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I.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY OF HEBREW
IN A THEOLOGICAL COURSE.¹

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The three English Synods of our church, under whose supervision the affairs of this seminary are conducted, have called me to a specific work; they have called me to a chair of "Hebrew and Old Testament Science." The very designation of the chair indicates that Hebrew is not to be neglected. Instruction in Hebrew, according to the designation of the chair, is not an unimportant part of the work of the incumbent. Were the chair designated simply "Old Testament Science," such a designation likewise would not exclude instruction in Hebrew. In the nature of the facts in the case a scientific study of the Old Testament without taking cognizance of the original Hebrew could only be partial, superficial, unreliable, or even worse. The prominent and possible redundant use of the word "Hebrew," in the title of the chair to which the church has called me, is an indication to me that in our Seminary Hebrew is to continue to hold its time-honored and rightful position as a part of the important equipment of men for the practical Christian ministry.

¹The address delivered by the author, May 13, 1909, in Santee Hall on the occasion of his inauguration into the office of Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Science in the Theological Seminary at Lancaster, Pa.

III.

THE NEW TESTAMENT PORTRAIT OF JESUS.

AN EXEGETICAL STUDY.

PHILIP VOLLMER.

More than ever before the personality of Jesus is engaging the attention of scholars. All other subjects, the criticism of the sources included, have been relegated to second place. "What think ye of Christ?" is once more the paramount question. Manifold are the character sketches of Jesus. This variety is due to the individuality of the painter as well as to the colors used, whether taken from the New Testament or modern consciousness.

In this sketch we intend to follow the strictly exegetical method, and our aim is to reproduce faithfully the Saviour's portrait as exhibited on the canvas of the New Testament. In so doing we take the sources at their face value, firmly believing that all the gospels were written by men who saw Jesus, who heard his voice, saw the light in his eyes and caught the expression of his face and are thus absolutely trustworthy in their delineation of Christ's character. For clearness sake we will arrange the material according to the time-honored psychological categories, body, intellect, sensibility and will, being of course conscious of the differences of opinion under which category the various qualities should best be placed.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS.

No true portraits of Jesus have come down to us, and no physical characteristics of him are definitely recorded in the New Testament. Inferences have been drawn from various passages: *e. g.*, from Isa. 53, that he lacked beauty (so Justin

Martyr, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian); from Psalm 44, that he was "fairer than the children of men" (so Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, Chrysostom); from John 8: 57, that he looked older than he was; from John 18: 6, that there was an overawing dignity in his appearance. Taking into account our Lord's nationality and age, the customs of the times and the fact that the incarnation was the taking on of perfect humanity, we will not be very far out of the way when we picture Jesus as of medium height, dark complexion, a full beard, bright eyes, of dignified appearance and well-dressed (John 19: 23, 24). For, if the face of man, as a rule, reflects his soul, the features of Jesus must have, in a high degree, expressed the majesty and greatness of his spirit. At the transfiguration the inner glory pierced for a while the body which clothed it.

Unreliable legends know that Jesus sent by the hand of Thaddeus his portrait to Abgarus, king of Odessa, who had sent the Greeks to him (John 12: 20), and that Christ on his way to Golgotha impressed his true picture into the handkerchief of Veronika. There is also a forgery made about the twelfth century, a letter of "Lentulus, president of the people of Jerusalem to the Roman Senate," in which the following description of Jesus is given: "A man of tall stature, beautiful, with a venerable countenance, which they who look on it can both love and fear. His hair is waving, somewhat wine-colored; his brow is smooth and most serene; his face is without any spot or wrinkle, and glows with a delicate flush; his nose and mouth are faultless; the beard is abundant and his eyes prominent and brilliant; in speech he is grave, reserved and modest." This fancy picture has no doubt influenced the artists up to the present time. The Roman emperor Alexander Severus (222) placed in his lararium the image of Jesus, but no one knows how it looked. Eusebius (325) saw at Cæsarea Philippi a bronze statue of Christ, with the inscription "To the Saviour, the Benefactor," which Julian the Apostate (361) destroyed. If this was not the statue of an emperor, as Gibbon supposes, then there existed one supposed actual portrait of Christ before the fourth century.

CHRIST'S INTELLECTUAL POWERS.

The mental capacity of Jesus was truly marvelous. He was a man of limited education, but his mind was penetrating and active. As to his education, Jesus received only the common schooling, not a higher education (John 7: 15). Once only it is reported that he attended one of those scribal colleges, which met within the temple precinct, when after he had become "a Son of the Law" by confirmation, he visited the passover (Luke 2: 42). Luke 4: 16, mentions that he could read, and John 8: 8, that he could write. Like other Jewish boys he attended the parochial school, when six years of age. Because he had not attended a rabbinical college, the rulers called him "a Samaritan" (John 8, 48), which was a nickname for one who had never sat at the feet of the rabbi. His acquaintance with Hebrew literature outside of the Old Testament cannot be determined. That he was familiar with Buddhism is a hypercritical modern fancy. He was a bilingual or plurilingual man. His mother tongue was Aramaic. Very likely, he understood Greek, for he seems to have spoken to the Greeks (John 12) without an interpreter. It is almost certain that he read the classical Hebrew. Jesus did not over-estimate mere mental training. It was perhaps when rejected by the learned men of his nation (John 10: 39, 40) that he offered up the prayer in Math. 11: 25.

The *penetration* and deep insight of Jesus was wonderful. He knew by a glance what was in man. He called Peter a rock, Nathanael, an Israelite without guile, Herod Agrippa, a fox, the pharisees, hypocrites and the Samaritan woman, by implication, an outcast. His knowledge of character is illustrated by the treatment accorded by him to each of the three would-be disciples (Luke 9: 57-62). Neither did his insight fail him when he called Judas for his disciple. Judas' moral descent was gradual. The *keenness* of Christ's mind is amply illustrated by his frequent encounters with the wise men of his nation in debate. He worsted them on their own proper field (cf. Mark 12: 28-34; Math. 22: 41-46). The people marvelled, saying: "How hath this man learning, though he

hath not studied?" Jesus' answer is his claim of divine revelation (John 5: 20).

A very conspicuous quality of our Lord's intellect was *breadth*. All other great men represent sectional, not universal humanity, as *e. g.*, Socrates was never anything else than a great Greek; Luther, a German; Calvin, a Frenchman; Washington, an American. Christ was no nativist (John 4); he selected his disciples from all classes and of various temperaments and sent them to all nations. He embraces publicans and other outcasts. Over against narrow ultra-conservatism, he was liberal in his views on religious, moral and ceremonial questions, such as the traditions of the elders and unscriptural views of the sabbath. This brought him into constant conflict with his countrymen and eventually to the cross. Hand in hand with this broadmindedness goes what we might call his *self-limitation*, or narrowness, in the good sense of the word. His personal work, and also that of his disciples during his lifetime was to be restricted to the Jews only. He limited also the scope of his work, and refused, *e. g.*, to interfere in questions of inheritance, taxation, etc. "In der Beschränkung zeigt sich der Meister" (Goethe).

It has been questioned that our Lord was *original*. If by this term is meant that which has no organic relation with the past or the coining of new words, or startling ideas, Jesus was not original. And yet he made that impression upon his contemporaries. "A new teaching! We have never seen it after this fashion"—these were the exclamations. Jesus was original, (1) in that he altered the proportion of truth, exalting and expanding what had been previously neglected, *e. g.*, the fatherhood of God and the immanence of God and taking for granted doctrines as, *e. g.*, the unity and holiness of God; (2) he claimed a unique knowledge of God (Luke 10, 22); (3) he put new interpretations upon well-known truths, as, *e. g.*, when he explained Isa. 61: 1 in Nazareth; (4) he taught with a new accent of assurance and authority: "but I say unto you," so that the people exclaimed, "with authority he teaches."

All his teaching is pervaded by a "sweet reasonableness." Every sentence in the Sermon on the Mount is a classical expression of unparalleled common sense. How reasonable it sounds to hear him ask: Is not life more than raiment? Why mutter prayers and fast? Is not the soul worth more than the whole world? How reasonable is his test of truth, "If any man willeth to do my will . . .," and above all, that rule which on account of its supreme reasonableness, all the world calls "golden." Christ is perfectly normal, not eccentric nor erratic.

EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF JESUS.

The strongest emotion in the soul of Christ was his complete *trust in God*. "He trusted God" said even his enemies (Math. 27: 43). His first and last words were expressions of faith. In the Sermon on the Mount, when he spoke of the lilies and the birds, and also in Gethsemane, he emphasized his confidence in the Father. This state of his soul Jesus expressed in his *habit of prayer*. (Luke 3: 21, 22; Mark 1: 35; Luke 5: 16; 6: 12; Math. 14: 23; Luke 9: 18-28; Math. 26: 36; Luke 23: 46.) We all know his longest, his most submissive and his last prayer. He prayed in public, in solitary places (mountains and in Gethsemane), for long periods (temptation), before important events (the choosing of the Twelve), and on the cross, three of his seven last words being prayers. He exhorted others to pray and taught his disciples a form of prayer. An atmosphere of *reverence* surrounds the entire life of Christ. In prayer, his language was not familiar but reverent, his posture showed respect. He cultivated habits of reverence; he prayed before meals, he was regular in attendance at the temple and synagogue services; he observed the passover meal, going through the usual ritual. This close walk with God spread over the entire life of the Saviour the spirit of optimism; not that brainless feeling which is often called by this name, but that strong conviction born of faith in God and belief in the possibilities of human nature. He saw the rocky element in Peter, he knew that publicans can repent,

and that the crown follows the cross (John 12: 32). "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," was one of his last words. He was an "incorrigible optimist."

The soul of the Lord was flushed, so to say, with a flood of *love to men*. No one ever emphasized the value of man as he did (Mark 8: 36; Math. 16: 26). He interested himself in the children, watching them at play (Math. 11: 16), rebuking his disciples for keeping them from him (Math. 19: 13) and declaring the child an example to his disciples (Math. 18: 2). This spirit of love manifests itself in our Lord's *sympathetic disposition*. The first part of his sermon at Nazareth sounded so gracious because it was spoken with deep compassion. With the exception of about eight, all his miracles are works of mercy. His throbbing heart is shown in phrases constantly recurring: "moved with compassion" (Math. 20: 34; 9: 36; Luke 7: 13; Math. 14: 14; 15: 32). Twice it is reported that Christ wept. He protected woman and therefore severely censured the lax interpretation of the divorce laws by the liberal school of Hillel. Physical and moral distress pierced his soul. He raised fallen women, even one living in adultery, and helped the poor man at Bethesda. He cried out to doomed Jerusalem and stretched forth his hands, saying "Come unto me." While embracing all men, he was *eager for more intimate friendship*. Even before the beginning of his public ministry he surrounded himself with special friends (John 1: 39). In the course of time, wider and closer circles of friends gathered around him by the seventy, the twelve, the three, the beloved disciple. But there was never any favoritism. He loved each one to the measure of his receptivity. He gave all of them his love (John 13: 34), his knowledge (John 15: 15), his example (John 13: 15). He loved many of them as special friends (John 11: 3-5; 13: 23).

Love has a large family of daughters. One of the oldest is *obedience*. This he had to learn (Heb. 5: 8). To his father's business he was faithfully devoted (John 4: 34; 6: 38; 8: 29). In his family, he was a dutiful son and brother, probably the bread-winner after Joseph's death. He appears

to his brother James after his resurrection and on the cross he makes provision for his mother. The address "woman" in John 2: 4 is not disrespectful according to custom and the idiom of the language. Obedience is a close neighbor to *humility*. He emptied himself (Phil. 2: 5-11), washed the feet of his disciples, warns them of the spirit of dominance, and enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday on the humble beast of peace. The common people heard him gladly and flocked to him in large numbers; yet he remained meek and lowly in heart. When they urged him to become king, he refused. In all this he was absolutely *sincere* and outspoken. Hypocrisy he hated. He used plain words. He called the rulers liars, and Herod Antipas a fox. Closely allied to this virtue is the Lord's *candor*, which means whiteness, from *candidus, i. e.*, openness and frankness, without guile and craft. He never held back the truth. He told his disciples, "behold I sent you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves" (Math. 10). Thrice he announced his death, when all expected a great triumph. His candor at Capernaum reduced the number of his followers materially (John 7: 66). He candidly speaks of limitations to his knowledge and authority, during his lifetime on earth (Mark 13: 32; 10: 40). In John 14: 1 he assures his disciples that they may always expect candor from him.

Christ was a *generous* soul. When he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," he spoke of his personal experience. He had no money, but he gave his time, strength, ideas, heart and life. Sympathy consumed his life blood. He pleased not himself (Rom. 15: 3). His death was a free surrender, a self-sacrifice (John 10: 17, 18). While severe towards himself, he was very *considerate* for others. He remembers the frailty of human nature and offers the disciples a vacation (Mark 6: 31). A large measure of *joy* and *gladness* was poured out over his entire personality. The painters represent him as sad and melancholy, but on friend and foe he made the opposite impression. The latter called him a glutton and winebibber, a boon companion of sinners, *i. e.*, light-hearted men. These slanders prove that he did not im-

press his contemporaries as morose. His friends tell us that he attended a wedding and various social occasions, that he discouraged fasting, compared himself to a bridegroom, declared that the child is the pattern for a true disciple, compared his kingdom to a marriage-feast and bade them even to express their joy outwardly: "Rejoice and leap for joy." True, the sources do not record that he ever laughed, but they mention twice that he wept because it was so exceptional. As a *friend of nature* he often speaks of flowers and birds, both of which are emblems of joy.

THE WILL POWER OF JESUS.

The *firmness* of Christ's character is very conspicuous. Neither friend nor foe could bend or manipulate him. He opposed false traditions and standards, repulsed Peter when he tried to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem, also his brethren (John 7: 3) and even his mother at Cana and Capernaum (John 2: 1; Math. 12: 46-50). He was little affected by the spirit of the times; he was a universal genius. In his teaching the element of firmness and certainty is very apparent. He was absolutely certain of the truth. He knew God had a plan and he also knew what it was. With manly firmness and prophetic clearness he approaches his passion. This characteristic did not repulse men. He was very *accessible* to all kinds of people: to simple fishermen (John 1: 37; Mark 1: 16), to anxious parents (Mark 5: 22; 7: 25; 10: 13), to publicans (Math. 9: 10; 10: 3; 11: 19; Luke 19: 2); to sinful women (Luke 7: 37; Math. 21: 31). His charm and magnetism increased his popularity. Another active virtue of Jesus was his *patience*, which may be defined as a calm waiting for something hoped for. He waited for many years till the Baptist arose. When urged to hurry on, he replies: Are there not twelve hours in a day; my hour has not come (see also John 7). Instead of setting Palestine on fire with a Messianic declaration, before the people were prepared, he asks, "tell no man," and after the transfiguration he says:

"keep still." The slowness of his disciples tried his patience, but he never lost it (Math. 15: 16; 16: 5-12). How patiently did he treat Judas, warning him again and again of the lurking danger. The cursing of the fig tree was not a lack of patience, but an acted parable.

The Lord's will power was surcharged with a glowing *enthusiasm*, which has been defined as being possessed by God (Luke 2: 41; Math. 4: 1). His friends considered him on the verge of nervous prostration and insanity and his enemies said he was possessed of a demon (Mark 3: 21-31). This quality drew like-minded men to him. Side by side in Jesus' character, goes undaunted *courage*, physical, moral and intellectual. He faces the mob, his traitor, the desecrators of the temple, the rulers. Notice his calmness in the tempest, before his judges, and at the crucifixion. He preaches unpopular truths at Nazareth, remains firm when many left him at the crisis in Capernaum, and dares to offend good society by disregarding conventionalities. He preaches good sermons to small audiences (Nicodemus, Samaritan woman). But this quality never degenerated into foolhardiness. Jesus was *cautious* and circumspect. Several times he fled from danger, for eighteen months he staid away from Jerusalem, after the rulers had taken official action to kill him (John 5: 18). After the meeting of the Sanhedrin on the Hill of Evil Council he withdraws to Ephraim (John 11: 47-54). Another manly virtue in the Lord's character is his *indignation*. He repelled temptation (Mark 8: 33); hypocrisy roused him to a flame of judgment (Mark 3: 5, 11, 15-17; Math. 23: 1-36); treachery shook him to the center of his being (John 13: 21); desecration of the temple angered him; perversion of the true idea of death aroused him at the grave of Lazarus (John 11: 38). He was indignant at the treatment the rulers accorded to the people. Indifference toward wrong is an unerring sign of moral deterioration. In Jesus, indignation never passed the limit, where it becomes sin; it was one manifestation of his love.

THE UNITY OF CHRIST'S CHARACTER.

Binding these various qualities together, what is the total impression, der Gesamteindruck, which the eye and ear witnesses had of the man Jesus? First, the gospels portray him, negatively, as a *sinless man*. This was his own conviction and the testimony of friends and foes: the Baptist, Peter, Judas, Pilate and his wife, the malefactor and centurion, the false witnesses (I Peter 2: 22; II Cor. 5: 21; I John 3: 5; Heb. 4: 15; 7: 26). He is intolerant of evil. He never prayed for, but bestows pardon. More than this: it is moral *perfection*, absolute goodness that he possesses according to the gospel story. "No one is good but the father" (Math. 19: 17) does not contradict this. There Jesus refused the attribute, because the speaker regarded him as a mere man. Both these qualities constituted his *spiritual-mindedness*, by which we mean the general bend of thought and motive toward divine things. He moves habitually in the realm of heavenly realities. Proofs of this are too abundant to be specific in detail. Jesus made the impression of *strength* and true greatness. The paintings which make him appear subdued and effeminate are not true to the colors furnished by those who saw him every day. By his power of personality he drew the good and repulsed bad men. The Baptist said, he is greater than I. "Follow me," he said to the disciples, and they felt a strange fascination which drew them towards him. The bitter hatred of his enemies indicates power, for we cannot hate a weakling, much as we may despise him. He claims *greatness*, but it is singularly modest and quiet. It attracts and never repels the well-disposed beholder. Even children seemed to have loved him. He was great in all things that pertain to perfect manliness, while others are often only great artists, great conquerors, great statesmen, but small men. In contrast with the jealousy, pettiness and malice of his friends and foes, Christ's greatness shines forth gloriously: Behold the Man!

An analysis of Christ's character, such as we have attempted, will in no wise do justice to the subject, even if it amounted to a complete catalogue of his characteristics, without mention-

ing the poise, the fine balance of faculties, the even proportion and perfect *harmony* of virtues apparently opposite and contradictory which distinguishes him from other men. Ordinary men are in constant danger of extremes. From enthusiasm they run into fanaticism and intolerance, from firmness into harshness, from mildness into weakness. This answers the question whether we can attribute to Jesus any one of the four *temperaments*. "He was neither sanguine, like Peter; nor choleric, like Paul; nor melancholic, like John; nor phlegmatic, like James. He combined the vivacity without the levity of the sanguine, the vigor without the violence of the choleric, the seriousness without the austerity of the melancholic, the calmness without the apathy of the phlegmatic, temperament" (Schaff, *Person of Christ*).

How do the writers of the New Testament account for this unique personality? Simply by accepting Christ's own testimony concerning his superhuman and divine origin and character—his coequality and coeternity with the Father, as explained in the first chapters of Mathew, Luke and John, and many other passages. On any other theory the appearance of absolutely perfect and sinless manhood makes a much larger draft on reason and faith than the Biblical accounts do.

Our task as indicated in the wording of the subject is finished. For completeness sake, it may, however, not be amiss to remind us that there are other portraits of Jesus. The ancient sketches painted by the Ebionites, Gnostics and other sects, as well as that by the Wolfenbüttel fragments, which make Christ or his apostles, or both common frauds and imposters are entirely faded and have to-day only antiquarian interest. The various liberal schools and individuals have mixed the colors furnished by the New Testament writers with contemporary philosophy and science and this accounts for the variety of their portraits. They believe that the true colors are to be found back and behind the glaring varnish with which the "dogmatism" of the Apostolic Church has covered over the real picture of Jesus. This varnish they call enthusiasm, self-deception, myths, legends and fiction. The pictures of

the liberal schools vary much, from the radicalism of Strauss, Renan and Schenkel, to the saner views of Keim, Harnack, Jülicher, Boussets, Pfeiderer and Frenssen. These learned men believe that they by criticism of the sources have discovered and restored the real Jesus, as painted behind the glaring church colors. And this, in general outlines, is his portrait: Jesus is a great man, but a product of his times, with the limitations of his period. He had sin in his nature, but he has conquered this defect. He was born like any other man; he never rose from the dead. The most modern portrait of Christ differs still more from the New Testament sketch. The men who employ the new religio-historical method of investigation reject both portraits of Jesus, that of the New Testament and theological tradition, as well as that of liberalism as unscientific. Between the two these radicals consider the portrait painted by the church as more scientific. The historicity of Jesus must fall, say Kalthoff, Smith, Jensen, and others. Jensen believes that the story of Jesus is an adaptation of the Babylonian Gilgamesh legend; and the two physicians Rasmussen and Loosten believe that Jesus was a nervous wreck bordering on insanity. With this, the most modern portrait of Jesus, theological science seems to have reached the limit, and the pendulum is already seen to swing backwards to saner and more Biblical conceptions.

Helpful literature on the character of Jesus are the following books: Jefferson, *Character of Jesus*; A. W. Hitchcock, *The Psychology of Jesus*; A. E. Garvie, *Studies in the Inner Life of Jesus*; Maclaren, *The Mind of the Master*; Schaff, *The Person of Christ*; Grützmacher, *Ist das liberale Christusbild modern*; an article on the "Character of Jesus" in Hastings's *Dictionary of the Gospels*.

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