

notice—is accommodated throughout to the view of the origin and structure of the book generally accepted by modern scholars.

Such is a sketch, only too inadequate and imperfect, of Franz Delitzsch's life and work. He

has left a noble example of talents consecrated to the highest ends. May his devotion to learning, his keenness in the pursuit of truth, his earnestness of purpose, his warm and reverent Christian spirit, find many imitators!

## Franz Delitzsch: The Tribute of a Friend and Pupil.

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THE last few months have been fateful months in the theological record. England and Germany have both had the ranks of their most distinguished divines sadly thinned. In Biblical scholarship both countries have suffered losses which cannot be immediately repaired. Of these losses none touches a wider circle, none awakens deeper regret, than the one we have last to chronicle. The death of the veteran Leipsic Hebraist, which took place on the 4th March, in the 78th year of his age, is an event which will be mourned as much in England and beyond the Atlantic as among his own people. It is the removal not only of one of the foremost of Christian scholars, but of a teacher revered and a friend beloved as few men of learning have been in our time. It was impossible to know Franz Delitzsch without feeling the magnetic influence of a strong and attractive personality which compelled affection not less than respect. It was impossible to hear him without recognising in him one of the select students who gave character to the theology of Germany. His death, indeed, marks the close of a period of transition. He was the last representative of a remarkable group of academic teachers whose uncommon gifts, varied acquirements, and creative genius made the Universities of the Fatherland the great schools of theological thought. When these men took possession of their Chairs, the German mind ran largely in the channels of theological and philosophical inquiry. New lines of research were opened up; original contributions were made to knowledge; new methods of investigation were struck out; and each of a dozen Universities had its man or men who won for it a European reputation in some particular department of research. Things have changed since then. The German mind has been largely diverted into other directions. Fruitful work is still being carried on, and professors of acknowledged ability occupy the Chairs. But theology is not the dominant subject which it was thirty or forty years ago, neither are the Universities the centres of distinct and world-wide theological impulse which they were then. We owe more than we have yet confessed to

men like Ewald, Rothe, Hofmann, Beck, Tholuck, Müller, Dorner, Döllinger, not to speak of Schleiermacher, Neander, and others of earlier date. Among these later leaders of theological thought Franz Delitzsch held a position of highest honour, and exercised an influence which suffered no diminution even in his declining years. And there are few, to whatever critical school or ecclesiastical party they may belong, who will not heartily allow that both the honour and the influence were his by right.

The circumstances of his career are soon told. They have been given by the present writer elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> and need only be briefly referred to here. He was born of Christian parents in Leipsic, on the 23rd February 1813, and was baptized there on the 4th March of the same year. He died, therefore, on the 77th anniversary of his reception into the Christian Church. He had his education in the Gymnasium and University of the city of his birth, and to that city he remained fondly attached through his long life. With all his largeness of heart and world-wide sympathies, he was from first to last a Saxon patriot. He completed his academic studies in 1842, and in 1846 he was called to a Professor's Chair in the University of Rostock. In 1850 he was transferred to the Bavarian University of Erlangen, where he continued to teach with enviable success for sixteen years. Erlangen had an old reputation as an exegetical school. During the period of Delitzsch's tenure of office it rose to a higher distinction than it had ever enjoyed before, and attracted large numbers of students from many different countries. The years spent in the small Bavarian town were among the happiest in his life. His hands were full of honourable and successful work. His fame as an academic teacher was at its height. He made his mark as a writer. Above all, he was surrounded by congenial friends, among whom Von Hofmann had the first place. In 1867, however, an opportunity was offered him of returning to his native Leipsic. He could not resist the chance. The last twenty-three years of his life were spent in the home of his childhood, in

<sup>1</sup> See the *Expositor* of June 1886.

uninterrupted usefulness, indefatigable toil, and universal honour. They were not exempt from sorrow. The death of two sons of rare promise threw a shadow over their brightness. But they were years of a tranquil happiness, the springs of which lay in devotion to academic duty, genial intercourse with youth, deep piety, and concern for all that was good.

His special, life-long, practical Christian interest was in the conversion of Israel. There was a reason for this in his own religious history. In his early manhood philosophical speculation took a great hold of his mind, and made him a stranger to Christian faith. But before he left the University he passed through a great change. This was due to a variety of causes, among which the most powerful was the personal influence of Christian men who happily came across his path at a critical period. He was introduced to a small circle of devout strangers, mostly from America, who were in Leipsic for a time. His intercourse with these revived earlier Christian impressions. He was greatly helped, too, by a preacher of the name of Hahn, who had himself been recovered from the reigning rationalism. But he owed most, probably, to Messrs. Goldberg and Becker, two missionaries of the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews. Other influences acted upon him at a later period, and gave a tone at once to his piety and to his theology. But it was from these men that he received the first and most decisive impulse. They were the instruments of God in making him a new man. He gave up his passion for philosophical speculation, and dedicated himself to sacred pursuits. He had had an early liking for Hebrew. He now threw himself, with all the energy of his forceful and enthusiastic nature, into the study of that language—resolved to possess the key to the Old Testament, in which he discovered the record of divine revelation. But neither then nor at any period of his career did it satisfy his sense of Christian obligation to confine himself to the quiet life of the mere student. He felt the pressure of the call to active Christian work. He interested himself in philanthropic movements. Above all, he took the cause of Israel upon his heart. He became the champion of the hated Jew. He strove to protect him against the blind, persecuting enmity which unfortunately inspires so many even of the best men in Germany. He stood up for him when the current of popular sentiment ran fiercely against him, and when men of great and deserved authority in the Lutheran Church—like the well-known Court Chaplain Stöcker—forgot both his rights and their own Christian charity. By strenuous literary effort and patient personal dealing he sought to do the part of an evangelist and a brother to the Israelite. He was the life and soul of the *Institutum*

*Judaicum*, a missionary institute established on behalf of the Jews, which had its headquarters at Leipsic, and its branches in other University towns. He was never more at home than in the modest work which he carried on in the rooms of this missionary seminary, opening up the Scriptures to some inquiring son of Israel, or furnishing some theological student with that knowledge of the Jew's own literature, which should make him a capable interpreter of Christ's message to His own nation. Nor, amid the many disappointments which he had to bear, did he ever remit his efforts in this sacred cause, or bate one jot of his hope of Israel's future. This great zeal for the Christian good of the Hebrew people led many to suppose that he was himself of Jewish extraction, and a convert from Judaism.

The instinct of authorship kindled in him in his early youth. His first considerable publication dates about half-a-century back; his last was almost coincident with his death. He was an unresting worker. He seldom allowed himself a holiday. When Leipsic was half empty, and both students and household had fled for rest and change, he continued at his desk. The amount of literary matter which he was thus able to overtake was enormous. Nor was it less remarkable for its variety than for its mass. He had a peculiarly mobile, fertile intellect, to which few subjects were foreign. The art of the story-teller came almost as naturally to him as the laboured pursuits of the grammarian and lexicographer. His pen turned readily from the heavy toil of the commentator or the dogmatic theologian to easy dissertations on colours, antiquarian customs, and unfamiliar topics in history. Whatever might be the subject which engaged his attention, a fresh interest was thrown around it by his vivid fancy, his novel ways of regarding it, and the fascination of a style which, though by no means simple, had something of a poetic charm in it.

It is as a Hebraist and an interpreter of the Old Testament that he will be best remembered. Among Hebrew scholars of the evangelical school he stood confessedly first. His Hebrew version of the New Testament is by far the best that has yet appeared. It is a remarkable witness to his scholarship, his industry, and his skill. It has already gone through a number of editions, and has deservedly won a large circulation. Inspired by the hope of the access which it might win for the gospel of Christ to the Jewish mind, he never ceased his endeavours to perfect it. Nothing lay closer to his thoughts during his last days. He had all but completed another revision of it, when the cherished work was stayed by paralysis and death. In Rabbinical learning he had no rival among Christian students. It is doubtful, indeed, whether he has any proper successor in that peculiar line of study. Vast stores of know-

ledge at any rate have perished with him, which it will require an equally lengthened and constant application to recover. In the exegesis of the Old Testament Scriptures he made his mark early. Beginning with his work on *Habakkuk*, which was published in 1843, he produced a series of commentaries on the Hebrew books, including *Genesis*, *Psalms*, *Job*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Song of Songs*, *Isaiah*, which have materially contributed to a better appreciation of the character, purpose, and limits of the older Revelation. These are of different degrees of merit, the most successful being those on *Psalms*, *Ecclesiastes*, and *Isaiah*. But they are all distinguished by a happy combination of grammatical and historical science with spiritual perception. The charm of his interpretation lies first in his sympathy with the divine message of the book, the reverence with which he regards it, and his insight into its religious place and purpose.

These important additions to the exegesis of the Old Testament would of themselves secure for Franz Delitzsch a notable place among recent theologians. But his reputation rests upon a broader basis than that. We owe him weighty and original contributions to the history of Messianic Prophecy, to that of the poetry and philosophy of the Jews in post-Biblical times, to the Apologetics of the Christian faith, to the Psychology of the Bible, and similar subjects. Nor is our debt to Dr. Delitzsch limited to these things. He did important service in the field of New Testament scholarship as well as in Hebrew and Old Testament inquiry. Some of his smaller publications on the Textual Criticism of the New Testament books are of great interest. One of the most successful specimens of his gifts as an interpreter, too, is his Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, a work rich in matter, particularly instructive in its treatment of the doctrinal bearings of the book, and entitled to a high place in the exegetical performances of the day.

Dr. Delitzsch's own theological position was well defined and firmly held. When Christian truth became vital to him, he gave his full consent to the evangelical system of doctrine. The theology of the Reformers became the pivot of his entire religious thinking. To him it expressed what he had himself experienced of grace, and no change either in the popular beliefs of his time or in his own views of Revelation could ever make him less evangelical, or a less loyal child of the Protestant Reformation, than he was at the opening of his spiritual life. From first to last, too, he was an unswerving Lutheran. The forms in which gospel truth had been cast by Luther and Melancthon in the memorable day of Europe's spiritual regeneration were the chosen terms of his own faith, to which he clung from youth to old age with all the well-nigh passionate

force of his strong and generous nature. But while a Lutheran of the Lutherans, he had a large-hearted charity for all men, and an appreciative, sympathetic consideration for Christians of other types and theologians of other schools. Moreover, he preserved to the end an open and candid mind, and was not ashamed to retrace his steps where the growing light of truth disclosed new ways to him. The critical reconstruction of the Old Testament books was for a length of time extremely distasteful to him. His conservative instincts rose in protest against it. He distrusted it, and fought against it with the intensity of a nature which felt that truth itself might be at stake with it. The rashness and irreverence of certain of its most pronounced advocates sharpened his suspicion of it. There was everything against his being reconciled to it. But candour triumphed over prepossession. He watched the advance of inquiry, and weighed carefully the gradually gathering evidence. The result was that at the close of his long and honourable career he made the frank confession that in some things, and these of essential moment, the new criticism had right on its side. He withdrew from his old views of the unity of *Isaiah*, and accepted much that he had long withstood in the new theory of the Mosaic legislation and the order of the Old Testament books. The spirit in which these concessions were made will be understood from what is said in the preface to the new edition of his *Genesis*.

Those who have enjoyed his friendship, as it has been the privilege of the present writer to do for many years, know best how much is lost by the removal of Franz Delitzsch. He was the truest and most charming of friends. His affection for children, his love of nature, his passion for flowers, lent a rare attraction to his companionship. It was in the evening stroll, when the day's toil was over, or at the simple social meal in some homely German tavern, that he was seen at his best. Then one came to understand all that he was, and to love him for his strong and tender heart, as well as to admire him for his rich and cultivated mind.

He has been taken from us full of years and honours. It is pleasant to know that our own country was not slack to acknowledge his worth. More than once he was invited to visit one of the Scottish Churches. On the occasion, too, of the celebration of the Tercentenary of the University of Edinburgh in 1884, it was resolved to offer him the degree of D.D. He was prevented by the etiquette of the German Universities from accepting the honour, but he greatly valued the recognition. He has left us a noble example of patient, fruitful, consecrated work. May God raise up among us scholars of the same rank and of like spirit, able to wed the new learning of the present with the robust, evangelical faith of the past!