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The Bible Student

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

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CONTINUING

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To err is human. To blunder might almost be said to be the peculiar property of, if **Errors and** not the wise man, **Blunders.** yet the man of learning—more or less. There is such a thing as pure error: a blunder is, on the other hand, essentially confusion, and he who blunders is, in the very nature of the case, "mixed." He is not like the lost horse wandering in the steppes: he is like the sleepy horse stumbling in the path. The very core of a blunder is, therefore, incongruity: and it is on this account that it ordinarily strikes us as amusing; for incongruity is the soul of humor. The incongruity may indeed pass beyond the limits of the amusing to the absurd, and may be such as to call out rather indignation than a smile; but in any case, it is the presence of mismatched elements in the phenomenon which raises it from the plane of a mere error into the dignity of a blunder. The late Mr. EDWARD A. FREEMAN, in his inimitable way, genially defines a blunder accordingly thus:—"A blunder is a work of art. An utterly stupid man, an utterly ignorant man, may

make dull mistakes and dull confusions; he cannot make a good blunder. To make a good blunder needs cleverness, and it needs knowledge—imperfect knowledge certainly, but still some knowledge, not utter ignorance." Indeed, it does not always imply ignorance at all,—sleepiness rather. The best blunders are but the nods of Homers; and a Homer is as necessary for their production as the nod.

We see the blunder in its most genial form when no ignorance is argued at all. In **Various Kinds** these cases, it cre- **Of Blunders.** ates nothing in the hearer but a diverted smile, in which the perpetrator joins without embarrassment. Instances may be found in Dr. HERRICK JOHNSON's declaration that Peter "cowered before a barmaid" (Lectures on the New Testament, Etc.: The American Tract Society, 1881, p. 7), and Dr. CHARLES WADSWORTH's explanation, in one of his printed sermons, that the Epistle to the Colossians "had been penned by two private secretaries, Tychicus and a young colored man, Onesimus." Neither writer so

Current Biblical Thought.

Professor C. BRUSTON of Montauban, contributes a very acute paper on *Le début de l'Hebreux and The Pre-existent Christ.* *Epître aux Hébreux* to the January number of the *Revue de Théologie et des Questions Religieuses*. Its ultimate purpose seems to be to bring support to the modern denial of the pre-existence of Christ, by voiding from the opening verses of Hebrews all implications of his preincarnate action, and referring all their declarations to "the historic Christ." The method used is that of textual emendation. The first hand of the great *codex Vaticanus*, as is well known, in verse 3, instead of "upholding all things by the word of his power," reads "manifesting all things by the word of his power." This has hitherto been treated as a pure individualism of that MS.—due doubtless to a careless slip of the scribe. In the treatise on the *Father and the Son*, recently published by GEORG WOBBERMIN in GEBHARDT and HARNACK'S *Texte und Untersuchungen* and attributed to SERAPION of THMOUIS, a contemporary of ATHANASIUS, however, the reading recurs in a context which precludes the possibility of mistake: "And again Saint Paul, the Apostle, says in the Epistle to the Hebrews: 'And manifesting all things by the word of his power.'" BRUSTON argues that, this reading being shown to a transmitted one, it must be reckoned with; and he urges that it is demanded by the whole context. Turning then to the clause of the second verse, "Through whom also he made the ages," he proposes, with the support of one late minuscule, by altering the

genitive into the accusative, to read rather, "For whom"—i. e., in the same sense that the Sabbath was made "for man" (Mark 2: 27), or woman was created "for man" (I. Cor. 11: 8)—"also he made the ages." The deed is now done: the entire passage contains nothing that is not applicable to the "historic Christ," and it only remains to plead the logical coherence of the whole as a justification of the process by which it has been attained. This is his analysis: "After having said that God spoke by his Son, the author adds: (1) what God had done for him before his coming, (a) He had appointed him heir of all things, and (b) He had made eternity, or rather the ages of the world for him; (2) What he was and what he did, (a) He was the image of God and revealed to men all that it was needful for them to know, and (b) He made purification for sins; then (3) He took his seat at the right hand of God, and became by so much better than the angels as he deserved the name of Son (and not of a messenger or angel), which he received from God." Thus he thinks he has brought Hebrews into line with the teaching of Paul, who (Phil. 2: 2-6) accounts the exaltation of Christ his reward for obedience; and, indeed, into harmony with the New Testament at large, in which he nowhere finds the notion of the personal pre-existence of the Son. He says: "According to the prologue of the Fourth Gospel, the Logos is eternal and is God; but it is nowhere said that he had a personality distinct from that of God. On the contrary, 'the Logos was God.' This is an

affirmation familiar to the Greek philosophy from Heraclitus down, and especially to that of the Stoics. According to the whole New Testament, the Son of God is a personal being distinct from God; but it is nowhere said that he was eternal *a parte ante*; he is eternal only *a parte post*." On the whole Prof. BRUSTON has given us as pretty a piece of dogmatically warped exegesis as we have seen for a long time. The case he makes out for his interpretation of the opening verses of Hebrews is indeed exceedingly plausible. Beyond that, of course, there is nothing to be said for his construction.

The Hebrew Ben Sira is still a leading object of discussion in critical circles. To Prof. MARGOLIOUTH's aid in his assault upon its authenticity, Mr. ISRAEL LÉVI has come in a striking article which appears in the *Revue des Études Juives*; with this the defenders of the originality of the Cairene text will have to reckon. Defenders, meanwhile, are multiplying at such a rate that the literature of the subject bids fair to become wholly unmanageable. The studies of Prof. KÖNIG which appeared first as several articles in the *Expository Times* are now issued also in a German form. Prof. A. A. BEVAN in the course of a review of the publication of Messrs. SCHECHTER and TAYLOR, printed in the first number of *The Journal of Theological Studies* (p. 141), offers an interesting conjecture for the clearing up of the Hebrew form of the famous "free-will text," 15: 14: "God made man from the beginning and left him in the hand of his (own) counsel." With that curious reduplication characteristic of the Hebrew text, this appears in it in the form: "God created man from the beginning; and put him into the

hand of him that would spoil him; and gave him into the hand of his inclination." This doublet, Prof. BEVAN rightly argues, gives us not a synonym, but a contradiction: although the context demands an assertion of the man's free will, moreover, we have in its former member a declaration that he has been handed over to his spoiler, which would seem to mean his evil nature,—although to Ben Sira, it would seem, there is no evil nature to be presupposed for man. Prof. BEVAN, therefore, by a neat conjecture, proposes to substitute חותפו for חירותו and thus to obtain, according at least to a common Syriac use, a neutral term for moral free will. One is inclined to ask whether it would not be almost as easy and might not yield an even more satisfactory result, to read the ordinary Rabbinic term for moral autonomy רשותו. But back of it all lies the question why we should emend the text at all. Why assume that this clause must accord with its fellow? Why assume that it must accord with Bar Sira? These doublets certainly offer a problem for the advocates of the authenticity of the new Hebrew text, which it behooves them to deal with fundamentally.

B. B. W.

Among New Testament problems which await solution is that of the authorship of the *Did Barnabas Write Hebrews?* Epistle to the Hebrews. There may be said to be a growing tendency to ascribe it to Barnabas. This position is maintained and admirably stated in a thesis recently published by Mr. H. H. B. AYLES of Cambridge, in which we have a discussion of the date, destination and authorship of the epistle. He agrees with many scholars that the epistle was written about 64 A. D., and that it was sent to the church at Jerusalem. It would