite first-rate scholars, but as nothing fresh has been done upon it for some time it is slipping behind. The Johannine section was revised at

Holtzmann's request by Walter Bauer; and it was hoped that Schmiedel would be able to revise the work of Lipsius, but this has not been done.

J. Weiss was the first editor of *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*. His premature death in 1914 was an irreparable loss to New Testament students. The third edition was edited by Bousset and Heitmüller. The work consists of a new translation, with introductions and continuous exposition. Its standpoint is advanced. The contributors were for the most part distinguished scholars, and in spite of some weaker sections the work is first-class of its kind.

The *Handbuch* is edited by Lietzmann. It is technical rather than popular. It consists of a translation, rather paraphrastic in character in order to lighten the exegesis, and a brief, compact commentary specially strong on the philological side and supplying a rich accumulation of ethnic parallels. The standpoint is on the whole advanced.

Zahn's commentary is a massive work from the conservative side. The veteran editor has himself written the commentaries on *Matthew, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, Galatians*, and the *Apocalypse*. His

collaborators include Paul Ewald, Wohlenberg, Bachmann, Riggenbach. No translation is supplied, and the form of the exposition is too solid to be prepossessing; but the work contains a large mass of valuable matter, though more than most commentaries it taxes the close attention of the student.

In French there is a comprehensive Roman Catholic commentary published in the series known as *Collection d'Études Bibliques*. The famous Semitic scholar, Lagrange, has published valuable commentaries on *Judges, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Romans, and Galatians*. Condamin has edited *Isaiah and Jeremiah*; Hoonacker, *The Minor Prophets*; Podechard, *Ecclesiastes*; Allo, *The Apocalypse*; and Jacquier, *The Acts of the Apostles*. The enterprise has been executed, especially in its later portions, on a very large scale. It is marked by sound and sometimes distinguished scholarship and by familiarity with German and British work. It is, of course, imperative for all contributors to respect the limitations imposed on criticism by the decrees of the Biblical Commission.

(To be continued.)

Literature.

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS.

DR. BENJAMIN W. BACON, one of America's ablest New Testament scholars, has published eight lectures, simple in style and comprehensive in scope, on *The Story of Jesus and the Beginnings of the Church* (Allen & Unwin; 8s. 6d. net). He himself describes the work as 'a valuation of the Synoptic Record for History and for Religion.' He begins by maintaining a position on which he had insisted in a former work, that the gospel of Jesus cannot do without the gospel about Jesus, nor the gospel about Jesus without the gospel of Jesus. Following up the latter point, he insists that we want the fullest and most accurate account of the career of Jesus that historical research can give us, not merely that we may understand the mind of Jesus, but that we may understand the mind of God. No doubt the Epistles of Paul would suffice to bring us into contact with the Spirit of God as it was in Jesus, but we need every fragment of the sayings and doings of Jesus that the records can supply, in order to know what kind of Spirit we are

of. As history divorced from religion lacks its ultimate solution, so religion apart from the check of history runs to superstition, goes mad.

Accordingly, Dr. Bacon attempts to get back to the earthly Jesus, and first he would sift the old Petrine tradition in its varied forms so as to come as close as possible to the primitive witness of Peter. Having tried to show how in the main the structure of Mark is historical, he proceeds to compare Mark's record with the much earlier, though meagre, references of Paul, and with the material from S, the so-called 'Second Source' of the Synoptic Gospels, used in common by Matthew and Luke (the material designated by the symbol Q). The result of the comparison is a more adequate and historical appreciation of Jesus' ministry than is afforded by Mark alone. In particular Dr. Bacon shows grounds for qualifying Mark's apocalypticism.

The closing chapter of the volume faces the question, How did the gospel about Jesus begin? thus seeking to penetrate the obscurity which surrounds the birth of the Resurrection-faith. It was Peter's faith in the risen Christ that was made the founda-