

All the Faith In Hebrews - A General Introduction to the Principles of Biblical Interpretation and Illustrations of them from the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Pre-eminently a reasoned appeal for living by faith, Hebrews is also a manual of Old Testament interpretation. The modern (mistaken) approach sees the Epistle as a tirade against unbelieving Jews. The traditional approach sees so much more.

One of the chief themes of the School of Theology this year is that of Biblical interpretation. We have been contrasting two approaches that is;

1. What we can call, the method used by the Bible itself, also sometimes called the Traditional approach, the method used by CH Spurgeon (as we have seen), and the great worthies of the past.

2. The second is the modern or characteristic approach of theological liberalism which denies the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture and is based on the principle that the Bible **must** be interpreted in the same way as one would interpret any other book. Sadly a method which now even influences some of a more evangelical persuasion.

We are going to be looking at how some of these principles of Biblical interpretation are illustrated in the Epistle to the Hebrews, but first we must give some time to refresh our minds with regard to some of the issues involved.

Martin Luther in his characteristically blunt and to the point way of expressing himself, identified one of the fundamental principles of Biblical Hermeneutics (i.e. the **interpretation** of Scripture, Homiletics being the **application** of Scripture), as follows:

Here Christ would indicate the principal reason why the Scripture was given by God . Men are to study and search it and to learn that He, Mary's Son, is the One who is able to give eternal life to all who come to Him and believe on Him. Therefore he who would correctly and profitably read Scripture should see to it that he finds Christ in it.

From sermon on John 5:39 – 43

If we do not apply this principle we are indeed just interpreting the Bible as we would any other great work of literature such as Homer, Chaucer, Shakespeare or Milton. Luther goes on to say:

If you will interpret well, take Christ with you for he is the man whom everything concerns.

(Underlying the literal and historical interpretation of Old Testament Scripture are types, shadows, indications, insights

relating to Christ, the Gospel and the Christian life.)

Scripture is not like any other text, it is uniquely the Word of God. It requires its own special approach. It God's Word and needs to be spiritually discerned.

Christ gives us the real ability to explain Moses and the prophets... For all the stories of Holy Scripture refer to Him.

John 5:39 itself says:

Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

(In other words, If you do not see they testify of Me you are missing the point, you are not interpreting them correctly)

The fundamentals of Luther's principle of Biblical interpretation was of course shared by John Calvin and the other Reformers. He firmly believed in the typical significance of much that is found in the Old Testament, though he slightly tempered Luther's opinion that Christ should be found everywhere in Scripture. For example he reduced the number of Psalms that could be recognized as Messianic (we might contest this), he also insisted that the Prophets should be interpreted in the light of historical circumstances pertaining at the time the prophecies were first given, as at the same time he regarded and emphasized that, the first business of an interpreter is to let his author say what he does say, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say.

With this note of caution however we gladly recommend and receive Luther's fundamental principle of Christ in all the Scriptures.

Calvin believed that certain Persons, institutions and events were types and figures (words he used interchangeably). This was not to imply that historical figures such as Moses had no reality of their own, but that there was a correspondence between them and Christ.

Calvin certainly believed as did the other Reformers, that there are some allegories in Scripture. the Song of Solomon for example.

That there are also many parallels, allusions, figures of speech, rhetorical devices and types illustrative of Christ, the Gospels and the Christian life.

That the Old testament was written for the use and benefit of all ages.

That all Scripture is unified, the voice of God, each part in complete harmony with the rest.

We are reminded of Mr. Spurgeon's comments in regard to Robert Hawker's Poor Man's Commentary, in his famous commenting on Commentaries:

It is to be confessed that he occasionally sees Jesus where Jesus is not legitimately to be seen. He allowed his reason to be mastered by his affections, which, vice as it is, is not the worst fault in the world. There is always such a savour of the Lord Jesus Christ in Dr. Hawker that you cannot read him without profit.

His biographer John Williams remarked: *it was said of two celebrated commentators Cocceius and Grotius, that the one found Christ everywhere, and the other nowhere. Dr. Hawker is of the former school, and Jesus is the name, he everywhere "delighted to honour;" so much so, but we fear in some instances, he has overlooked the primary and literary sense to introduce allegories, which can hardly be justified.*

In his *Poor Man's Commentary* he had printed quite rightly *Moses wrote of Me.*

Biography of Hawker p. 86

We are not looking to see Christ where he is not, but our fundamental principle must be to look for Christ in all the Scriptures. He is in a great many more Scriptures than teachers of modern biblical interpretation would allow.

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The Second Point we need to have in mind is:

At the time of the Reformation there was a very timely and legitimate reaction against what was commonly called the allegorical method or four fold method of Scripture interpretation.

We might suggest that this reaction has been used in later years to justify a somewhat severe restriction on finding Christ in the Old Testament. This is not a helpful restriction, and to some extent may rest on a misunderstanding of what the Reformers were seeking to guard against.

We need to spend a few moments in reminding ourselves what the Medieval Allegorical Method or The Four Fold Method of Scripture Interpretation, really involved.

The principle was that every Scripture had a four- fold or four layered meaning. These four elements were said to be the, historical or literal sense, the allegorical or figurative sense, the tropological or moral sense, and the anagogic or future sense.

Sometimes expressed as follows:

The literal sense : what the passage says about past events.

The allegorical sense: what the passage can tell us about Christ.

The moral sense: the moral story, what the passage can tell is about how to live.

The Anagogical sense: what the passage tells us about our ultimate fate, prophecies, the future life, eternity.

On the face of it this can sound quite reasonable even helpful, even Luther having warned of the danger of its abuse, still at times continued to use it, but beware, we need to keep in mind that it had its origins in Greek philosophy, and was a method used by the Alexandrian Jews in Egypt as a tool for **reinterpreting Scripture** in order to bring it in line with what was regarded as the more sophisticated and cultured system of Greek philosophy in that day.

It was borrowed from those who commentated on the classical Greek mythologies. It was an ingenious device whereby they could modify some of those ancient stories and remove elements that were seemed to be absurd or portrayed their god or heroes behaving badly. Those old heathen

commentators began to argue that behind the original text there were hidden meanings, mystical meanings, allegorical meanings. These commentators claimed to understand these meanings and thereby could subtly reinterpret the text as they pleased.

Sadly these methods were used by the medieval church to reinterpret Scripture on Roman Catholic lines. This is what the Reformers were objecting to.

Luther in his day along with the other Reformers strongly opposed this method because **it was being used to reinterpret Scripture and bring it in line with the teachings of medieval Roman Catholicism.**

Even when this was not its chief objective it gave rise at that time to the most fanciful and inaccurate interpretations of Scripture passages. One writer quotes the following a more extreme examples.

The journey of Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees to Haran is interpreted as the imaginary trip of a Stoic philosopher who leaves sensual understanding and arrives at the senses. (i.e. leaves worldly, human understanding and arrives at Biblical, godly understanding).

The two-pence given by the good Samaritan to the innkeeper has the hidden meanings of baptism of the Lord's supper.

The River Euphrates means the out flow of manners and is not an actual literal River in Mesopotamia.

Pope Gregory the Great's interpretation of the Book of Job is often referred to:

*The patriarchs three friends, denote the heretics;
Job's seven sons are the Twelve Apostles;
His 7000 sheep are God's faithful people.
His 3000 hump-backed camels are the depraved Gentiles.*

However we come back to the point that neither Luther or Calvin or the Reformers denied the typical significance of much that is found in the Old Testament nor could they or want to deny that it speaks of Christ.

Today by perhaps over- emphasising the Reformers' right and proper insistence of seeking first the literal sense of Scripture we have found ourselves missing, failing to see, the very significant way the New Testament **itself interprets the Old Testament in the light of the life death and resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ and the mutual harmony and complementary nature of the two Testaments.**

We are going to glance at how this is illustrated in Hebrews, though the New Testament abounds with illustrations and examples of it.

Calvin himself said in regard to the matter of Scripture interpretation:

A good master to teach us sobriety in this is the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Commentary Exodus 26:1 quoted in Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries T.H.L.Parker p. 71

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1.

First of all however we need to refresh our minds on the basic rules and principles of Scripture interpretation. We can only briefly touch on this matter.

1. A reverent and prayerful approach.

We are handling the very Word of God. The Revelation from heaven. God's inspired, inerrant Word. We are privileged to have it and to read it. We recognizing that these things are "spiritually discerned". We pray:

*Come Divine Interpreter,
Give us eyes Thy book to read.*

John Wycliffe exhorted those seeking to understand and teach Scripture to; *Maintain a humble seeking attitude so that the Holy Spirit can instruct us.*

2. We seek to understand at first the text of Scripture in its grammatical sense, sometimes called the grammatical- historical sense or its natural sense, or its simple sense.

Again we might note in the light of what we have said above our Lord himself did this in opposition to the fanciful interpretations of the religious leaders of his day. He charged the Jewish scholars and interpreters of that time with rendering of no effect the law of God by their traditions. He evidently had it as a chief aim of his public teaching, to set out the real sense of the Old Testament Scriptures, and to set them free from the false glosses and subtle and fanciful twists of pharisaic interpretation.

The oldest rabbinical writings give ample evidence that there was need for our Lord to take such a course. The Jewish rabbis took the words of Jeremiah, where he had compared the Word of God to a hammer that brakes the rock in pieces, to mean that the Word of God had as many senses, as a rock broken by a hammer had many pieces. Some rabbinical authorities therefore maintained that 49 meanings could be found and other 70 meanings for each verse.

Some extremely fanciful interpretations were given. One example quoted by Fairbairn is as follows.

The passage which narrates the meeting of Esau and Jacob, tells us that Esau kissed his brother Jacob when they met.. The rabbis said, kiss, here really meant bite. Whereupon they added, our father Jacob's neck was changed into marble, so that the teeth of the ungodly were broken.

This fanciful rabbinic method of interpreting Scripture, some modernists accuse the New Testament writers of adopting, i.e. putting a false meaning on the words of prophecy, reading into Old Testament passages meanings that were never there. This of course we strongly contest.

In the same way that our Lord reacted against the Rabbinic interpreters of His day the Reformers reacted against the fanciful interpretations of some of the Church Fathers and scholars of the later

medieval church.

We are to interpret Scripture in the grammatical- historical sense.

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Clement of Alexandria... Interpreting the narrative of Abraham's marriage, successively to Sarah and Hagar as follows:

A Christian ought to cultivate philosophy or the liberal arts before he devotes himself wholly to the study of divine wisdom. Abraham is a perfect example of this. At first Abram was childless in his marriage he produced no fruit. He was married to Sarah who represents Christian wisdom. He then took Hagar to wife who represents philosophy and human wisdom. After this he is fruitful in his marriages.

The meaning here is that a combination of the study of philosophy and the liberal arts alongside that of spiritual and divine wisdom is the way to be a fruitful and effective Christian in this world.

This practice was very much the way of things in the medieval church, and I've heard it said, I don't know whether it is still the case but even today candidates for the Roman Catholic priesthood are first taught philosophy before theology in their seminaries.

It was this sort of false interpretation of Scripture that the Reformers reacted against.

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Melanchthon said:

The sense of Scripture is one, certain, and simple, and is everywhere to be ascertained in accordance with the principles of grammar and human discourse.

Luther famously commented:

We must not make God's Word mean what we would wish it to mean: we must not bend it, but allow it to bend us; and give it the honour of being better than we could make it; so that we must let it stand.

Quoted by Fairburn, Hermeneutical Manual p.85

However none of this says we should not find Christ in the Old Testament or parallels and instructions for the Church in its pages.

It is good practice in seeking to interpret Scripture to have before us a grid. a list of things we expect to find, especially this applies to the interpretation of the Old Testament. we should be finding...

Pictures, types of Christ.
Doctrine of Redemption.
Plan of the Gospel.
Gospel arguments.

Promises of God.
Warnings.
Insights into God's Covenant.
Teaching on worship.
Teaching on witness, service etc.

A note on passing on the meaning of single sense or simple sense

Dr. Masters in his highly commendable book *Not Like any Other Book* and vital reading on the subject, comments:

It was while criticizing the "mere monkey game" of gymnastic interpreters that Luther declared:
The Holy Ghost is the all- simplest writer in Heaven and earth, and so the words can have no more than one and the simplest sense which we call the scriptural or literal meaning.

With this we heartily agree, but Luther did not refer to whole passages – only to words and sentences, because he taught that it was essential to study the Old Testaments through Christ – seeing lenses, believing that the whole Bible spoke about Christ. (He rejected wild allegorisation and espoused the "typological interpretation" of the Old Testament, nowadays often called the "spiritual interpretation". **So, Luther saw types of Christ, and of the church, and parallels with the Christian's spiritual warfare in the Old Testament not apparent from the literal sense of the passage, but he did not change the material literal meaning of words and phrases.**

*There is yet more to think on the subject of "single sense," because it easily becomes a restriction to "simple sense". (or we might say simplistic sense), If a major government issues a statement on some aspect of foreign policy, other nations analyse it very closely to see what is implied for a variety of possible situations. The document will have a general drift, but built into it will be indications of the thinking of the issuing government in a number of directions. **If God issues a communiqué we cannot read it as though it were book of rules for primary school children, but this is what the modern approach tends to do. While demanding the most complex analytical processes, they expect only one single (and usually ultra - simple) meaning in any passage.***

Not Like any Other Book p.30

By single or simple sense we do not mean simplistic sense.

3. We must give attention to the meaning of words

William Tyndale did this and brought about a revolution. In his great translation of the New Testament by giving close attention to the original meaning of words he undermined the entire papal system.

There is a good section on this in David Daniell's biography of William Tyndale page 148.

Tyndale translated the Greek *presbuteros* as "senior", in his translation he used the word "elder" not priest.

He translated the Greek word *ecclesia* as *congregation* instead of church.

He translated the Greek verb *metanoeo* as *repent* and not as the *Vulgate* had done, *do penance*.

He translated the Greek verb *exomologeō* as *acknowledge* or admit and not as the *Vulgate* *to confess*. Implying confession to a priest.

He translated the Greek word *agape* as love. Charity had come to mean outward works, by which one might earn salvation.

Tyndale was well aware that the correct interpretation of these words would be undermining the entire sacerdotal structure of medieval Catholicism and once again to allow the Gospel message to shine out clearly and brightly. This he was achieving by rightly interpreting the Word of God.

Fairbairn rightly reminds us. *Sometimes words escape altogether from their original meaning.*

In Biblical interpretation it is important for us to know at least something of the original language. To use the best interpretational aids. R.C.Trench's *Study of Words* is worth reading on this.

4. The Rule of Scripture or the Analogy of Faith

These two principles are sometimes separated but for brevity I am putting them together. **In regard to the rule of Scripture we mean the relationship of one part of Scripture to the other.** Recognizing, agreement between all parts of Scripture. No part contradicting the other. In interpreting a passage we make sure our interpretation is in line with the rest of Scripture and not contradicting other Scriptures. . **The perfect harmony and unity of Scripture.** John Knox expressed this very well when he said:

The Word of God is plain in itself, and if there appear any obscurity in one place, the Holy Ghost, who is never contrary to Himself, explains the same clearly in other places: so that there can remain no doubt, but to such as obstinately remain ignorant.

This is a most helpful and vitally important interpretive rule, it takes us to the very heart of what we are trying to say in this lecture, let me give you an example.

In a number of cases the New Testament authors made a combination of various passages of the Old Testament which in the Old Testament had no contextual relationship.(I mean texts coming from different parts of Scripture) This is a procedure that can easily be abused and in which preposterous combinations may be suggested. In the New Testament, however, we find this practice used with great sobriety, and we are therefore encouraged to see the character of complementarity which is one of the features of inspired writ.

It is when the Bible is seen as one large, contextual unit that the ultimate in interpretation is also reached.

Standing Forth Roger Nicole p.89

Just take one example of this: take the words of God the Father to God the Son at the time of our Lord's baptism. *Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

Matthew 3:17, Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22

This saying is composed of two quotations from the Old Testament.

Thou art my beloved Son, is a quotation from Psalm 2:7.

In whom I am well pleased, is a quotation from Isaiah 42:1

Which incidentally in our Authorized Version actually reads, *in whom my soul delighteth.*

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Psalm 2 is a Coronation Psalm, and was always taken as pointing to the triumphant enthronement of the Messiah.

Isaiah 42:1 is part of the description of the Servant of the Lord, whose portrait is completed in Isaiah 53, *he who was wounded for our transgressions bruised for our iniquities.*

The Divine Son of God Dying in the Sinners place.

These two verses together, spoken from Scripture by the very mouth of God at the time of our Lord's baptism, illustrates very clearly the fact that the Old Testament is seen by the New as one large contextual unit. These two apparently unconnected texts are in fact connected, as the whole is connected, and combine together to portray Christ the King, the suffering Saviour, the Son of God.

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Just to return to the general teaching of what is normally described as the Rule of Scripture.

In interpreting Scripture we normally say let the sense of the more obscure and difficult parts of Scripture be understood by the light of the plainer parts of Scripture. **Augustine added to this, "and the common faith held by the Orthodox Church"**. This later addition is what is often referred to as the **analogy of faith**, this is fine if we mean by this, the doctrines revealed to us in Scripture.

There is danger if we don't make this addition or qualification. The famous Vincent of Lorenz took it to mean harmony with the creeds, publicly authorized and sanctioned by the Church. This led in turn to the medieval church seeking to bend Scripture interpretation to its own often man-made doctrines and man-made creeds.

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These are some of the basic principles of the interpretation of Scripture

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We must now make an even briefer resume of the history of the interpretation of the types of Scripture, from the time of the Reformation to today.

The Reformers rightly emphasized the grammatical sense of Scripture, as we have seen against the fanciful contortions of the rabbis and pre-eminently in their case, those of the medieval Roman Church. **They did not however reject the use of types.**

However they set no rules for the recognition types. In the 17th century scholars such as Cocceius, recognized and differentiated between *innate types*, i.e. those which the New Testament expressly asserts to be types.... And , *inferred types*, i.e. **those though not specifically noted or explained in Scripture, but yet, on probable grounds, inferred by interpreters as conformable to the analogy of faith and the practice of the inspired writers in regard to similar examples.**(See The Typology of Scripture Patrick Fairbairn vol I p.28).

Here was a correct practice but the argument justifying the correct practice was not fully set out.

Well-known interpreters such as Benjamin Keach took this approach. Some say that he over did his use of typology, but nevertheless has proved to very helpful profitable contributor to the interpretation of Scripture.

However in the 18th century, a reaction against this approach took place. It was partly influenced by the sceptical and rationalistic atmosphere of that age and partly because of the lack of formal justification for the method.

The outcome of this was the teaching that **only the types clearly indicated as such by the writers of the New Testament themselves could rightly be used** as legitimate types.

This has largely remained the position of the more modernistic and rationalistic interpreters of Scripture to the present day. It has also now become widely accepted by those of more evangelical outlook.

However this was not the principle held by the great evangelical expositors and preachers of a former age. It is the view challenge by Patrick Fairbairn in his work on the Typology of Scripture and his work on Biblical Hermeneutics.

Important quote from Fairbairn

The leading excellence of the system that preceded it (i.e. that advocated by Cocceius and others, or what we would advocate as the biblical system), was the constant reference it believed the Scriptures of the Old Testament bore towards Christ and the Gospel dispensation; and the practical disavowal of this may be said to constitute the great defect of the more exact and leaner system, which has now obtained the general suffrage/ acceptance of the learned. It drops a golden principle for the sake of avoiding a few lawless

aberrations.... In the very prescription of these limits, it wrongfully withholds from us the key of knowledge, and shuts us up to evils scarcely less to be depreciated than those it seeks to correct. For it destroys to a large extent the bond of connection between the Old and the New Testament Scriptures, and thus deprives the Christian Church of much of the instruction in divine things which they were designed to impart.

Typology of Scripture Vol I p.38

He goes on to state that the examples of typology which are expressly stated by the New Testament authors are examples, specimens taken from a vast storehouse, where many more are to be found.

We might just as we close this part of the lecture remind ourselves that this is a vital subject, bearing in mind also that the New Testament authors almost without exception drew very heavily upon the Old Testament. Almost 1/10 of the New Testament actually consists of Old Testament quotations. This is not to mention the multitudinous references and allusions to the Old Testament which abound from Matthew to Revelation.

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Part II

Turning now to look at how these principles are worked out in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Some preliminary comments and observations

The Epistle abounds with, overflows with, terms and references to the Old Testament Scriptures. Commentators say that there are 12 direct quotations from the Pentateuch, and 39 allusions to passages from the Pentateuch in the Epistle. There are many references to the Psalms, some say the majority are from the Psalms, others quote 11 direct references and two allusions to the Psalms... though a glance at the older cross referenced Bibles such as John Brown's will reveal that there are many, many more. There are also references to the Book of Proverbs.

What is unmistakably clear is that the author sees the Old Testament Scriptures as pointing to Christ, the Gospel and giving many typical illustration of the Christian life.

Leon Morris emphasizes the fact that Hebrews is saying:

What the ancient writings say is fulfilled in Him. This means more than that specific promises are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Rather the thrust of the whole Old Testament is such that it leads inescapably to Him. The author writes of Christianity as the final religion, not because he regards the faith of the Old Testament as mistaken, but because he sees it as God's way of pointing men to Jesus Christ. Judaism is not so much abrogated by Christianity as brought to its climax. The fuller meaning of the Old Testament is to be seen in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament and the New are rightly seen only when they are recognized as parts of one whole. And it is Jesus Christ who enables us to discern that whole and its meaning.

The Expositors Bible Commentary Ed. Frank Gaeblein p.7

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Fairbairn says of Hebrews:

It is in its main theme a reasoning from the Old Testament to the New; not, however for the purpose of proving that Jesus was the Christ promised to the Fathers, but rather, taking for granted this as a point mutually held, and showing from the dignity of Christ's Person, and the Perfection of his work, as indicated even in the Old Testament Scriptures the completeness of his dispensation in itself, and the mingled folly and danger of keeping up the shadowy services of Judaism, which had lost all their importance when their design was accomplished in Christ.

Here Fairbairn is saying that the Old Testament speaks much of the dignity of Christ's Person, and the Perfection of his work and that the institutions types and shadows of the Old Testament are all anticipatory of Him. As far as this Epistle is concerned he is saying that the need to continue to practice the Old Testament ordinances is no longer necessary now that Christ himself has come.

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Looking now at the theme of Hebrews and some of the Old Testament quotations found there.

Paul is showing the Hebrew Christians who are suffering persecution and trial, that that which they have in the Gospel is far better, (Key word Ch.1: v 4. used 13 times in the Epistle), far superior to the old Jewish ritual and ordinances. They are but types and shadows of the reality which they now possess. They are immensely valuable as types and pictures but not now as rituals or ordinances to be performed but truths to be pondered on in the light of Christ. In all this he never undervalues the Old Testament, he never drives a wedge between the two Testaments.

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Samuel Mather the Puritan reminds us that the distinction between the two Testaments is the manner of the setting forth of the Gospel not that there is another Gospel: or no Gospel in the Old Testament. He goes on to say "*We do not call one the New Testament because it is all Gospel, and the other Old, because it is all law. There is as much of law in the New Testament as in the Old; there is more of the threatening of the broken law in the sermons of our Lord himself,, than in any other portion of the Holy Scriptures. And there is very much of the Gospel of grace in Christ, revealed in the Old Testament. But we call the one Old, because it was the first dispensation of the Gospel; the other the New, because the latter dispensation of the same everlasting Gospel; it is the way and the manner of the dispensation, not the subject of it, that has been changed.* (page 8 Mather on the Types).

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The Argument of Hebrews

The argument is as follows:

1. Chapter 1. Christ is superior to the **Angels**, who were employed at Sinai as messengers stamping great dignity on the old dispensation. **The New inaugurated in Christ is of the fullest, most complete and highest order of Divine dignity and significance. Christ is higher than all the highest angels or archangels, he is the only begotten Son of God ,very god of very God.**

2. Chapter 3. To **Moses**, the greatest of human mediators, deliverers, legislators, and leaders. **Christ is the Deliverer, Saviour, leader of His people.**

3. Chapter 4. To **Joshua** (his name given as Jesus Ch. 4: 8) who led the people to the rest of the Promised Land. **Christ leads into the true rest of the soul, and to heaven at last, *Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.***

4. Chapter 5 and 7. To **Aaron**, with the whole economy of priesthood, Tabernacle, Temple, and offerings. Christ being of the order of Melchisedec, implying that He is of a heavenly, more spiritual, ever abiding order.

5. Chapter 8. **A better Covenant...** not a different Covenant but a better setting forth of God's great Covenant of Grace.

Returning to Chapter 2. Christ was made lower than the angels, in order to die to save us, but by resurrection exalted again higher than they who are but messengers to do his will, and minister to the heirs of salvation while he sits on the very throne of God.

Christ is far superior to Moses, Joshua who were but servants, while he is the Son and Heir.

Christ is superior to Aaron and his fellow priests who were sinners, were many, and served but for a time, and needed to make new offerings and sacrifices every year. Since He is sinless He, abides a priests forever, who once and for all obtained through his sacrifice on the cross, eternal redemption. Christ ministers in a higher sanctuary, offers a better sacrifice.

All these contrasts are most useful to the preacher in expounding the glories of Christ and the real nature of the Gospel. We look at the Old Testament with the light of the New Testament and in doing so we learn many valuable lessons and insights.

Fairbairn reminds us that over half of the Old Testament quotations used in the course of the argument are taken from the Psalms, pointing out that the Psalms would be most familiar to his readers, and also associated with the devotional services of the Jews. We have to look for Christ much in the Psalms.

Particular Psalms are used in Hebrews which are nowhere else used in the New Testament in application to Christ that is.

In the first chapter alone we find: Direct reference or allusion to according to John Brown's notes :

Psalms 2:6-8, Ps. 33:9 quoted Heb 1:3,

Psalm 2;7 Ps. 89: 26, 27 quoted Heb 1:5,
Psalm 2;7, Ps. 97:7 Heb 1:6
Psalm 104:4, Ps. 103: 20, Ps 68:17 Heb I:7
Psalm 45:6,7, Ps. 93:1-2, Ps. 72:1-14, 110: 45 Heb. 1: 8

We could go on, but the main argument here rests on the following Psalms.

Psalms 97:7 quoted in **Hebrews 1:6** *and let all the angels of God worship him,*

And Psalm 102:25-27, quoted in **Hebrews 1: 10** *And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands.*

These are quoted to argue the point that there is a glory in Christ which overshadows, the glory of all preceding revelations. This Paul is arguing was made plain even in the Old Testament.

Note also that Psalm 102 is addressed to God as the Creator, and is here in Hebrews applied to Christ.

Likewise in the 97th Psalm which points to God's power and glory in the world in the fullness of time as bringing discomfort to worshipers of idols and to all false worshipers and joy to the church, is also applied to Christ.

The Catena

The verses of Ch. 1: 5 - 14 are sometimes called the Catena. Cantina means a chain or a connected series. Such as a series of connected quotations, or passages. In this sense it is a connected series of texts from the Old Testament. This is a very interesting use of the word for it emphasizes the interconnectedness and completely joined up nature of the Old Testament and indeed the whole of Scripture.

Again interestingly this chain of quoted texts can be seen as illustrative of the various stages in the life and ministry of our Saviour.

It begins with testimony to his pre-existence and eternity quoting from Psalm 2; and Second Samuel 7.

It then moves to his Incarnation quoting Deuteronomy 34, on to his baptism quoting Psalm 45. (Note the reference in the Psalm is to his anointing v.7).

It speaks of his Resurrection quoting Psalm 104 where the reference is to his indestructibility verse 31):

Concluding with his ascension as referred to in Psalm 110:1 *The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*

B.B. Warfield says:

From this Catena of passages we perceive, then, that in the view of this writer the Old Testament presents to our contemplation a Messiah who is not merely transcendent but sheerly divine; to whom the great names of "Son of God," "God," "Lord" belonged of rights, and to whom are described all the dignities, powers and functions which these great names suggest.

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In chapter 2 Paul uses the 8th Psalm quoted in Hebrews 2: verses 7 and 8

Thou maddest him a little lower than the angels: thou crownest him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands....

(What the Psalmist applies to the first Adam Paul here refers to the last Adam, Christ. Also we can notice that he is not careful to quote the reference but sees the whole O.T as the Divine oracle, the voice of the Holy Spirit. See F.F. Bruce who is very helpful on this passage, p.34-36.)

What the author is seeking to do here is to explain the difficulty experienced by the Hebrews, first recipients of this Epistle in coming to terms with Christ's humiliation, and his humanity. In the Psalm the glory of God is celebrated, as connected with the place and dignity of man upon the earth.

This is applied as follows:

In aligning himself with man, the Son of God, indeed, stooped for a time below the dignity of the angels, but it was only that he might raise manhood to a higher position even than that he had prior to the Fall. Christ stooped low that he might raise man high.

In doing this we indeed see the highest glory of our Saviour Jesus Christ. As the hymn writer says, *his highest work redemption, see his glory in a blaze.* The point here is the writer to the Hebrews is finding all this revelation in the Old Testament Scriptures.

.....

Again.

It is also in connection with this part of his argument that the apostle refers to a passage in Isaiah that is Isaiah 8:17, 18. Where Isaiah says: "*I will wait upon the Lord: behold, I and the children which the Lord hath given me are for signs and wonders.*"

Hebrews 2:13-15

"And again I will put my trust in him. and again, Behold I and the Children which God hath given me"

It is generally regarded that Isaiah speaks of himself and of his own children, as raised up by the Lord, to encourage the people to trust in God and his faithfulness to deliver them in difficult

times. Clearly however the author of Hebrews sees more in this. He seems to see in this our Lord Jesus Christ and his spiritual offspring. He is speaking in the context of the trials and sufferings of Christ, and the trials and sufferings that his people will pass through. In the same way as Isaiah prophesied they are all brought safely through.

Our point here is that the Old Testament prophets spoke at times in terms of things which carried and bore in them the seeds of future truths of which at the time they were not fully aware of, or at least the significance of.

Dr. Masters comments on this aspect of Old Testament prophecy as follows:

We do not claim that the human authors always understood everything of the message that God gave them, for they were given words from the very mind of God, and were frequently moved to write far more Truth than they appreciated. We learn from One Peter 1:10 – 12 that the inspired writers of the Old Testament studied their own words just as we search the Scriptures today. No doubt they understood what they were written up to a point, but became "Bible students" when they wish to grasp the detailed implications of the message God channelled through them.

Not Like any Other Book p. 20

Again another point is;

It is true to say that some of the Old Testament references found in Hebrews are loose quotations simply giving the spirit of the text, or as we say its general meaning and application.

In chapter 5 however we have an example of reasoning based on the importance of single words and expressions in a text .

In chapter 5 verse 6 Paul is speaking of Melchisedec.

Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

He is quoting from the 110th Psalm.

The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek

His whole argument in chapters 5,6 and 7 are an answer to the Jews querying the fact that Christ is not a priest after the law – i.e. the order of Aaron, but indeed a priest of far superior order ie. that of the order of Melchisedec. And the nature of that excellence is expounded from the express words of this text.

Demonstrating that the New Testament authors viewed and expected their readers to understand the Old Testament as a divinely authoritative document.

For an illustration of an argument based on one word see John Owen Heb 9 :7.

But unto the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people.

John Owen quotes first from the Psalms where the word errors is used. That is Psalm 19:12, Psalm 25:7 and Psalm 95:10. He also refers to II Chronicles 16:9, I Samuel 26:21, Hosea 4:16 amongst others. He said is that where the word errors is used it refers to all the sins of the people of whatever nature they were. He says errors have their origin in the heart and the mind.

Here, indeed, lies the original of all sin. The mind being filled with darkness and ignorance, alienates the whole soul from the life of God. And as it had superadded prejudices, which it receives from corrupt desires, it yet neither directs nor judgeth aright, as unto particular acts, and duties, under all present circumstances. And what notions of good and evil it cannot but retain, it gives up in particular instances onto the occasions of sin.

Owen then goes on to say that spiritual illumination of the mind is indispensably necessary to our walking with God.

Then are listed the methods and ways we can best seek to walk with God.

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Also understanding of the word blood from I.V.P Commentary p 165.

In chapter 9 verse 22 we have another particular word that it is important to referred to the Old Testament in order to rightly understand. That is the word blood.

Without shedding of blood is no remission.

Hebrews 9:22

This is an unmistakable reference to the sacrificial death of Christ, and needs to be seen, as it is intended to be seen. Hebrews against the background of the Old Testament.

Several modern scholars have followed the late 19th century interpretation offered by B. F. Westcott, that when the New Testament makes use of this term, it is meant to indicate the release of life. Westcott says that in the biblical idea of sacrifice "two distinct ideas were included": "the death of the victim by the shedding of its blood, and the liberation, so to speak of the principle of life by which it had been animated,

so that this life became available for another end". Westcott goes on to say that "the blood of Christ represents Christ's life."

This is not the Biblical understanding of the word blood. In Biblical thought blood shed stands not for the release of life from the burden of the flesh, but for the bringing to an end of life in the flesh. It is a witness to physical death, not an evidence of spiritual survival. In this letter to the Hebrews, the phrase resist to the point of shedding one's blood (12:4) plainly means to die rather than compromise. The shedding of Christ's blood refers to the once and for all sacrifice and death of Christ for our redemption. Hebrews chapter 9 gives a full exposition of the Old Testament use and meaning of the word blood through which we are safeguarded from wrong interpretations such as those offered by B.F. Westcott.

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Chapters 8 and 9 are great chapters on the covenant. Spurgeon has a wonderful sermon on this in volume 58 published for reading on Thursday, October 31, 1912.

He begins by saying: the doctrine of the divine covenant lies at the root of all true theology. It is been said that he who well understands the distinction between the Covenant of works in the Covenant of grace is a master in divinity. I am persuaded that most of the mistakes which men make concerning the doctrines of Scripture are based upon fundamental errors with regard to the Covenants of law and of grace.

Chapter 9 uses again illustrations from the Old Testament to expound the doctrine of the atonement. The opening verses 1-5 offer of the preacher an opportunity in one sermon to remind his hearers of the spiritual significance of the furniture of the Tabernacle.

From Chapter 10:19 begins the second part of this Epistle that is the exhortation to apply these truths to our hearts and lives.

The end of this chapter forms an introduction to the extremely well known chapter 11. The last verses of chapter 10 contains the famous quotation from Habakkuk 2:1. *The just shall live by faith.* Paul is using this text to bolster the strength of the faith of his readers under persecution and perplexity, and to introduce the 11th chapter whereby they see that the great heroes of the Old Testament walked with God by faith as he is now exhorting them to do in difficult times.

Jewish believers threatened with excommunication from the Temple and all that it stood for are here being shown that they not the unbelieving Jews truly stand in the faith of their fathers. Though they may be cut off from the O.T. ordinances, which was a trial for them, they are not cut off from the great saints of the O.T. they are in fact following in their steps. They like them are *Looking to Jesus the great author and finisher of our faith.* (12:2)

Chapter 11 is the great chapter on faith. Having shown them the glory of the Gospel of Christ he exhorts them to steadfastness. Through the lives of the great Saints of the Old Testament he

encourage them, by their example to stand fast in the faith once given. The great saints of old throughout the Old Testament era through thousands of years suffered shame and reproach yet knew the power of God with them, so they must hold fast and see that great power of work in their lives also.

Evidence we may say of history, which reminds us that the New Testament writers regarded these as real people and the events in recorded of their lives as true historical occurrences.

In closing let us sum up with these words...

It is of great importance that we should understand the manner in which the writers of the New Testament appealed to the Old. They find in the ancient Scriptures germs of truth, undeveloped principles, glimpses of something more glorious than the Psalmist and Prophets themselves perceived, elementary illustrations of the deepest laws of God's government; and they quote these passages to illustrate the work and confirm the doctrine of Christ.....

It is not merely in the direct promises of the Old Testament that thoughtful Christian will recognize "the shadow of heavenly things;" he will find simple lessons on the highest spiritual truths in the history of the patriarchs, and the sorrows and hopes of the Psalmist's; just as Sir Isaac Newton is said to have first recognized in the fall of an Apple the law which guides the motion of the planets, and sustains the harmonies of the universe; just as the student of the most difficult questions of philosophy will recall some of the experiences of his childhood, as affording the earliest illustrations of the most remarkable and subtle laws of man's intellectual activity.

The Jewish Temple R.W. Dale p.224

So we find here in Hebrews;

The sublime theme of Christ's Divinity and Godhead. A superb portrait of our all sufficient Saviour.

The long expected Jesus the Messiah.

The earnest exhortation to live the life of faith, the life of true Christian maturity, stability and usefulness.

And as we have focused upon this afternoon.. essential principles and guidance in the correct handling and interpretation of Scripture.