

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



**PATREON**

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expositor-series-1.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php)

tion in my "Life of Christ," I did not mention, because I did not know, who had won the credit of originating or reviving it, having myself heard it suggested in conversation by a learned bishop. Mr. Field has removed the only objection I ever felt to admitting it, and I cannot but think that it will rank hereafter with the most certain and valuable results which modern has borrowed from ancient exegesis.

F. W. FARRAR.

---

### NOTES ON COMMENTARIES.

#### 2. JOB TO SOLOMON'S SONG.

IN the age of Solomon a new kind of literature sprang into being among the Hebrews, or at least rose to its highest excellence, noble specimens of which have come down to us in the books which they called collectively *Chokmah*, the literature of *Wisdom*. Poetic in form, it is ethical or didactic in spirit, and sets itself to depict, in various forms, the art of living rightly or well. Thus the Book of Job teaches men how to *suffer*, the Book of Psalms how to *pray*, the Book of Proverbs how to *act*, the Book Ecclesiastes how to *enjoy*, and the Song which is Solomon's how to *love*.

These books have been far more fortunate in their Commentators than the historical books; there is hardly one of them on which even the English school has not furnished a valuable, or even an invaluable, exposition. The very first of them is exceptionally fortunate. The Book of *Job* is probably the most sublime poem in the literature of the world. The questions it handles—as, e.g., the capacity of man for a disinterested virtue, a genuine and unselfish piety; the origin, function, and end of evil—are of profound and perennial interest, and it raises and answers them in the noblest way. No wonder, therefore, that it has attracted to itself the best and ablest minds. In the foreign school Renan and Ewald, Dillmann and Merx, are among the Commentators who have laboured at it most successfully; among ourselves Professor A. B. Davidson and Canon Cook. Davidson's Commentary<sup>1</sup>—alas, that it should still be incomplete!—is indeed a quite unique bit of work. It combines philosophical breadth and spiritual in-

<sup>1</sup> A Commentary, Grammatical and Exegetical, on the Book of Job: with a Translation. By the Rev. A. B. Davidson, M.A. Vol. I. Williams and Norgate.

sight with exegetical power and a careful and exhaustive examination of the grammatical constructions of the book in an altogether singular degree. To the student of Hebrew it is invaluable, since it takes up every question of grammar, from the simplest to the most difficult, and gives a plain straightforward solution of them. And even those who have no acquaintance with Hebrew will be charmed by the erudition which yields an easy explanation of the historical, geographical, astrological, and other allusions of the poem, and the subtle and penetrative power with which its moral problems are handled. I should find it hard to name a finer specimen of English exposition. And yet, I hardly know why, it is not by simply reading this Commentary that we discover its excellence: *that* discovers itself only to those who *work* with it: but no man, I think, can set himself to study and expound the Poem without finding that he gets more real and valuable help—help too of all kinds—from Professor Davidson's Commentary than from any other within his reach. There is wit in it and humour as well as philosophy and learning; and though at times the style is somewhat awkward and heavy, at other times the book is as admirable in form as it is in substance. It abounds in happy thoughts happily expressed. Professor Davidson should be debarred from all other work till he has completed this. At present it extends only to the close of Chap. xiv.

Canon Cook's Commentary on Job<sup>1</sup> is by far the most admirable popular exposition of the Book I know. The introductory essay on the contents, object, integrity, character, language, style, and date of the poem will be very welcome and instructive even to scholars; while yet it is written in a style so terse and telling that any reader of intelligence may follow it throughout, and can hardly fail to be charmed by it. The notes are brief, yet sufficient both to explain the numerous allusions to the science, customs, &c., of various ancient races with which the Book abounds, and the main course of the argument between Job and his three friends: they are all, moreover, carefully brought within the range of the general reader.

Delitzsch's Biblical Commentary on the *Book of Job*<sup>2</sup> shews that learned and devout author at his very best, and is greatly enhanced in value by the illustrative notes contributed by Dr. Wetzstein, who, for many years the Prussian Consul at Damascus,

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. IV. of "The Speaker's Commentary." John Murray.

<sup>2</sup> Two Volumes, published by T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh.

made himself familiar on the spot with the scenery, customs, and traditions of the Hauran. Possessed of these three Commentaries, if only he know how to use them, the English student will find himself sufficiently equipped for the study of this noble and inspired poem.

On the *Book of Psalms* endless Commentaries have been written, many of them of great worth to those who crave homiletical and devotional comments on those sacred hymns, which yet have little worth to the student who aspires, first of all, to get at the original meaning and intention of the Psalmists; others, while affecting to be only or mainly critical, of no real value either to those who desire to acquaint themselves with the historical conditions under which the several psalms were written and their grammatical sense, or of those who desire to find nutriment for their spiritual life. Among the former I should class Mr. Spurgeon's "Treasury of David," which really contains most of the finest things that have been said for eighteen centuries about the Psalms; and among the latter a little book published by Macmillan some years since, and entitled, "The Psalms Chronologically Arranged, by Four Friends," which, despite its popularity, is as poor in its criticism as it is unsound in its chronology. The one English book on the Psalter of the first class is Canon Perowne's.<sup>1</sup> It combines sound learning with genuine expository power, and should be in the hands of all who intend to study or expound this unparalleled collection of sacred lyrics. The Hebrew student will find many notes that will aid him in his study: but these may be skipped by the English reader—as a rule, indeed, they stand apart in a place by themselves; so that no man of intelligence, however unlearned, need fear to get even the larger edition, or doubt that he may use it to advantage. A smaller edition of this important work has been lately issued, in a cheap form, expressly for the use of those English students who have no language but their own. It is an admirable condensation; the expository notes are all that could be desired: the one drawback to it is, that considerations of space have compelled the author to omit the valuable essay prefixed to the larger edition.

EDITOR.

(To be continued.)

<sup>1</sup> "The Book of Psalms. A New Translation, with Introductions and Notes, Explanatory and Critical." By J. J. Stewart Perowne, B.D. Vols. I. and II. Bell and Daldy.