A commentary, critical, experimental, and practical, on the Old and New Testaments

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A

COMMENTARY,

CRITICAL, EXPERIMENTAL, AND PRACTICAL.

ON THE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS,

BY THE

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VOL. III.

JOB—ISAIAH.

BY THE REV. A. R. FAUSSET, A.M.

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MY AIM in the following Commentary is not so much to give my comments on Holy Writ as to make the Word of God its own interpreter. Scripture is self-contained, and, in so far as it is understood aright, is independent of external aids. The best commentary on the Bible is that which will clear out of the way of the English reader all such impediments to our perception of the sense as arise out of our human ignorance. To remove such impediments, and to let Scripture speak for itself, is the aim of the present undertaking.

One hindrance arises from the fact that the Word of God was originally given in languages which are distinct, in many of their idioms and modes of thought, from our mother-tongue. It is true that no book suffers so little from faithful translation as the Bible, owing to its being adapted to the universal family of man, in all times and places. Nevertheless, even the Bible, and especially the Old Testament, presents many idiomatic phrases, figurative modes of speech, and allusions to Hebrew usages which need explanation to the English reader. Modern research has put within our reach many means for the elucidation of such difficulties, and it is right that not merely the learned, but also the general readers and lovers of the Bible, should enjoy the benefit.

The books of ancient and modern writers have accordingly been freely used in this Commentary, each in that department in which the writer is most eminent. Some names will be seen quoted in these volumes with whose rationalistic principles I have not the least sympathy. They are simply quoted for that wherein they have rendered help to the understanding of Scripture, though in other respects they have “darkened counsel by words.” Some of them have suggested valuable criticisms on the Hebrew words: others have thrown light upon questions of history and antiquities; and for this alone I quote them. Rationalists and deniers of inspiration have been constrained, by the overruling Providence of God, to subserve the cause of truth, which they have vainly attempted to overthrow. Honey is produced in the carcase of the slain lion, and “out of the eater comes forth meat.”

My experience in the careful comparison of the English version with the original has been that, for the most part, our authorized version is the best rendering. There are, however, many passages in which it is desirable that the intelligent English reader shall know what is the various translation proposed by some able critics. Let him, on the one hand, remember that not the English version, but the original autograph, is strictly the infallible Word of God in its minutest words. On the other hand, let him rest assured that, in the main, the English version is a most faithful rendering, made by some of the ablest and
most devout scholars who have ever lived, and is practically, and with the exception of some possible and other probable corrections, the infallible Word of God to us.

Once for all, let me state my unhesitating conviction of the plenary and verbal inspiration of “all Scripture,” and of Holy Scripture alone. Not that the sacred writers were mere machines: they retained their individuality and conscious agency (1 Cor. xiv. 32); but their words were so controlled by the superintending agency of the Spirit that all their words were sanctioned by God for the purposes of His revelation. “It came not by the will of man; but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. i. 21). The apostles spake, and their speeches were afterwards embodied in writing, “not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (1 Cor. ii. 13). If the Apocrypha be quoted in this Commentary, it is quoted, not as Holy Scripture, but as a valuable human history, to elucidate the Word of God.

In the Old Testament I have scarcely ever recommended any reading as preferable to that of the Hebrew MSS. used by our English version, except that occasionally where the Chetib, or old Hebrew text, reads differently from the Keri, or Hebrew margin, I have sometimes preferred the former as the more genuine. In the New Testament there is greater ground, in several passages, for an alteration of the text so as to accord with older Greek MSS., versions, and authorities, which were not so much attended to, or known, when the English version was made, as they are in our days. The more firmly we believe in verbal inspiration, the more interest we have in the restoration, even in minor details (which are all that are in question in the case), of the exact words of the original autographs.

In consonance with the principle that Scripture is its own best commentator, I have made frequent reference to parallel passages—not seeming or superficial parallels, which often mislead—but such as appear to me real parallels. Let me urge the reader always to take the trouble of searching them out, and judging for himself the reality and suggestiveness of the parallelism.

A. R. FAUSSET.

St. Cuthbert’s, York, July, 1866.
HEBREW poetry is unique in its kind: in essence, the most sublime; in form, marked by a simplicity and ease which flow from its sublimity. 'The Spirit of the Lord spake by the Hebrew poet, and His word was upon his tongue' (2 Sam. xxiii. 2). Even the music was put under the charge of spiritually gifted men; and one of the chief musicians, Heman, is called "the king's seer in the words of God" (1 Chr. xxv. 1, 5). King David is stated to have invented instruments of music (Amos vi. 5). There is not in Hebrew poetry the artistic rhythm of form which appears in the classical poetry of Greece and Rome; but it amply makes up for this by its fresh and graceful naturalness.

Early specimens of Hebrew poetry occur—e.g., Lamech's sceptical parody of Enoch's prophecy, or, as others think, lamentation for a homicide committed in those lawless times in self-defence (Gen. iv. 23; cf. Jude 14; Exod. xxxii. 18; Num. xxi. 14, 15, 17, 18, 27; xxiii. 7, 8, 18; xxiv. 3, 15). The poetical element appears much more in the Old than in the New Testament. The poetical books are exclusively those of the Old Testament; and in the Old Testament itself the portions that are the most fundamental (e.g., the Pentateuch of Moses, the lawgiver, in its main body) are those which have in them least of the poetical element in form. Elijah, the father of the prophets, is quite free of poetical art. The succeeding prophets were not strictly poets, except in so far as the ecstatic state in inspiration lifted them to poetic modes of thought and expression. The prophet was more of an inspired teacher than a poet. It is when the sacred writer acts as the representative of the personal experiences of the children of God and of the Church that poetry finds its proper sphere.

The use of poetry in Scripture was particularly to supply the want not provided for by the law, viz., of devotional forms to express in private, and in public joint worship, the feelings of pious Israelites. The schools of the prophets fostered and diffused a religious spirit among the people; and we find them using lyric instruments to accompany their prophecies (1 Sam. x. 5). David, however, it was who specially matured the lyric effusions of devotion into a perfection which they had not before attained.

Another purpose which Psalmody, through David's inspired productions, served, was to draw forth from under the typical forms of legal services their hidden essence and spirit, adapting them to the various spiritual exigencies of individual and congregational life. Nature, too, is in them shown to speak the glory and goodness of the invisible yet ever-present God. A handbook of devotion was furnished to the Israelite whereby he could enter into the true spirit of the services of the sanctuary, and so feel the need of that coming Messiah, of whom especially the Book of Psalms testifies throughout. We also, in our Christian dispensation, need its help in our devotions. Obliged as we are, notwithstanding our higher privileges in most respects, to walk by faith rather than by sight in a greater degree than they, we find the Psalms, with their realizing expression of the felt nearness of God, the best repertory whence to draw divinely-sanctioned language, wherewith to express our prayers and thanksgivings to God, and our breathings after holy communion with our fellow-saints.

As to the objection raised against the spirit of revenge which breathes in some psalms, the answer is, a wide distinction is to be drawn between personal vindictiveness and the desire for God's honour being vindicated. Personal revenge, not only in the other parts of Scripture, but also in the Psalms, in theory and in practice, is alike reprobated (Exod. xxxii. 4, 5; Lev. xix. 18; Job xxxi. 29, 30; Ps. vii. 4, 5, 8, 11, 12; Prov. xxv. 21, 22), which corresponds to David's practice in the case of his unrelenting enemy (1 Sam. xxiv. 5, 6; xxvi. 8-10). On the other hand, the people of God have always desired that whatever mars the cause of God—as, for instance, the prosperity of the enemies of God and His Church—should be brought to an end (Ps. x. 12; xxx. 27;
xl. 16; Ixxxix. 6-10). It is well for us, too, in our dispensation of love, to be reminded by these psalms of the danger of lax views as to God's hatred of sin; and of the need there is we should altogether enter into the mind of God on such points, at the same time that we seek to convert all men to God (cf. 1 Sam. xvi. 1; Ps. cxxxix. 21; Isa. lxvi. 24; Rev. xiv. 10).

Some psalms are composed of twenty-two parallel sentences, or strophes of verses, beginning with words of which the initial letters correspond with the Hebrew letters (twenty-two), in their order, (cf. Ps. xxxvii. and cxix.) So Lamentations. This arrangement was designed as a help to the memory, and is only found in such compositions as handle not a distinct and progressive subject, but a series of pious reflections, in the case of which the precise order was of less moment. The Psalmist, in adopting it, does not slavishly follow it; but, as in the 25th Psalm, deviates from it, so as to make the form, when needful, bend to the sense. Of these poems there are twelve in all in the Hebrew Bible, (Ps. xxv., xxxiv., xxxvii., cx., cxx., cxix., cxlv.; Prov. xxxi. 10-31; Lam. i., ii., iii., iv.)

The great excellence of the Hebrew principle of versification—viz., parallelism, or 'thought-rhythm' (Exod. iv.)—is, that whilst the poetry of every other language whose versification depends on the regular recurrence of certain sounds suffers considerably by translation, Hebrew poetry, whose rhythm depends on the parallel correspondence of similar thoughts, loses almost nothing in being translated—the Holy Spirit having thus presciently provided for its ultimate translation into every language without loss to the sense. Thus, our English version Job and Psalms, though but translations, are eminently poetical. On parallelism, see Introduction to Job. Thus, also, a clue is given to the meaning in many passages, the sense of the word in one clause being more fully set forth by the corresponding word in the succeeding parallel clause. In the Masoretic punctuation of the Hebrew the metrical arrangement is marked by the distinctive accents. It accords with the Divine inspiration of Scripture poetry that the thought is more prominent than the form, the kernel than the shell. The Hebrew poetic rhythm resembled our blank verse, without, however, metrical feet. There is a verbal rhythm above that of prose; but as the true Hebrew pronunciation is lost, the rhythm is but imperfectly recognized.

The peculiarity of the Hebrew poetical age is, that it was always historic and true, not mythical, as the early poetical ages of all other nations. Again, its poetry is distinguished from prose by the use of terms decidedly poetic. David's lament over Jonathan furnishes a beautiful specimen of another feature found in Hebrew poetry, the strophe—three strophes being marked by the recurrence three times of the dirge sung by the chorus; the first dirge sung by the whole body of singers, representing Israel; the second, by a chorus of damsels; the third, by a chorus of youths (2 Sam. i. 17-27).

The lyrical poetry, which is the predominant style in the Bible, and is especially terse and sententious, seems to have come from an earlier kind, resembling the modern Book of Proverbs (cf. Gen. iv. 23, 24). The Oriental mind tends to embody thought in pithy gnomes, maxims, and proverbs. 'The poetry of the Easterns is a string of pearls. Every word has life. Every proposition is condensed wisdom. Every thought is striking and epigrammatical' (Kittel, 'Biblical Cyclopaedia'). We are led to the same inference from the term Muschel, 'a proverb' or 'similitude,' being used to designate poetry in general. 'Hebrew poetry, in its origin, was a painting to the eye, a parable or teaching by likenesses discovered by the popular mind, expressed by the popular tongue, and adopted and polished by the national poet.' Solomon, under inspiration, may have embodied in his Proverbs such of the pre-existing popular wise sayings as were sanctioned by the Spirit of God.

The Hebrew title for the Psalms, Tehilim, means hymns, i.e. joyous praises (sometimes accompanied with dancing, Exod. xv.; Judg. v.), not exactly answering to the LXX. title, Psalms—i.e., lyrical odes, or songs accompanied by an instrument. The title Tehilim, 'hymns,' was probably adopted on account of the use made of the Psalms in divine service, though only a part can be strictly called songs of praise, others being dirges, and very many prayers (whence, in Ps. lxxii. 20, David styles all his previous compositions 'the prayers of David'). Sixty-five bear the title, lyrical odes (Mizmorim), whilst
only one is styled *Tehilah* or *lyam*. From the title being *Psalm* in the LXX. and New Testament, and also the Peshito, it is probable that *Psalmus* (*Mizmorim*), or *lyrical* odes, was the old title before *Teilim*.

Epic poetry, as having its proper sphere in a *mythical heroic* age, has no place among the Hebrews of the Old Testament Scripture age. For in their earliest ages, viz., the *patriarchal, not fable*, as in Greece, Rome, Egypt, and all heathen nations, but *truth* and *historic reality* reigned; so much so that the poetic element, which is the offspring of the imagination, is less found in those earlier than in the later ages. The Pentateuch is almost throughout historic prose. In the subsequent uninspired age, in Tobit, we have some approach to the Epos.

Drama, also, in the full modern sense, is not found in Hebrew literature. This was due, not to any want of intellectual culture, as is fully shown by the high excellence of their lyric and didactic poetry, but to their earnest character, and to the solemnity of the subjects of their literature. The dramatic element appears in Job more than in any other book in the Bible; there are the *dramatis persona*, a plot, and a ‘denouement’ prepared for by Elihu, the fourth friend’s speech, and brought about by the interposition of Jehovah himself. Still, it is not a strict drama, but rather an inspired debate on a difficult problem of the Divine government exemplified in Job’s case, with historic narrative, prologue, and epilogue. The Song of Solomon, too, has much of the dramatic cast. See *Introductio* to Job and Song of Solomon. The *Style* of many psalms is very dramatic, transitions often occurring from one to another person, without introduction, and especially from speaking indirectly of God to addresses to God; thus, in Psalm xxxii. 1, 2, David makes a general introduction, ‘Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven,’ &c.; then, at vv. 3-7, he passes to addressing God directly; then, in v. 8, without preface, God is introduced, directly speaking, in answer to the previous prayer; then, v. 10, 11, again he resumes indirect speaking of God, and addresses himself in conclusion to the righteous. These quick changes of person do not startle us, but give us a stronger sense of his habitual converse with God than any assertions could do. Cf. also, in Psalm cxxxiii. 8-10, the prayer, ‘Arise, O Lord, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy. For thy servant David’s sake turn not away the face of thine anointed,’ with God’s direct answer, which follows in almost the words of the prayer, ‘The Lord hath sworn unto David, &c. This is my rest for ever (v. 14). I will clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.’ Thus, also, in Psalm ii., various personages are introduced dramatically acting and speaking—the confederate nations, Jehovah, the Messiah, and the Psalmist.

A frequent feature is the alternate succession of parts, adapting the several psalms to alternate recitation by two semi-choruses in the temple worship, followed by a full chorus between the parts or at the end. So Ps. cvii. 15, 21, 31. De Burgh, in his valuable commentary on the Psalms, remarks, ‘Our cathedral service exemplifies the form of chanting the Psalms, except that the semi-chorus is alternately a whole verse, instead of alternating, as of old, the half verse; while the full chorus is the “gloria” at the end of each Psalm.’

In conclusion, besides its unique point of excellence, its Divine inspiration, Hebrew poetry is characterized as being essentially national, yet eminently catholic, speaking to the heart and spiritual sensibilities of universal humanity. Simple and unconstrained, it is distinguished by a natural freshness, which is the result of its genuine truthfulness. The Hebrew poet sought not self, or his own fame, as all heathen poets, but was inspired by the Spirit of God to meet a pressing want, which his own and his nation’s spiritual aspirations after God made to be at once a necessity and a delight. Cf. 2 Sam. xxiii. 1, 2, “The sweet Psalmist of Israel said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me,” &c.

Ewald rightly remarks, as several odes of the highest poetic excellence are not included (e. g., the songs of Moses, Exod. xv. and xxxii.; of Deborah, Judg. v.; of Hannah, 1 Sam. ii. 1-10; of Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 9-20; of Habakkuk, Hab. iii.; and even David’s dirge over Saul and Jonathan, 2 Sam. i. 17, 18), ‘The selection of the Psalms collected in one book was made not so much with reference to the beauty of the pieces, as to their adaptation for public worship. Still, one overruling Spirit ordered the selection
and arrangement of the contents of the book, as one pervading tone and subject appear throughout,—Christ in His own inner life as the God-man, and in His past, present, and future relations to the Church and the world." Isaac Taylor well calls the Psalms 'The Liturgy of the spiritual life;' and Luther, 'A Bible in miniature.'

The principle of the order in which the Psalms, though not always discoverable, is in some cases clear, and shows the arrangement to be unmistakably the work of the Spirit, not merely that of the collector. Thus, Ps. xxii. plainly portrays the dying agonies of Messiah; Ps. xxxiii. His peaceful rest in Paradise after His death on the cross; and Ps. xxxiv., His glorious ascension into heaven.

THE BOOK OF JOB.

JOB A REAL PERSON.—It has been supposed by some that the Book of Job is an allegory, not a real narrative, on account of the artificial character of many of its statements. Thus, the sacred numbers, three and seven, often occur. He had seven thousand sheep, seven sons, both before and after his trials; his three friends sat down with him seven days and seven nights; both before and after his trials he had three daughters. So, also, the number and form of the speeches of the several speakers seem to be artificial. The name of Job, too, is derived from an Arabic word signifying repentance.

But Ezek. xiv. 14 (cf. v. 16-20) speaks of "Job" in conjunction with "Noah and Daniel," real persons. St. James (v. 11) also refers to Job as an example of "patience," which he would not have been likely to do had Job been only a fictitious person. Also, the names of persons and places are specified with a particularity not to be looked for in an allegory. As to the exact doubling of his possessions after his restoration, no doubt the round number is given for the exact number, as the latter approached near the former; this is often done in undoubtedly historical books. As to the studied number and form of the speeches, it seems likely that the arguments were substantially those which appear in the Book, but that the studied and poetic form were given by Job himself, guided by the Holy Spirit. He lived 140 years after his trials, and nothing would be more natural than that he should, at his leisure, mould into a perfect form the arguments used in the momentous debate, for the instruction of the Church in all ages. Probably, too, the debate itself occupied several sittings; and the number of speeches assigned to each was arranged by preconcerted agreement, and each was allowed the interval of a day or more to prepare carefully his speech and replies: this will account for the speakers bringing forward their arguments in regular series, no one speaking out of his turn. As to the name Job—repentance (supposing the derivation correct)—it was common in old times to give a name from circumstances which occurred at an advanced period of life, and this is no argument against the reality of the person.

WHERE JOB LIVED.—Uz, according to Gesenius, means a light sandy soil, and was in the North of Arabia Deserta, between Palestine and the Euphrates, called by Ptolemy ('Geography,' 19) Ausitas, or Aisitai. In Gen. x. 23; xxii. 21; xxxvi. 28; and I Chr. i. 17-42, it is the name of a man; in Jer. xxv. 20; Lam. iv. 21; and Job i. 1, it is a country. Uz, in Gen. xxii. 21, is said to be the son of Nahor, brother of Abraham, a different person from the one mentioned in Gen. x. 23, a grandson of Shem. The probability is, that the country took its name from the latter of the two; for this one was the son of Aram, from whom the Arameans take their name; and these dwelt in Mesopotamia, between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. Cf. as to the dwelling of the sons of Shem in Gen. x. 30, "a mount of the East," answering to "men of the East" (Job i. 3), Rawlinson, in his deciphering of the Assyrian inscriptions, states, that 'Uz is the prevailing name of the country at the mouth of the Euphrates.' It is probable that Eliphaz the Temanite and the Sabaeans dwelt in that quarter; and we know that the Chaldeans resided there, and not near Idumea, which some identify with Uz. The tornado from "the wilderness" (ch. i. 19) agrees with the view of it being Arabia Deserta. Job (ch. i. 3) is called "the greatest of the men of the East," but Idumea was not East, but South of Palestine; therefore, in Scripture language, the phrase cannot apply to that country; but probably refers to the North of Arabia Deserta, between Palestine, Idumea, and the