

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:



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



<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for the *Journal of Theological Studies* (old series) can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jts-os_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[1st page of article]

which, however hypothetical the details, seem best resolved—especially the instance of Num. xiv. 40-5 compared with Num. xxi. 1-3—by postulating two different sojourns at that place by two distinct Israelite groups at the time of the entry into Canaan.¹

J. R. PORTER

THE HIGHER EXEGESIS

HISTORICAL exegesis, like patriotism, is 'not enough'. The religious interest in the Bible demands something more, something that implies or asserts a Biblical theology, and therefore points to a theological exegesis. Moreover the use of Scripture in the service of religion will always involve a process of adaptation to the needs of successive generations, whether the result be enshrined in Halakah and Haggadah, or in Christian dogma and devotional comment. The pure scholar is often apt to be contemptuous of such work, but it is both inevitable and useful. We might call it 'the higher exegesis' (with Eichhorn's phrase 'the higher criticism' in mind) to denote the study of the content in its *present* context, the 'Nachgeschichte' of the written word.²

The history of hermeneutics (a rather neglected branch of Biblical study at the present time) will supply an unending number of examples of what we now see to be re-interpretations. They begin in the Old Testament itself, where for example Hosea's interpretation of the story of Jacob (xii) or of the history of Jehu's revolt (i. 4) is very different from the view taken in the original narratives. The New Testament abounds in illustrations, notably in the revision of the Jewish conception of the Messiah. The history of Christian doctrine shows constant appeal to Scripture on the often naïve and unwarranted assumption that the text confirms the exegete's own dogmatic position. Who to-day would quote Ps. lxix. 4, 'I restored that which I took not away', as a proof-text for the doctrine of the ransom paid by Christ to the devil (Aug. *de Trin.* xiii. 14)? On

¹ The accepted identification of Kadesh-barnea with Ain Qedeis has been assumed throughout this note; it still seems the most likely view, especially if, with Woolley and Lawrence, *Palestine Exploration Fund: Annual, 1914-15*, pp. 52-71, we include also the region surrounding the actual oasis, cf. *Revue Biblique*, xxxi, 1922, pp. 55-81. But the main thesis would not be affected even if the critics of this opinion (Musil, Phythian-Adams) were proved right. Indeed, Phythian-Adams, while identifying Petra with Kadesh, has been led to make speculations not entirely dissimilar from those of the present writer (*Call of Israel*, pp. 199-200).

² Cf. H. W. Hertzberg, 'Die Nachgeschichte alttestamentlicher Texte innerhalb des Alten Testaments', in *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 66.

the other hand, who with any sense of poetry and devotion would deny the spiritual truth of St. Bernard's allegorical exegesis of Cant. i. 2, in which he makes the penitent kiss of the Lord's feet and the loyal kiss of the Lord's hands the necessary stages to the fellowship of the kiss of the Bridegroom's mouth?

No one can write even a commentary without some doctrinal conceptions, and some sense of poetry is a necessary equipment for the exposition of the Book which contains so much of it. But the perils of both dogmatic presupposition and allegorical fancy are obvious, especially when they assume the garb of historical exegesis. That is particularly true at the present time, which has shown a marked tendency to revert to 'the higher exegesis', whether dogmatic or allegorical. Attention was called to the dogmatic tendency by Dr. J. K. Mozley in his article ('The Bible To-day') in the previous issue of this JOURNAL (xliv, no. 173-4), and to the allegorical by Dr. Lowe in his review of Fr. Hebert's *The Throne of David* (J.T.S. xliii, no. 171-2), where the reviewer remarks, 'The author's keen championship of mystical interpretation . . . arouses uneasiness'. Significant confirmation of this remark might be seen in the Russian Ikon which forms the frontispiece of Fr. Hebert's book and in the passage quoted from St. Ephraem in connexion with it. However suggestive and interesting in themselves, they do not belong to historical exegesis.

The true development of historical exegesis into legitimate religious and theological application is not by the imposition of dogma, true or false, and not by the embroidery of allegory, however suggestive and devotionally helpful. It is by penetrating deep enough into the historical meaning to find its permanent truth, and thus to bring out that spiritual continuity which constitutes the real unity of the Bible. To-day, for example, the appeal to the argument from prophecy is useless in its older forms; they are as much out of date as pre-Darwinian biology. But the fuller recognition of historical development points to a new presentation of the argument, just as biological evolution may be interpreted as a stronger proof of teleology.¹

The fact that Jeremiah (xi. 19) compared himself to 'a lamb that is led to the slaughter' (echoed in Isa. liii. 7) has no evidential value in regard to the conception of Rev. v. 6 or xiii. 8, so far as verbal relation goes. But historical exegesis of the 'cross' of Jeremiah can find in him a true forerunner of Jesus, whom some regarded as that prophet *redivivus* (Matt. xvi. 14). The spiritual continuity is found in the whole historical situation of both 'prophets', notwithstanding marked differences of personal reaction to it.

¹ Cf. the relevant remarks on the value of a (revised) typology in Dr. S. A. Cook's *George Adam Smith* (Milford, 2s. 6d.), p. 22 f.

On practical grounds, of course, there is full justification for the purely historical exposition, especially in view of the enormous increase in the studies ancillary to Scripture, and in the data they yield. But ordinary men, who are not specialist scholars, will still need commentaries and expositions that are both historical in basis and religiously practical in present-day application. From this standpoint we are justified in scrutinizing any book that claims to be historical in method, and yet laudably aims at the higher exegesis, such as the latest volume by Dr. Phythian-Adams.¹

The theme of this attractively written and enthusiastically argued book is one of central importance to both Biblical exegesis and Christian theology. It is that of the mediation of God's spiritual presence through the institutions of Israel and along the line of Biblical history down to the Church of Pentecost. The method is throughout that of historical exegesis, and there is no resort to allegory. With the general run of the argument that God is really present in the midst of the community which He has created and still guides no one is likely to quarrel who is alive to the significance and essential nature of the Church of Christ. Such a reader may derive from the book increased conviction and new stimulus to take his own share of the responsibilities which this conviction involves. It is rather to the way in which this selective thesis affects the exegesis of particular passages that our critical judgement should be directed. Three examples only can be given here.

The book opens with a reference to the (genuine) Solomonic prayer contained in 1 Kings viii. 12-13 (on basis of LXX). Instead of the obvious application of the 'thick darkness' to the windowless chamber of the Holy of Holies (an application admitted on p. 55), we are carried back to Horeb, in order to emphasize the continued presence of Yahweh with His people by means of the Ark. One difficulty in the way of this view is that our earliest literary document, the Song of Deborah, appears to imply that Yahweh came to the help of His people from the sacred mountain in the south. This is evaded by referring Judges v. 3-5 to events at Horeb, not to the stormy overthrow of Sisera. It is even suggested that the words 'Is not Yahweh gone out before thee?' (in the inferior prose narrative of iv. 14) may mean that Deborah brought down the Ark with her. The further difficulty that Elijah travelled to Horeb to renew his contact with Yahweh is met by the statement that 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' (*sic*) implies a rebuke of the prophet for coming to Horeb at all. But there is no ground for the italics in the Hebrew, which is as straightforward a question as the same words in Judges

¹ *The People and the Presence: a Study of the At-one-ment* (O.U.P., 12s. 6d.).

xviii. 3. What, moreover, are we to make of the fact that the angel of Yahweh strengthens Elijah for his journey to Horeb, which surely must imply divine approval of it—to say nothing of the fact that God *did* meet him in Horeb? Do not these forced interpretations suggest the undue influence of the writer's thesis?

A similar criticism must be made of some of the interpretations of passages in the New Testament, notably of the cardinal one of John i. 14. This is paraphrased as 'The Word was made Flesh so that we abide in Him (vi. 51, 53, 55-7; xv. 4) and "tabernacled" in us (and we beheld His glory descending at Pentecost . . .)'. The author fully recognizes that this novel transference of the Presence from the Incarnate Son to the community will not find easy acceptance, and he struggles manfully to show that this 'Naomorphism' (which is the term he coins to express his view) might have been and was in the mind of the author of the Fourth Gospel (whom he regards as not one of the Twelve, but as a 'boy' whose youthfulness enabled him to be present on all sorts of occasions when the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus had to be recorded). It is not clear how he can claim Cyril of Alexandria and Leo in partial support of his view of John i. 14, since he admits that they both refer the verse to the Incarnation. He emphasizes the Pauline reference to the collective temple of the Holy Spirit in 1 Cor. iii. 16, without mention of the individualized temples of vi. 19 (p. 199), though he does make a rather grudging reference to the latter passage elsewhere (p. 243).

A third and final example may be taken from the appendix which deals drastically with the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. He is regarded as the villain of the piece, whose line of thought 'has contributed largely to our neglect of the mystery of the Presence'. He is accused, among other things, of 'a singular slip', in extending the sprinkling of blood (Exod. xxiv. 8) to the tabernacle and all its furniture. The accuser seems himself to have overlooked the well-known fact that Josephus (*Antiq.* iii, § 206) makes the same 'singular slip', a fact which suggests that both writers are true to another tradition.

It will be seen therefore that this book, in spite of some fine qualities, is not always a safe guide in exegesis. In fact, the author seems to recognize before the end is reached that he has pressed his metaphor of 'Naomorphism' too far, for in the Epilogue he reverts to the richer figure of 'incorporation'. The Pauline metaphor of the Body, which derives from the Old Testament conception of 'corporate personality', affords a much more 'living' conception of the Church than any purely material emblem can give,¹ and could show a much

¹ The awkward mixture of metaphors to which the insistence on 'Naomorphism' leads.

more continuous history. Life has many ragged edges, and the Bible is a living book, with the dynamic qualities of the living God, yet with the ragged edges of a faithful record of life. The abundance of its metaphors is one evidence of this, and over-emphasis on any one of them is as dangerous to the exegete as it has notoriously been to the theologian.

H. WHEELER ROBINSON

προσανοικοδομηθήσεται Ecclus. iii. 14

THE purpose of this note is solely lexicographical. At Ecclus. iii. 14 the Greek text runs thus :

*ἐλεημοσύνη γὰρ πατὴρ οὐκ ἐπιληθήσεται,
καὶ ἀντὶ ἁμαρτιῶν προσανοικοδομηθήσεται σοι.*

The editors quote no variant to *προσανοικοδομηθήσεται* except *προσανοικοδομήσεται* in **N**, but the word arouses suspicion. No other example of it can be found, and the prefix *προσ-* does not seem to have any point in the context. Further, there is nothing corresponding to *προσ-* in the Hebrew and the Peshitta. In these the second line of the verse may be translated, 'and instead of sins it (i.e. righteousness) will be established'.¹ This evidence increases our suspicion of *προσ-* but does not enable us to see how the prefix originated. On this problem the Latin may throw some light. It renders the second line of ver. 14 :

Nam pro peccato matris restituetur tibi bonum,
et in iustitia aedificabitur tibi.

Here *προσ-* is not translated but 'pro peccato matris' represents *ἀντὶ ἁμαρτιῶν μητρός*. Whence is *μητρός* derived? The presence of *matris* in the Latin and of *προσ-* in the Greek may be explained if they go back to *προς*, misread as *μρος* in the Greek behind the Latin version and as *προσ-* in the archetype of our Greek authorities. The easiest explanation of *προς* would be that it has slipped into the line from *πατρός* in the line above. Thus we may infer that *ἀνοικοδομηθήσεται* and not *προσανοικοδομηθήσεται* is the original reading and that the Latin version, confused as it is, supplies valuable evidence for recovering the original form of the word.

morphism' leads is seen when Dr. Pythian-Adams writes of the Eucharist : 'Here through the outward and visible realities of Bread and Wine they will receive that Food of Eternal Life which binds them together as living stones into the Naos of the Living God' (p. 282).

¹ Mr. W. D. McHardy has verified this for me.