

# ❖THE❖OLD❖TESTAMENT❖STUDENT.❖

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## OLD TESTAMENT STUDY FOR HOMILETIC USE.

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The Old Testament is often in danger of neglect and disparagement. Some, because of acknowledged ignorance of its worth, belittle its claims. Others with an air of superiority insist upon confining the attention of our Sunday Schools to the study of the New Testament, and, in some cases, simply to the four gospels. They talk slightingly of the Old Testament as compared with the New. In their judgment it is but the gray dawn of the morning compared with the dazzling splendor of the noon-day; it is but the ladder up which we climb to lay hold of the ripened fruit of revelation's harvest. The relation between these parts of God's book is at this moment a subject of frequent discussion in our Sunday School and general religious papers. Let us remember that we do not honor the New Testament by dishonoring the Old. All parts of God's work are perfect. It was a part of this Old book, which David so loved, and in which he meditated both day and night. It was this book with which Timothy was so familiar that Paul could say of him, "from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings." Of these "sacred writings," Paul in addressing Timothy affirms, that they "are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." It was this book, which Christ studied and expounded, and which he commended his hearers for knowing.

The "Higher Criticism," if sincere and devout, will, in the end, do good. It is worth something, that attention is called to the history and distinctive characteristics of the Old Testament. Truth, no matter who brings it to us, is from God. We gladly welcome it. In encaustic tile at the entrance to Tennyson's home in the Isle of Wight are the words, "Truth against the world." We would gladly put these words at the head of every sermon. It is truth we seek. Truth

or St. Paul, but the rapt Isaiah. It is his bugle that even now rallies and guides the Christian host.

5. The New Testament can never be fairly understood without the Old. We have a product. To know whence it is, is no small help toward appreciating the force of the promise it has for the future of man and of men.

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#### A MISTAKE TO EXCLUDE THE OLD TESTAMENT FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

It is my opinion that it would be a serious mistake to exclude the Old Testament from Sabbath school instruction or to disparage it as a factor in that instruction. Because

1. It is a part of the inspired Word of God, which has not been abolished nor superseded by the New Testament ; and as such it is pronounced by the apostle "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness." Even its typical rites and institutions, which have ceased to be obligatory as outward forms, point as directly as ever to their great Antitype, and in their substantial meaning are of permanent force and value.

2. The New Testament is throughout based upon the Old, and a knowledge of the latter is essential to a correct understanding of the former.

3. The elementary and preliminary character of the Old Testament adapts it in a remarkable degree for the instruction of the young, for whom its narratives have a special attraction, while its facts and institutions serve as object-lessons under proper teaching, and convey the truth more widely even than didactic statements.

4. The prevalent disposition to undervalue the Old Testament, and even to set aside its authority and historical character will be best counteracted by its more diligent and thorough study. The truth of God and his revelation is one in all ages and under both dispensations ; his Church is one ; true religion is the same and the method of salvation is the same. And it is very important that this unity should be perceived and the whole Bible be recognized as the standard of faith and the rule of duty.

5. Many prevalent errors and misconceptions are traceable to an undue neglect of the Old Testament. False views of the nature of salvation and an inadequate sense of man's absolute need of a divine Savior and his absolute dependence on divine grace result from a failure to emphasize the fall of man and the consequent corruption of the race

as set forth in the Old Testament. The mercy and love of God are set in a false light by him who fails to insist upon the law and justice of God dwelt upon in the Old Testament.

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#### THE STUDY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

It should receive studious attention. It has been a sadly neglected field. The more recent time and thought given to it in connection with Bible study, has been a great gain to the Church, and has led to a great enrichment of hearts. To thousands and thousands this Old Testament study has been a *Revelation* indeed, and a richly compensating delight and surprise.

But the morning twilight is not like high noon. Prophecy is good—but fulfilment is better. Should the types occupy us as much as the *Antitype*? Should the symbols claim our thought equally with *Him whom they symbolize*? The crimson thread runs indeed from Genesis to Revelation, but the heart that dyed it broke on Calvary. And we would better be found oftener with *the slain Lamb of God* than with the sacrifices that typified the great atonement.

So I think the New Testament should have more attention in the Sabbath School than the Old. But the dust should not be allowed to gather anywhere along the record of this wonderful Book. And if we would best "see Jesus" we must see Him in type and symbol and shadow and prophecy as well as in the unveiled face of the New Testament.

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#### THE OLD TESTAMENT A TEXT-BOOK.

The Old Testament is a part of God's Word to the world. It is a concrete putting of great principles involved in the divine administration. In making his revelation to the world God did not directly write a book, but wrought out a history, and caused this history with all that pertained to it to be recorded in a book. Here are the lives of great men, here are events, startling, impressive, suggestive, symbolic, prophetic, and weighted with spiritual significance. Here are laws, promises, sacred poems, and vivid pictures, the knowledge of which enriches the mind and prepares the heart for the appreciation of the spiritual truths which fill the New Testament.

The Old Testament is fulfilled in the New. By the New its meanings are multiplied and its spirit intensified. Much of the vocabulary