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INTRODUCTION

TO

THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES.

BY

PATON J. GLOAG, D.D.,
MINISTER OF GALASHIELS,

AUTHOR OF 'AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PAULINE EPISTLES,' 'A COMMENTARY ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES,' 'EXEGETICAL STUDIES,' 'MESSENIAN PROPHECY: BEING THE BAIRD LECTURES FOR 1879,' ETC.

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PREFACE.

This work is intended to form a companion volume to the *Introduction to the Pauline Epistles*, published about twelve years ago. It does not purport to treat of the Catholic Epistles critically or exegetically, to explain their meaning, or to give any commentary on their contents. It does not belong to the class of "Commentaries," but to that of "Introductions to the New Testament." It discusses topics appropriate to such Introductions, such as the authenticity of the Epistles, their authorship, the readers to whom they are addressed, the design or intention of the writings, the peculiarities which belong to them, and the time when and the place from which they were written. To each Epistle there are also attached dissertations or appendices referring to certain special difficulties, disputed questions, apostolic customs, or, as in the case of the Epistle of Jude, to apocryphal writings there referred to. Several of these dissertations, it is admitted, are not very relevant, if the work be considered as an Introduction in a restricted sense; but they are all on points of theological interest and importance, and have a certain connection with the subject treated of. Some of them, as for example the dissertations on the eschatology of St. Peter and on the Book of Enoch, may be thought to be drawn out to undue length; but the intention was to treat the subjects as fully as possible, so that each dissertation may be considered as complete in itself.

A list of the most important books read or consulted in writing this work has been appended, with references to the editions in my possession; so that the quotations made from them may be referred to and verified. In translations from
the German, references have been generally made to the original when possible, as well as to the English version. After the book was completed, several recent works of importance came under my notice; these have been carefully read and consulted, and such references as were thought desirable have been made in notes, as they could not without much inconvenience be incorporated into the body of the work. Four of these deserve special mention: Holzmann's Einleitung in das neue Testament, 1885; Spitta's Der zweite Brief des Petrus und der Brief des Judas, 1885; Mangold's edition of Bleek's Einleitung in das neue Testament, vierte Auflage, 1886; and Weiss' Lehrbuch der Einleitung in das neue Testament, 1886.

Introductions to the New Testament are rare in England. The only important books of the kind with which I am acquainted, are the works of the Rev. T. Hartwell Horne, Dr. Samuel Davidson, and Professor Salmon. Horne's Introduction to the Scriptures is a repository of information with regard to biblical criticism in general; but the part of it which consists of a proper introduction to the different books of the New Testament is meagre and defective. A new and more valuable edition of this work has been published by Tregelles. The work has, however, in a great measure become antiquated. Dr. Davidson has two Introductions: the one entitled Introduction to the New Testament, published in 1848; and the other entitled Introduction to the Study of the New Testament, published in 1868; and a second edition, considerably altered, published in 1882. These, it need not be said, are both works of the highest interest and importance, but they can with no propriety be considered to be recensions of the same work; they proceed from very different standpoints. In the first work Dr. Davidson belongs to the positive critical school; while in the second work he is in close relation to the Tübingen school. Nor do I consider that the second work supersedes the first; for although Dr. Davidson has modified several of his opinions, yet the reasons by which he supports his former opinions are of great force, and sometimes appear to me to be even more convincing than those for their alteration. Whilst differing from several
of his later views, I have always treated them with that respect which his vast erudition demands. Of course Dr. Davidson's present views are to be found in the last edition of his *Introduction to the Study of the New Testament*; whilst many of the opinions advanced in the former work are no longer held by him. Professor Salmon's work, entitled *Introduction to the New Testament*, published in 1885, is an expansion of his lectures as regius professor of divinity in the University of Dublin. It is a work of considerable learning, showing much knowledge of Hellenistic Greek; his opinions are expressed with decision and perspicuity; but it may be questioned whether he always estimates adequately the objections of his opponents. Professor Salmon belongs to the positive school of exegetes, and maintains throughout the traditionary opinions. There are also English translations of important German Introductions; of these two call for special attention on account of their excellence, fulness, and erudition, Bleek's *Introduction to the New Testament*, and Reuss' *History of the Sacred Scriptures of the New Testament*.

There are frequent references in this work to the so-called Tübingen school. This is a phrase to be taken in a somewhat wide sense, but is designed to embrace all those theologians who have been influenced more or less by the celebrated Dr. F. C. Baur of Tübingen. Some may consider these references antiquated and an anachronism; as, according to their opinion, the influence of the Tübingen school is now almost extinct in Germany. I wish it were so; but on the contrary, similar views are very prevalent, although they may not be so pronounced as those of Baur. So long as such eminent theologians as Hilgenfeld, Volkmar, Keim, Holtzmann, Hausrath, and Lipsius—who, though differing in some points from each other, may be considered as belonging to the same school of theological thought—survive and influence theology, it cannot be said that the Tübingen school is extinct, or has even lost much of its power. The eminence of these theologians demands that their opinions be listened to with respect.

I have had considerable difficulty in determining the age of the writings of the apostolic Fathers. This point has been
carefully examined, although I have not thought it necessary to state in the notes the process by which the conclusions were arrived at. I merely state in the text what seems to me the most probable date, differing sometimes from that adopted by the best recognised authorities. After much consideration I have come to the conclusion that the newly-discovered work, the Didaché, is, with the possible exception of the Epistle of Clemens Romanus, the oldest of the post-apostolic documents, and was written some time between A.D. 80 and A.D. 100. I have seldom referred to the Ignatian Epistles, as, notwithstanding all that has been written about them, I consider their authenticity still involved in uncertainty, and their value in biblical criticism to be unimportant. The quotations from the Fathers are in general taken from Kirchofer's Quellensammlung; and for the translation I am indebted to Clark's Ante-Nicene Fathers, except where I thought the translation defective.

In the quotations from Scripture no uniform plan has been followed; in general I have quoted from the Authorized Version, except where there is a decided improvement in the Revised Version, or where extreme exactness is required; occasionally the Greek has been translated independently of both versions.

The substance of some of the articles and dissertations has already appeared in various periodicals; and I may refer to an article on the Book of Enoch in the British and Foreign Review, and to articles on the early Syriac versions and on St. Peter's residence in Rome in the Monthly Interpreter. Free use has also been made in the dissertation on the eschatology of Peter of an exposition on "the spirits in prison" (1 Pet. iii. 18–20), which appeared in my Exegetical Studies, published in 1884. I have pleasure in acknowledging my obligations to the Rev. W. P. Paterson, B.D., for verifying my references and for various important and valuable suggestions.
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