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978-1-107-66994-9 - A Short Commentary on the Book of Daniel: For the Use of Students

A. A. Bevan

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A SHORT COMMENTARY
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BOOK OF DANIEL
FOR THE USE OF STUDENTS

BY

A. A. BEVAN, M.A.

FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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PREFACE.

THE main object of this work is to assist those who are entering upon the study of the language and text of the Book of Daniel, by affording them such philological information as they are most likely to need. Since however philology can never be separated from history, I have found it necessary to devote considerable space to the treatment of historical questions. In the history of religion the Book of Daniel occupies a very important, perhaps a unique, position, but the working out of this subject belongs rather to the historian than to the commentator. Hence the relation in which this Book stands to the Prophets on the one hand and to the later Apocalypses on the other could not here be examined at any great length. Discussions upon speculative theology or philosophy I have studiously avoided, as I cannot but think that when introduced into exegetical works they serve rather to obscure than to elucidate the real matters at issue.

It is scarcely necessary to say that this work contains very little that is new. As to the character and general meaning of the Book of Daniel all sober critics have long been agreed, and I have therefore, in the great majority of cases, contented myself with stating, as concisely as possible, the views of former investigators. It has been my endeavour to collect, not only from Commentaries but from all other sources accessible to me, whatever appeared to be of real value for the purpose of interpretation. In a book intended for ordinary students an

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exhaustive treatment of the subject is, of course, out of the question. Hence it did not seem to me desirable to fill my pages with bibliographical details interesting only to the curious. It would indeed have been easy to supply much fuller lists of names and references, but had I attempted to give anything like a history of the interpretation of each passage, my book would have been swelled to many times its present bulk. Only now and then have I thought it worth while to say something about the views of the Rabbins and of the Christian Fathers. In citing modern writers I have generally confined myself to mentioning those whose works are the fruit of original research, passing over in silence the crowd of imitators and imitators of imitators. I ought here to state that I have unfortunately not been able to consult the essay of J. W. van Lennep, *De 70 jaarweken van Daniel* (Utrecht, 1888). Still more have I reason to regret that Prof. Driver's *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* did not appear till my book was in the press, and has thus been used only to a very limited extent. Some persons may perhaps think that I have not examined at sufficient length the arguments brought forward by Hengstenberg and English writers who belong to the same school. But the fact is that in a great number of cases these arguments are based upon assumptions which all scholars now agree in rejecting. Of what use would it be, for example, to refute such arguments of Hengstenberg as rest upon the theory that the First Book of the Maccabees was originally written in Greek, or to point out the numerous statements of Pusey, respecting Aramaic philology, which are now universally regarded as erroneous?

On many questions, as might have been expected, I have found it impossible to form a definite opinion. Though the Book of Daniel is by no means one of the more difficult books of the Old Testament, it nevertheless contains a considerable number of passages of which the meaning is still uncertain, and some which will perhaps remain for ever unintelligible. Where

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doubt or obscurity exists I have never sought to disguise the fact, and in offering explanations of my own I have been careful to indicate that they are mere suggestions to be accepted or rejected by the reader as he thinks fit. One principal cause of difficulty seems to me to be the corruption of the text. During the last fifty years the opinion that the text of the Old Testament is well-nigh faultless, has been constantly losing ground. The common maxim that the difficulty of readings raises a presumption in favour of their genuineness, is true only if understood to mean that no scribe *consciously* substitutes a difficult reading for an easy one. But when readings owe their origin to carelessness or to the external damaging of a manuscript, the above maxim is obviously inapplicable. In very many cases the text of the Old Testament can be explained only by means of conjecture, and our task consists in deciding which of several conjectures is the most probable. When I have proposed conjectural emendations I have done so in the full consciousness of the fact that very few emendations have any claim to be regarded as certain. The Hebrew of Daniel, as compared with that of other Old Testament writings, has so many marked peculiarities that it would be altogether a mistake to ascribe every anomaly to textual corruption. The business of the true textual critic is to distinguish those anomalies which are characteristic of the author's style from those which are not, in other words to distinguish linguistic peculiarities from linguistic impossibilities. The practice of rash and arbitrary emendation cannot of course be condemned too severely, but the old-fashioned school, who tortured grammar and syntax in order to extract a meaning from obscure passages, must appear equally unscientific.

In all that relates to Aramaic philology I have been guided chiefly by the works of Professor Nöldeke, of Strassburg, in particular by his *Mandäische Grammatik* (Halle, 1875), and his "Beiträge zur Kenntniss der aramäischen Dialecte" in the *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Vols.

XXI, XXII, and XXIV. By far the best work on Biblical Aramaic is Prof. Kautzsch's *Grammatik des Biblisch-Aramäischen* (Leipzig, 1884). If I have occasionally ventured to express disagreement with Prof. Kautzsch, this has been done solely from the conviction that his work is likely long to remain a standard book of reference, so that it is particularly necessary to point out those statements in it which are open to criticism. The older Grammars are very untrustworthy, since they were written at a time when a scientific classification of the Aramaic dialects had not yet been made, and when Biblical Aramaic (or, as it used to be called, Chaldee) was commonly believed to be a dialect learnt by the Jews in Babylonia during the Exile. That it is, on the contrary, a *West-Aramaic* dialect, has now been conclusively proved. I have endeavoured throughout to call attention to the close resemblance between the Aramaic of the Bible and the dialects afterwards spoken in Palestine and the neighbouring countries. In order the better to illustrate that resemblance I have published, in an Appendix, some specimens of the Palmyrene inscriptions, which have hitherto been practically inaccessible to most English students. Very similar is the dialect represented by the Nabatean inscriptions, which may best be studied in Prof. Euting's *Nabatäische Inschriften aus Arabien* (Berlin, 1885). The dialect of the Palestinian Christians is known chiefly from the Lectionary published at Verona in 1861—1864 by the Count Francesco Miniscalchi Erizzo, under the title of *Evangeliarium Hierosolymitanum*. In referring to the Samaritan dialect I have always quoted from Nutt's *Fragments of a Samaritan Targum* (London, 1874), of which the text is generally admitted to be more correct than that contained in the Polyglot Bibles.

Of Assyriology I possess no independent knowledge. My principal authority is Prof. Schrader's work *The Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament*, which I have used in the English translation (published by Williams and Norgate, 1885—1888), since it contains the latest corrections by the author.

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In my citations I have followed the paging of the German edition, which is given in the margin of the English text, so that possessors of either work will be able without difficulty to verify my references.

The transcription of Oriental words is notoriously a matter about which scholars still differ, and here I have found it impossible to be strictly consistent. Quotations from Phoenician and Aramaic inscriptions, from the Samaritan Targum and from the Christian Palestinian Lectionary have been printed in ordinary Hebrew letters. Syriac has usually been printed in the Old Syriac character, without vowel points, but when it was necessary to indicate the vocalization, I have, for the convenience of those who do not read Syriac, followed the method of transcription adopted by the late Prof. Wright in his article "Syriac Literature" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th ed.)—a method which in spite of some disadvantages is perhaps the best that has yet been proposed. Assyrian and Babylonian words are generally spelt as in Prof. Schrader's work, but for š, which is liable to perplex English readers, I have written *sh*, and the guttural which corresponds to the Arabic ح has been represented by *kh*. It is perhaps not superfluous to add that the real pronunciation of the Assyrio-Babylonian language is still very uncertain, since even on points so important as the number of the vowels Assyriologists are not yet agreed, some maintaining and others denying that *e* and *i* are distinguished in the cuneiform character.

In a work compiled from so many scattered sources and touching upon so many different subjects, errors will naturally be found. Some of these have, I hope, been rectified in the "Addenda et Corrigenda", but others no doubt remain. If in any place I have failed, through inadvertence, to acknowledge obligations to previous writers, I beg to offer them my sincere apologies. It remains for me to express my thanks to those personal friends who have aided me in the revising of this book. Prof. Robertson Smith has been so good as to

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read through the greater part of it, either in manuscript or in proof, and to him I owe many valuable suggestions. I am also greatly indebted to Mr E. A. Wallis Budge, of the British Museum, who has on several occasions supplied me with information on Assyriological matters.

TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
Dec. 1891.

ADDENDA ET CORRIGENDA.

- Page 3—That the original Pēshittā did not contain the apocryphal additions to Daniel may be inferred from the fact that Polychronius, who lived early in the 5th century, says with reference to the Song of the Three Children, Εἰδέναι δὲ δεῖ ὡς οὗτος ὁ ὕμνος οὐ κέλται ἐν τοῖς Ἑβραϊκοῖς ἢ ἐν τοῖς Συριακοῖς βιβλίοις.
- p. 9—Since the above was written, a posthumous edition of Prof. Delitzsch's *Messianic Prophecies* has appeared.
- p. 17, line 30—For *Nabūnāid* read *Nabūnāid*; the same mistake occurs again on p. 18 and in the note on p. 19.
- p. 36—The suffix הָם “their” appears frequently in Nabatean inscriptions, most of which are post-Christian.
- p. 37—As specimens of the Passive formed by internal vowel-change may be mentioned the word עבירה “was made” in a Nabatean inscription of the year 39 A.D. found at Madabah (see the *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, Vol. v. p. 290), and the Palmyrene נבי “has been taxed” (cf. גלי Dan. ii. 19, 30) in the Fiscal Inscription, where it is said טעון קרם די כלמא ננס כלה לארבעא טעונין די נמלין די מכסא נבי “a cart-load of whatsoever kind has been taxed as much as four camel-loads.”
- p. 39, line 19—For *‘ālayk* read *‘ālaik*.

ADDENDA ET CORRIGENDA.

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- p. 41, note 2—It should be noticed that in this passage of Polybius the *κεράτιον* corresponds to the קרנא of Dan. iii. 5, 7, 10, 15. The reading *κεραμίον* is evidently a mistake.
- p. 70—With regard to the phrase כּל־קבּל דּי “because”, I should have cited the remarks of Luzzatto in his *Elementi grammaticali del Caldeo biblico*, p. 52, “La voce כל non ha qui alcun valore, e sembra che le due voci קל־קבּל formassero primitivamente una sola voce קל־קבּל eguale al Rabbinico קל־אפי, קל־אפי. Da כּל־קבּל sembra nato il corrispondente קל־עמית di Koheleth”. This explanation appears to me decidedly preferable to the ordinary one.
- p. 74—On אֲלֵי “behold!” see Prof. Driver’s note (*Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, Addenda, p. xxv), where the word הלו in an Aramaic inscription of Egypt (*Corpus Inscr. Sem.* Pt. 2, N°. 137) is explained as being probably a variant of אֲלֵי.
- p. 83, last line—For *Lehnwörter* read *Fremdwörter*.
- p. 86, line 16—For (and תּבּוּל chap. v. 16) read (and תּבּוּל chap. v. 16, *Kēri*).
- p. 120, line 17—For *Chald. Wörterb.* read *Wörterb. über die Targumim*.
- p. 146—The method of interpreting Scripture by the artificial combination of different passages is so strikingly set forth in a fragment of Origen’s Commentary on the Psalms that it may be worth while to quote it. “In entering upon the interpretation of the Psalms, let me first cite a tradition of singular beauty which has been handed down to me by my Hebrew teacher as applying generally to all Holy Scripture. This Hebrew used to say that all divinely-inspired Scripture, by reason of its uncertain import, might be compared to a number of chambers in a single building, all locked. At the door of each chamber there is a key, but not the key which fits it; and thus the keys have been scattered over the chambers, none being adapted to the chamber where it is found. Hence it is a work of enormous difficulty to find the keys and to fit them to the chambers which they are capable of opening. The Scriptures then can be explained only when they receive one from another the first hints towards their explanation, since they contain in themselves

scattered up and down the principles of their exegesis". (See Delarue's edition, Vol. II. pp. 526, 527.) For this reference I am indebted to the kindness of the Rev. J. A. Robinson of Christ's College.

- p. 148, line 5—The date 588 B.C., for the destruction of Jerusalem, is that given by Schürer (*Gesch. d. jüd. Volkes*, II. p. 616) and by Driver (in the Chronological Table at the beginning of his *Isaiah, his life and times*). But the latter scholar has since adopted the view that Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C. (*Introduction*, pp. 232, 233).
- p. 183, line 21—It is possible that וּבַת הַנְּשִׁים is a corruption of וּבָתוּ בְּנָשִׁים, i.e. "and he shall give him his daughter to wife" etc. The phrase בְּנָשִׁים "to wife", "in marriage", does not seem to occur elsewhere in Hebrew or Jewish Aramaic, but כְּנָשָׁא often has this meaning in Syriac; cf. *The Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite*, ed. Wright, p. 19 of the Syriac text, line 8—
 ܡܪܝܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܠܡܢ ܕܢܘܨܬܐ "she gave her to him in marriage".

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N.B. *Citations from the Old Testament are always made according to the chapters and verses of the Hebrew Bible.*

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Καί μοι δοκεῖ μεγίστην θεὸν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἢ φύσιν ἀπο-
δείξαι τὴν Ἀλήθειαν καὶ μεγίστην αὐτῇ προσθεῖναι δύναμιν.
πάντων γοῦν αὐτὴν καταγωνιζομένων ἐνίοτε καὶ πασῶν τῶν
πιθανοτήτων μετὰ τοῦ ψεύδους ταπτομένων, οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως αὐτῇ
δι' αὐτῆς εἰς τὰς ψυχὰς εἰσδύεται τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ ποτὲ
μὲν παραχρῆμα δείκνυσι τὴν αὐτῆς δύναμιν, ποτὲ δὲ καὶ
πολὸν χρόνον ἐπισκοπισθεῖσα τέλος αὐτῇ δι' ἑαυτῆς ἐπικρατεῖ
καὶ καταγωνίζεται τὸ ψεῦδος.

POLYBIUS, *Fragm. of Bk. XIII.*

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