

tions resting on misrepresentations or misinterpretations of the text. To secure this end most effectually, the comment is chiefly explanatory, presenting in a concise and readable form the results of learned investigations carried on during the last half century. When fuller discussions of difficult passages or important subjects are necessary, they are placed at the end of the chapter or volume.

Conservative in tone and adapted rather to build up the well-disposed than to convert gainsayers, this commentary nevertheless contains several striking concessions which were never before, amongst us, stamped by authority so high. At the same time the work is carefully non-alarmist and re-assuring; and will, after a fair examination, be regarded as not badly adapted to the transition period through which the present generation is passing. It will be the impatient and the impetuous who will deem the notes tame and below the mark. To such readers dash and destructiveness would alone have been acceptable; while the style of the commentary in question is studiously quiet, inobtrusive and unsensational.

As specimens of the concessions alluded to, we give the following. On Genesis i. 5, it is said:—"The vexed question of the duration of the days of creation cannot readily be solved from consideration of the words of the text. The English Version would seem to confine it to natural days, but the original will allow much greater latitude. Time passed in regular succession of day and night. It was an ingenious conjecture of Kurtz, adopted by Hugh Miller, that the knowledge of pre-Adamite history, like the knowledge of future ages, may have been communicated to Moses, or perhaps to the first man, in prophetic vision, that so perhaps vast geological periods were exhibited to the eye of the inspired writer, each appearing to pass before him as so many successive days. It has been said moreover that the phenomena under the earth's surface correspond with the succession as described in this chapter, a period of comparative gloom, with more vapour and more carbonic acid in the atmosphere; then of greater light, of vegetation, of marine animals and huge reptiles, of birds, of beasts, and lastly of man."

Again, on human phraseology employed in conveying transcendental ideas:—"The whole of this history of the creation and the fall is full of these anthropomorphic representations. The Creator is spoken of as if consulting about the formation of man, as reflecting on the result of His creation, and declaring it all very good, or resting from His work, or planting a garden for Adam, bringing the animals to him to name them, then building up the rib of Adam into a woman, and bringing her to Adam to be his bride. Here again Adam hears his voice as of one walking in the garden in the cool of the day. All this corresponds well with the simple and child-like character of the early portions of Genesis. The Great Father, through His inspired word, is as it were teaching His children, in the infancy of their race, by means of simple language, and in simple lessons. Onkelos has here "The Voice of the Word of the Lord." It is by this name, "The Word of the Lord" that the Targums generally paraphrase the name of the Most High, more especially in those passages where is recorded anything like a visible or sensible representation of His Majesty. The Christian Fathers almost universally believed that every appearance of God to the patriarchs

and prophets was a manifestation of the Eternal Son, judging especially from John i. 18."

In the Introduction to Genesis, Vitringa is allowed to have offered a suggestion neither unnatural nor irreverent when he said that Moses may have had before him "documents of various kinds coming down from the times of the patriarchs and preserved among the Israelites, which he collected, reduced to order, worked up and, where needful, filled in;" and it is added that it is very probable that, either in writing or by oral delivery, the Israelites possessed traditions handed down from their forefathers; and that it is consistent with the wisdom of Moses, and not inconsistent with his Divine inspiration, that he should have preserved and incorporated with his own work all such traditions, written or oral, as had upon them the stamp of truth.

The objection that the Pentateuch betrays by its style a comparatively late date is thus met:—"Moses, putting aside all question of inspiration, was a man of extraordinary powers and opportunity. If he was not divinely guided and inspired, as all Christians believe, he must have been even a greater genius than he has been generally reckoned. He had had the highest cultivation possible in one of Egypt's most enlightened times; and after his early training in science and literature, he had lived the contemplative life of a shepherd in Midian. We find him then, with a full consciousness of his heavenly mission, coming forth as legislator, historian, poet, as well as prince and prophet. Such a man could not but mould the tongue of his people. To them he was Homer, Solon and Thucydides, all in one. Every one that knew anything of letters must have known the books of the Pentateuch. All Hebrew literature, as far as we know, was in ancient times of a sacred character; at all events, no other has come down to us; and it is certain that writers on sacred subjects would have been deeply imbued with the language and the thoughts of the books of Moses. Eastern languages, like Eastern manners, are slow of change; and there is certainly nothing strange in our finding that in the thousand years from Moses to Malachi, the same tongue was spoken, and the same words intelligible: especially in books treating on the same subjects and where the earlier books must have been the constant study of all the writers down to the very last. It is said, on the authority of Freytag, that the inhabitants of Mecca still speak the pure language of the Koran, written 1,200 years ago. Egyptian papyri, with an interval of 1,000 years between them, are said by Egyptologists to exhibit no change of language or of grammar. We must not reason about such nations as the Israelites, with their comparative isolation and fixedness, from the Exodus to the Captivity, on the same principles as we should think of the peoples of modern Europe, where so many elements of change have conspired to alter and to mould their language and their literature. The language of the Pentateuch then is just what the language of Moses would probably have been—simple, forcible, with archaic forms and expressions, but, having formed and stamped all future language, still readily intelligible to the last."

The co-operation of natural causes with providential supernatural arrangements is admitted. Thus in regard to the ninth Egyptian "plague" of darkness, we have these remarks:—"This infliction was specially calculated to affect the spirits of the Egyptians, whose chief object of worship was Ra, the Sun-