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I.

THE TESTIMONY OF CHRIST TO THE OLD TESTAMENT.

BOTH Jews and Christians receive the Old Testament as containing a revelation from God, while the latter regard it as standing in close and vital relationship to the New Testament. Everything connected with the Old Testament has, of recent years, been subjected to the closest scrutiny—the authorship of its several books, the time when they were written, their style, their historical value, their religious and ethical teachings. Apart from the veneration with which we regard the Old Testament writings on their own account, the intimate connection which they have with the Christian Scriptures necessarily gives us the deepest interest in the conclusions which may be reached by Old Testament criticism. For as the New Testament dispensation presupposes and grows out of the Mosaic, so the books of the New Testament touch those of the Old at every point: “*In vetere testamento novum latet, et in novo vetus patet.*”

We propose to take a summary view of the testimony of our Lord to the Old Testament, as it is recorded by the evangelists. The New Testament writers themselves largely quote and refer to the Old Testament, and the views which they express regarding the old economy and its writings are in harmony with the statements of their Master; but, for various reasons, we here confine ourselves to what is related of the Lord Himself.

Let us refer, first, to what is contained or necessarily implied in the Lord's testimony to the Old Testament Scriptures, and, secondly, to the critical value of His testimony.

IV.

CALVIN AS A COMMENTATOR.

CALVIN was an exegetical genius of the first order. His commentaries are unsurpassed for originality, depth, perspicuity, soundness, and permanent value. The Reformation period was fruitful beyond any other in translations and expositions of the Scripture. If Luther was the king of translators, Calvin was the king of commentators. Poole, in the Preface to his *Synopsis*, apologizes for not referring more frequently to Calvin, because others had so largely borrowed from him that to quote them was quoting him. Reuss, the chief editor of his works and himself an eminent Biblical scholar, says that Calvin was "beyond all question the greatest exegete of the sixteenth century." Archdeacon Farrar literally echoes this judgment. Diestel, the best historian of Old Testament exegesis, calls him "the creator of genuine exegesis." Few exegetical works outlive their generation; those of Calvin are not likely to be superseded, any more than Chrysostom's *Homilies* for patristic eloquence, or Bengel's *Gnomon* for pregnant and stimulating hints, or Matthew Henry's *Exposition* for devotional purposes and epigrammatic suggestions to preachers.

Calvin began his series of Commentaries at Strasburg with the Epistle to the Romans, on which his system of theology is chiefly built. In the dedication to his friend and Hebrew teacher Grynaeus, at Basel (Oct. 18, 1539), he already lays down his views of the best method of interpretation, namely, comprehensive brevity, transparent clearness, and strict adherence to the spirit and letter of the author. He gradually explained the most important books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the Prophets, and all the books of the New Testament with the exception of the Apocalypse, which he wisely left alone. Some of his expositions, as the Commentary on the Minor Prophets, were published from notes of his free, *extempore* lectures and sermons. His last literary work was a Commentary on Joshua, which he began in great bodily infirmity and finished shortly before his death and entrance into the promised land.

It was his delight to expound the Word of God from the chair and from the pulpit. Hence his theology is Biblical rather than

scholastic. The Commentaries on the Psalms and the Epistles of Paul are regarded as his best. He was in profound sympathy with David and Paul, and read in their history his own spiritual biography. He calls the Psalms (in the Preface), "an anatomy of all the parts of the soul; for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or, rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life the griefs, the sorrows, the fears, the doubts, the hopes, the cares, the perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated." He adds that his own trials and conflicts helped him much to a clearer understanding of these divine compositions.

He combined in a very rare degree all the essential qualifications of an exegete—grammatical knowledge, spiritual insight, acute perception, sound judgment, and practical tact. He thoroughly sympathized with the spirit of the Bible; he put himself into the situation of the writers, and reproduced and adapted their thoughts for the benefit of his age.

Tholuck mentions as the most prominent qualities of Calvin's commentaries these four: doctrinal impartiality, exegetical tact, various learning, and deep Christian piety. Winer praises his "truly wonderful sagacity in perceiving, and perspicuity in expounding, the meaning of the apostle."

1. Let us look first at his philological outfit.

Melancthon well says: "The Scripture cannot be understood theologically unless it be first understood grammatically." He had passed through the school of the Renaissance; he had a rare knowledge of Greek; he thought in Greek, and could not help inserting rare Greek words into his letters to learned friends. He was an invaluable help to Luther in his translation of the Bible, but his Commentaries are dogmatical rather than grammatical, and very meagre, as compared with Calvin's.

Luther surpassed all other Reformers in originality, freshness, spiritual insight, bold conjectures, and occasional flashes of genius. His Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, which he called "his wife," is a masterpiece of sympathetic exposition and forceful application of the leading idea of evangelical freedom to the question of his age. But he was no exegete in the proper sense of the term. He had no method and discipline. He condemned allegorizing as a mere "monkey-game" (*Affenspiel*), and yet he often resorted to it in Job, the Psalms, and the Canticles. He was eminently spiritual, and yet, as against Zwingli, slavishly literal in his interpretation. He seldom sticks to the text, but uses it only as a starting-point for popular sermons, or polemical excursions against papists and sectarians. He cared nothing for the consensus of the

fathers. He applied private judgment to the interpretation with the utmost freedom, and judged the canonicity and authority of the several books of the Bible by a dogmatic and subjective rule—his favorite doctrine of solifidian justification; and as he could not find it in James, he irreverently called that epistle “an epistle of straw.” He anticipated modern criticism, but his criticism proceeded from faith in Christ and God’s Word, and not from skepticism. His best book is a translation, and next to it, his little catechism for children.

Zwingli studied the Greek at Glarus and Einsiedeln, that he might be able “to draw the teaching of Christ from the fountain.” He learned Hebrew after he was called to Zürich. He also studied the fathers, and, like Erasmus, took more to Jerome than to Augustine. His expositions of Scripture are clear, easy and natural, but somewhat artificial. The other Swiss Reformers and exegetes—Ecolampadius, Grynæus, Bullinger, Pellican and Bibliander—had a good philological preparation. Pellican, a self-taught scholar (d. 1556), who was called to Zürich by Zwingli in 1525, wrote a little Hebrew grammar even before Reuchlin, and published at Zürich comments on the whole Bible. Bibliander (d. 1564) was likewise professor of Hebrew in Zürich, and had some acquaintance with other Semitic languages; he was, however, an Erasmian rather than a Calvinist, and opposed the doctrine of the absolute decree.

For the Hebrew Bible these scholars used the editions of Daniel Bomberg (Venice, 1518–1545); the Complutensian Polyglot, which gives, besides the Hebrew text, also the Septuagint and Vulgate and a Hebrew vocabulary (Alcala, printed 1514–1517, published 1520 *sqq.*); also the editions of Sabastian Münster (Basel, 1536), and of Robert Stephens (Étienne, Paris, 1539–1546). For the Greek Testament they had the editions of Erasmus (Basel, five ed., 1516–1535), the Complutensian Polyglot (1520), Colinaeus (Paris, 1534), Stephens (Paris and Geneva, 1546–1551). A year after Calvin’s death, Beza began to publish his popular editions of the Greek Testament, with a Latin version (Geneva, 1565–1604).

Textual criticism was not yet born, and could not begin its operations before a collection of the textual material from manuscripts, ancient versions, and patristic quotations. In this respect, therefore, all the Commentaries of the Reformation period are barren and useless. Literary criticism was stimulated by the Protestant spirit of inquiry with regard to the Jewish Apocrypha and some Antilegomena of the New Testament, but was soon repressed by dogmatism.

Calvin, besides being a master of Latin and French, had a very good knowledge of the languages of the Bible. He had learned the Greek from Volmar at Bourges, the Hebrew from Grynæus

during his sojourn at Basel, and he industriously continued the study of both. He was at home in classical antiquity; his first book was a Commentary on Seneca *De Clementia*, and he refers occasionally to Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, Polybius, Cicero, Seneca, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Terence, Livy, Pliny, Quintilian, Diogenes Laërtius, Aulus Gellius, etc. He inferred from Paul's quotation of Epimenides, Tit. i. 12, "That those are superstitious who never venture to quote anything from profane authors. Since all truth is from God, if anything has been said aptly and truly even by impious men it ought not to be rejected, because it proceeded from God. And since all things are of God, why is it not lawful to turn to his glory whatever may be aptly applied to this use?" On 1 Cor. viii. 1, he observes: "Science is no more to be blamed when it puffs up than a sword when it falls into the hands of a madman." But he never makes a display of learning, and uses it only as a means to get at the sense of the Scripture. He wrote for educated laymen as well as scholars, and abstains from minute investigations and criticisms, but he encouraged Beza to publish his Commentary on the New Testament, in which philological scholarship is more conspicuous.

Calvin was also familiar with the patristic commentators, and had much more respect for them than Luther. He fully appreciated the philological knowledge and tact of Jerome, the spiritual depth of Augustine, and the homiletic wealth of Chrysostom; but he used them with independent judgment and critical discrimination.

2. Calvin kept constantly in view the primary and fundamental aim of the interpreter, namely, to bring to light the true meaning of the Biblical authors according to the laws of thought and speech. He transferred himself into their mental state and environment so as to become identified with them, and let them explain what they actually did say, and not what they might or should have said, according to our notions or wishes. In this genuine exegetical method he has admirably succeeded, except in a few cases where his judgment was biased by his favorite dogma of a double predestination, or his antagonism to Rome; though even there he is more moderate and fair than his contemporaries, who indulge in diffuse and irrelevant declamations against popery and monkery. Thus he correctly refers the "Rock" in Matt. xvi. 18, to the person of Peter, as the representative of all believers. He stuck to the text. He detested irrelevant twaddle and diffuseness. He was free from pedantry. He never evades difficulties, but frankly meets and tries to solve them. He carefully studies the connection. His judgment is always clear, strong and sound. Commentaries are usually dry, broken, and indifferently written. His exposition is an easy, con-

tinuous flow of reproduction and adaptation in elegant Erasmian Latinity. He could truly assert on his death-bed that he never knowingly twisted or misinterpreted a single passage of the Scriptures; that he always aimed at simplicity, and restrained the temptation to display acuteness and ingenuity.

He made no complete translation of the Bible, but gave a Latin and a French version of those parts on which he commented in either or both languages, and he revised the French version of his cousin, Pierre Robert Olivetan, which appeared first in 1535, for the editions of 1545 and 1551.

3. Calvin is the founder of modern grammatico-historical exegesis. He affirmed and carried out the sound and hermeneutical principle that the Biblical authors, like all sensible writers, wished to convey to their readers one definite thought in words which they could understand. A passage may have a literal or a figurative sense, but cannot have two senses at once. The Word of God is inexhaustible and applicable to all times; but there is a difference between explanation and application, and application must be consistent with explanation.

Calvin departed from the allegorical method of the Middle Ages, which discovered no less than four senses in the Bible, turned it into a nose of wax and substituted pious imposition for honest exposition. He speaks of "puerile" and "far-fetched" allegories, and says that he abstains from them because there is nothing "solid and firm" in them. It is an almost sacrilegious audacity to twist the Scriptures this way and that way, to suit our fancy. In commenting on the allegory of Sarah and Hagar (Gal. iv. 22-26), he censures Origen for his arbitrary allegorizing, as if the plain historical sense of the Bible were too mean and too poor. "I acknowledge," he says, "that Scripture is a most rich and inexhaustible fountain of all wisdom, but I deny that its fertility consists in the various meanings which any man at his pleasure may put into it. Let us know then that the true meaning of Scripture is the natural and obvious meaning, and let us embrace and abide by it resolutely. Let us not only neglect as doubtful, but boldly set aside as deadly corruptions, those pretended expositions which lead us away from the natural meaning." He quotes Chrysostom approvingly, who says that the word "allegory" in this passage is used in an "improper" sense. He was averse to all forced attempts to harmonize difficulties. He constructed his harmony of the gospels from the three Synoptists alone, and explained John separately.

4. Calvin emancipated exegesis from the bondage of dogmatics. He was remarkably free from traditional orthodox prepossessions and prejudices, being convinced that the truths of Christianity do

not depend upon the number of *dicta probantia*. He could see no proof of the doctrine of the Trinity in the plural *Elohim*, nor in the three angel visitors of Abraham (Gen. xviii. 2), nor in the Trisagion (Ps. vi. 3), nor of the divinity of the Holy Spirit in Ps. xxxiii. 6.

5. He prepared the way for a proper historical understanding of prophecy. He fully believed in the Messianic prophecies, which are the very soul of the faith and hope of Israel; but he first perceived that they had a primary bearing and practical application to their own times, and an ulterior fulfillment in Christ, thus serving a present as well as a future use. He thus explained Psalms ii, viii, xvi, xxii, xl, xlv, lxviii, cx, as typical and indirectly Messianic. On the other hand, he made excessive use of typology, especially in his sermons, and saw not only in David but in every king of Jerusalem a "figure of Christ." In his explanation of the protevangelium (Gen. iii. 15) he correctly understands the "seed of the woman," collectively of the human race, in its perpetual conflict with Satan, which will culminate ultimately in the victory of Christ, the Head of the race. He widens the sense of the formula "that it might be fulfilled" (*ἵνα πληρωθῆ*), so as to express sometimes simply an analogy or correspondence between an Old Testament and a New Testament event. The prophecy (Hos. xi. 1) quoted by Matthew as referring to the return of the Christ child from Egypt, must, accordingly, "not be restricted to Christ," but is "skillfully adapted to the present occasion." In like manner, Paul, in Rom. x. 6, gives only an embellishment and adaptation of a word of Moses to the case in hand.

6. He had the profoundest reverence for the Scriptures, as containing the Word of the living God and as the only infallible and sufficient rule of faith and duty; but he was not swayed by a particular theory of inspiration. It is true, he never would have approved the unguarded judgments of Luther on James, Jude, Hebrews and the Apocalypse; but he had no hesitancy in admitting incidental errors which do not touch the vitals of faith. He remarks on Matt. xxvii. 9, "How the name of Jeremiah crept in, I confess I know not, *nor am I seriously troubled about it*. That the name of Jeremiah has been put for Zechariah by an error, the fact itself shows, because there is no such statement in Jeremiah." Concerning the discrepancies between the speech of Stephen, in Acts vii, and the account of Genesis, he suggests that Stephen or Luke drew upon ancient traditions rather than upon Moses, and made "a mistake in the name of Abraham."

He was far from the pedantry of the Purists in the seventeenth century, who asserted the classical purity of the New Testament Greek on the ground that the Holy Spirit could not be guilty of any solecism or barbarism, or the slightest violation of grammar;

not remembering that the apostles and evangelists carried the heavenly treasure of truth in earthen vessels, that the power and grace of God might become more manifest, and that Paul himself confesses his rudeness "in speech," though not "in knowledge." Calvin justly remarks, with special reference to Paul, that by a singular providence of God the highest mysteries were committed to us "*sub contemptibili verborum humilitate*," that our faith may not rest on the power of human eloquence, but solely on the efficacy of the divine Spirit; and yet he fully recognized the force and the fire, the majesty and weight of Paul's style, which he compares to flashes of lightning.

The scholastic Calvinists, like the scholastic Lutherans of the seventeenth century, departed from the liberal views of the Reformers, and adopted a mechanical theory which confounds inspiration with dictation, ignores the human element in the Bible, and reduces the sacred writers to mere penmen of the Holy Spirit. This theory is destructive of scientific exegesis. It found symbolical expression, but only for a brief period, in the Helvetic Consensus Formula of 1675, which, in defiance of historical facts, asserts even the inspiration of the Masoretic vowel points. But notwithstanding this restraint, the Calvinistic exegetes adhered more closely to the grammatical and historical sense of the Scriptures than their Lutheran and Roman Catholic contemporaries.

7. Calvin accepted the traditional canon of the New Testament, but exercised the freedom of the ante-Nicene Church concerning the origin of some of the books. He denied the Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews on account of the differences of style and mode of teaching (*ratio docendi*), but admitted its apostolic spirit and value. He doubted the genuineness of the Second Epistle of Peter, and was disposed to ascribe it to a pupil of the apostle, but he saw nothing in it unworthy of Peter. He prepared the way for a distinction between authorship and editorship as to the Pentateuch and the Psalter.

He departed from the traditional view that the Scripture rests on the authority of the Church. He based it on internal rather than external evidence, on the authority of God rather than the authority of men. He discusses the subject in his *Institutes* and states the case as follows: "There has very generally prevailed a most pernicious error that the Scriptures have only so much weight as is conceded to them by the suffrages of the Church, as though the eternal and inviolable truth of God depended on the arbitrary will of men. . . . For, as God alone is a sufficient witness of Himself in His own Word, so also the Word will never gain credit in the hearts of men till it be confirmed by the internal testimony of the

Spirit. It is necessary, therefore, that the same Spirit, who spake by the mouths of the prophets, should penetrate into our hearts to convince us that they faithfully delivered the oracles which were divinely intrusted to them. . . . Let it be considered then as an undeniable truth that they who have been inwardly taught by the Spirit feel an entire acquiescence in the Scripture, and that it is self-authenticated, carrying with it its own evidence, and ought not to be made the subject of demonstrations and arguments from reason; but it obtains the credit which it deserves with us by the testimony of the Spirit. For though it commands our reverence by its internal majesty, it never seriously affects us till it is confirmed by the Spirit in our hearts. Therefore, being illuminated by Him, we now believe the divine original of the Scripture, not from our own judgment or that of others, but we esteem the certainty that we have received it from God's own mouth, by the ministry of men, to be superior to that of any human judgment, and equal to that of an intuitive perception of God Himself in it. . . . Without this certainty, better and stronger than any human judgment, in vain will the authority of the Scripture be either defended by arguments or established by the authority of the Church, or confirmed by any other support, since, unless the foundation be laid, it remains in perpetual suspense."

This doctrine of the intrinsic merit and self-evidencing character of the Scripture, to all who are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, passed into the Gallican, Belgic, Second Helvetic, Westminster and other Reformed confessions. They present a fuller statement of the objective or formal principle of Protestantism, namely, the absolute supremacy of the Word of God as the infallible rule of faith and practice, than the Lutheran symbols which give prominence to the subjective or material principle of justification by faith.

At the same time the ecclesiastical tradition is of great value as a witness to the human authorship and canonicity of the several books, and is more fully recognized by modern Biblical scholarship, in its conflict with destructive criticism, than it was in the days of controversy with Romanism. The internal testimony of the Holy Spirit and the external testimony of the Church join in establishing the divine authority of the Scriptures.

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