

David Brown, D.D., LL.D.

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PART II.

As a preacher Dr. Brown had a style of his own which seldom failed to interest. His pulpit discourses were carefully constructed, and had the admirable quality of proceeding always on a faithful interpretation of the text. His first object was to get his audience face to face with the exact meaning of the passage in hand, and let the Word of God, rightly understood, make its own impression. His sermons were in this way always informing, as they were also pointed, warm, and sympathetic, kindled now and again by happy comment, flight of fancy, or touch of sentiment. He had great delight in the exercise of the preacher's gift, and in all the work of the Christian pastor. But he was far from limiting himself to what belonged to his own profession. His active mind suffered little to escape it in any province of human interest. Art, letters, public affairs, the progress of science, had all a strong hold upon his attention. In politics he was an advanced and consistent Liberal, never shrinking from the public expression of his views on questions which divided men, in no whit abating his enthusiasm or lowering his convictions when old age overtook him. His primary interest, however, naturally was the religious. He was ever ready to advance by all means in his power the work of Christ's Church and the spiritual good of the people. He took an energetic part in the great revival movement which passed across from Ulster to Scotland in 1859. He gave his loyal support and hearty sympathy to Mr. Moody and other American evangelists who came from time to time with a message for the people of Scotland. He took his own part, too, in the religious debates and ecclesiastical controversies of the time. In these he was found almost invariably on the side of liberty and progress. He was an earnest advocate of the movement for union between the Free Church and the United Presbyterian. He was a zealous supporter of the measure which gave Scotland a national system of elementary education in schools open to the whole people, and managed by the people, in place of the old denominational order. When questions arose about the introduc-

tion of hymn-books and organs into the public worship of the Presbyterian Church, and about the revision of the Creed, he was no less decidedly on the side of progress. The one occasion on which he departed from his usual position and acted with the pronounced Conservative party was that of the controversy over the writings of his brilliant colleague, Professor Robertson Smith. His anxieties regarding the effect which the critical reconstruction of the Old Testament books might have on the authority of the Divine Word led him, in this case, to take up an attitude of strenuous opposition to those who stood for liberty of opinion, within the limits of the Westminster Standards, on questions belonging to the literary history of the books which make up the Old Testament Canon. It was a painful and unexpected incident in his career.

The range of Dr. Brown's studies was wide. But his chief interest was the criticism and interpretation of the New Testament writings. He was a skilful exegete, particularly happy in grasping the spiritual message of a passage and expressing it in a few pointed, sympathetic, telling sentences. Many surpassed him in original work, in the grammatical faculty, and in the larger historical sense. Few excelled him in getting at the choice essence of the best work of the exegetes of all ages, in bringing out the spiritual aroma of a sentence in Gospel or Epistle, or in making the results of interpretation touch the heart and quicken the life. One of his favourite subjects was the Textual Criticism of the Old Testament. He was an early student of this branch of sacred learning. He was amongst the first to teach it in the Theological Colleges of Scotland, and he retained his interest in it till the end. He gave much attention to it in the work of the Committee of Revisers of the New Testament, of which he had the honour of being a member. In the deliberations of that Committee he sympathized mostly with the moderate Conservatives, and voted usually, though not invariably, with Prebendary Scrivener. The contentions of men of the more limited school of Dean Burgon

were too extreme for him. On the other hand, he did not accept Westcott and Hort's criticism in its most distinctive principles. His reluctance to part with certain cherished words of Scripture which that criticism pronounced to be no part of the oldest accessible text made him doubtful. In this he separated himself from the great majority of trained critics in England, Germany, and America.

Dr. Brown began to write at a comparatively early period in his career, and he made considerable contributions to the theological literature of his day. He wrote many articles for the magazines: the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, the *Expositor*, the *Expository Times*, the *Theological Review*, the *Critical Review*, and others. Some of the oldest of these are among the ablest and most effective. We might refer to an admirable paper on 'Bengel,' and to an able and incisive reply to an attack made, upon the Reformers by Sir William Hamilton, in which the great metaphysician's mistakes in an unfamiliar field, which he had too rashly entered, were patiently followed out and vigorously refuted. One of his most successful publications was his volume on *Christ's Second Advent: Will it be Pre-millennial?*—which has gone through a number of editions since it was first published in 1843, and has had a large circulation in America as well as at home. It deals with the views of Elliott, the Bonars, and others, which were before the public some half-century ago. It refers little to the German speculations on the same subject, and it has never had worked into it the later developments of opinion. But it is in many respects an effective handling of the whole premillenarian position, and it is strong in acute exegesis. A smaller volume on a kindred topic was published in 1861, under the title of *The Restoration of the Jews*, in which he discusses the history, principles, and bearings of the question, and constructs an argument in favour of the restoration of Israel to their own land. The reasoning turns largely upon the position that 'the *people* and the *land* of Israel are so connected in numerous prophecies of the Old Testament, that whatever *literality* and *perpetuity* are ascribed to the one must, on all strict principles of interpretation, be attributed to the other also.' The contention that the *conversion* of Israel carries with it the *territorial* restoration of Israel is strongly put. The reasoning loses its point if the general view of prophecy on which the book proceeds is not

accepted as sufficient, and that would be the case with most now. But there is much that is of interest in the volume apart from its main idea. Among the most attractive productions of his literary activity must be placed his *Life of John Duncan*, with the companion volume, entitled *John Duncan in the Pulpit and at the Communion Table*. John Duncan, Professor of Hebrew in the New College, Edinburgh, best known as Rabbi Duncan, was an Aberdonian as Dr. Brown himself was. They were life-long friends, and in these two volumes, written in vivid and sympathetic terms, the survivor prepared a fitting memorial of one of the rarest minds and finest spirits of our time. In another volume of biographical interest, published under the title of *Crushed Hopes Crowned in Death*, Dr. Brown gave a touching account of his oldest son, a young man of great promise, who, after a distinguished career in the Universities of Glasgow and Oxford, won by competition a place in the Indian Civil Service, but took ill after a brief residence in India, and died at sea on his way home. The book is the embalment of the affection of a stricken father for a son prematurely removed.

Dr. Brown turned always, however, by preference to the study of the New Testament. And in this department his best work probably was done. So late as 1891, when he was eighty-eight years old, he published a treatise on *The Apocalypse, its Structure and Primary Predictions*, in which he contends for the later date of the book, and for the essentially *predictive* as opposed to the essentially *descriptive* theory of its purpose. He contributed also an exposition of the Epistles to the Corinthians to Schaff's *Popular Commentary*. Many years before that he wrote expositions of the Gospels, the Book of Acts, and the Epistle to the Romans for Collins's *Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical*. In these we have Dr. Brown at his best in his most favourite field. These commentaries have been greatly valued. Those on the Gospels and the Book of Acts, published also in separate form, have been received with special favour. They are undoubtedly the best portions of the series to which they belong, and are particularly successful in giving the results of scientific exegesis in their spiritual applications, and in forms to meet the practical needs of unlearned readers. In his old age he returned once more to his early love, and issued a new exposi-

tion of the *Epistle to the Romans* as one of the volumes in the series of *Handbooks for Bible Classes*. It is not too much to say that this volume, small as it is, has few to match it in insight into Paul's teaching, or in vivid and persuasive statement of the fundamental matters of Pauline doctrine.

In the course of his long life many honours came to Dr. Brown. Before he obtained his professorship he had the honorary degree of D.D. conferred upon him by Princeton College, New Jersey, the college of the Hodges and other distinguished theologians. In 1872 he received a

similar dignity from his own university. In 1885 he was called to occupy the Moderator's chair of the General Assembly, the highest position in the Free Church. In 1895, in his extreme old age, he was made LL.D. by the University of Aberdeen. A recognition of a more singular kind came to him not long since from the King of Servia. This was the decoration of Knight Commander of the Royal Order of St. Sava. This honour was peculiarly welcome as given in appreciation of his Commentaries on the Gospels and Acts, an abridgment of which he had been asked to prepare for translation into the Servian language.

Recent Foreign Theology.

Lisco's 'Second Corinthians.'¹

DR. LISCO, already known by his originality as an investigator of the relations between St. Paul and the Church of Corinth, makes in the volume before us one more attempt to map out the 'trackless jungle' of the questions surrounding the Second Epistle to the Corinthians.

Like many recent German writers on the subject, he regards the Epistle, as handed down, as a combination of several letters of St. Paul to Corinth, the restoration of which to their historical order does much to clear up the intricate problems of the subject.

His results are briefly as follows:—After despatching the 'First Epistle,' in which he announces his intention of revisiting Corinth by way of Macedonia, St. Paul hears (from Timothy) of increasing tension at Corinth between Jewish and Gentile Christians. Hence the 'unrecorded visit,' which Lisco adopts, following the stock arguments of those who assume it without venturing to place it before 1 Cor. This visit was meant to restore peace, but failed to do so. On the contrary, by his mild treatment of impenitent Gentile Christians, the apostle alienated seriously the Jewish element in the Church. He now leaves Corinth, and returns to Macedonia. Meanwhile, he is fiercely attacked at Corinth by Judaizing

Christians, not members of the Corinthian Church. As a result of this, a Jewish Christian of Corinth writes to the apostle in very disrespectful terms, informing him of the state of things. (The evidence for these hypotheses is to be more fully set out by Dr. Lisco in a forthcoming work, pp. 41, 44.) This man is the Offender of 2 Co 2 and 7, who is of course quite different from the Offender of 1 Co 5. In reply to this letter, St. Paul despatches the indignant 'Letter of Four Chapters' (2 Co 10-13¹⁰). This is Dr. Lisco's Epistle 'A.' He thinks that the well-known interjected passage 6¹⁴-7¹ originally belonged to it, but by some chance changed places with 12¹¹⁻¹⁹, which he refers to his Epistle 'B.' The arguments for this may carry more conviction to some readers than they do to the present reviewer. No reply from Corinth comes, and St. Paul retires again to Ephesus, in order to find Titus, whom he has left there, and in whom he sees the man for the situation at Corinth. Shortly after the despatch of Titus, St. Paul is obliged to leave Ephesus. In restless and painful suspense he passes through Troas and Macedonia until at last, somewhere in Macedonia, he receives a letter from Corinth, to which Dr. Lisco's Epistle 'B' is his reply. This consists of 2 Co 1¹-6¹⁸ 12¹¹⁻¹⁹ 7^{2, 3} 9 13¹¹⁻¹³. Then, following up the letter of the Corinthians, comes Titus himself, with excellent news, and the apostle is able to write 2 Co 7⁴-8²⁴; Dr. Lisco's Epistle 'C.'

There is nothing either new or strange in the divisions Dr. Lisco makes in the Epistle, with the

¹ *Die Entstehung des zweiten Korintherbriefes*. By Dr. H. Lisco. 84 pp. Berlin, 1896. London: Williams & Norgate.