

ON THE USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE EPISTLE.

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Every student of the Epistle to the Hebrews must feel that it deals in a peculiar degree with the thoughts and trials of our own time. The situation of Jewish converts on the eve of the destruction of Jerusalem was necessarily marked by the sorest distress. They had looked with unhesitating confidence for the redemption of Israel and for the restoration of the Kingdom to the people of God; and in proportion as their hope had been bright, their disappointment was overwhelming when these expectations, as they had fashioned them, were finally dispelled.

They were deprived of the consolations of their ancestral ritual: they were excluded from the fellowship of their countrymen: the letter of Scripture had failed them: the Christ remained outwardly unvindicated from the judgment of high-priests and scribes; and a storm was gathering round the Holy City which to calm eyes boded utter desolation without any prospect of relief. The writer of the Epistle enters with the tenderest sympathy into every cause of the grief and dejection which troubled his countrymen, and transfigures each sorrow into an occasion for a larger hope through a new revelation of the glory of Christ. So it will be still, I cannot doubt, in this day of our own visitation if we look, as he directs us, to the Ascended Lord. The difficulties which come to us through physical facts and theories, through criticism, through wider views of human history, correspond with those which came to Jewish Christians at the close of the Apostolic age, and they will find their solution also in fuller views of the Person and Work of Christ. The promise of the Lord awaits fulfilment for us in this present day, as it found fulfilment for them: *In your patience ye shall win your souls.*

This conviction has been constantly present to me in commenting on the Epistle. I have endeavoured to suggest in the notes lines of thought which I have found to open light upon problems which we are required to face. In doing this it has throughout been my desire to induce my readers to become my fellow-students, and I have aimed at encouraging sustained reflection rather than at entering on the field of controversy. No conclusion is of real value to us till we have made it our own by serious work; and

controversy tends no less to narrow our vision than to give to forms of language or conception that rigidity of outline which is fatal to the presentation of life.

Some perhaps will think that in the interpretation of the text undue stress is laid upon details of expression; that it is unreasonable to insist upon points of order, upon variations of tenses and words, upon subtleties of composition, upon indications of meaning conveyed by minute variations of language in a book written for popular use in a dialect largely affected by foreign elements. The work of forty years has brought to me the surest conviction that such criticism is wholly at fault. Every day's study of the Apostolic writings confirms me in the belief that we do not commonly attend with sufficient care to their exact meaning. The Greek of the New Testament is not indeed the Greek of the Classical writers, but it is not less precise or less powerful. I should not of course maintain that the fulness of meaning which can be recognised in the phrases of a book like the Epistle to the Hebrews was consciously apprehended by the author, though he seems to have used the resources of literary art with more distinct design than any other of the Apostles; but clearness of spiritual vision brings with it a corresponding precision and force of expression through which the patient interpreter can attain little by little to that which the prophet saw. No one would limit the teaching of a poet's words to that which was definitely present to his mind. Still less can we suppose that he who is inspired to give a message of GOD to all ages sees himself the completeness of the truth which all life serves to illuminate.

I have not attempted to summarise in the notes the opinions of modern commentators. This has been done fairly and in detail by Lunemann . Where I feel real doubt, I have given the various views which seem to me to claim consideration: in other cases I have, for the most part, simply stated the conclusions which I have gained. I have however freely quoted patristic comments, and that in the original texts. Every quotation which I have given has, I believe, some feature of interest; and the trouble of mastering the writer's own words will be more than compensated by a sense of their force and beauty.

It did not appear to fall within my scope to discuss the authorship of the Commentary which I have quoted under the name of Primasius

(Migne, *P. L.* lxviii). The Commentary is printed also under the name of Haymo (Migne, *P. L.* cxvii) with some variations, and in this text the lacuna in the notes on Heb. 4 is filled up.

As far as I have observed the Commentary of Herveius Burgidolensis ('of Bourg-Dieu or Bourg-Deols in Berry' † 1149, Migne, *P. L.* clxxxix) has not been used before. The passages which I have given will shew that for vigour and independence and sobriety and depth he is second to no mediaeval expositor. I regret that I have not given notes from Atto of Vercelli († c. 960, Migne, *P. L.* cxxxiv). His commentary also will repay examination.

It would be impossible for me to estimate or even to determine my debts to other writers. I cannot however but acknowledge gratefully how much I owe both to Delitzsch and to Riehm. The latter writer appears to me to have seized more truly than any one the general character and teaching of the Epistle.

For illustrations from Philo I am largely indebted to the *Exercitationes* of J. B. Carpzov (1750), who has left few parallels unnoticed. But I have always seemed to learn most from Trommius and Bruder. If to these Concordances—till the former is superseded by the promised Oxford Concordance—the student adds Dr Moulton's edition of Winer's Grammar and Dr Thayer's edition of Grimm's Lexicon, he will find that he has at his command a fruitful field of investigation which yields to every effort fresh signs of the inexhaustible wealth of the Written Word.

No work in which I have ever been allowed to spend many years of continuous labour has had for me the same intense human interest as the study of the Epistle to the Hebrews. If this feeling, which must shew itself in what I have written, moves others to work upon the book with frank and confident reverence, to listen to the voice which speaks to us 'to-day' from its pages, to bring to the doubts, the controversies, the apparent losses, which distress us, the spirit of absolute self-surrender to our King-priest, the living and glorified Christ, which it inspires, my end will be fully gained. Such students will join with me in offering a devout thanksgiving to GOD that He has made a little plainer to us, through lessons which have

seemed to be a stern discipline, words which express the manifold experience of life and its final interpretation:

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