

**VOL. XXXVI. NEW
TESTAMENT STUDIES.
BIBLE READING IN
THE EARLY CHURCH**

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THE EARLY CHURCH

BY

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TRANSLATED BY

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PREFACE

ALL that need be said of the interest and importance of the question of the use of the Holy Scriptures in the Early Church has been set forth in the Introduction.

The "History of the New Testament" includes not only the history of its versions in various languages, but also the history of its use. Again, the history of the use is also, in its first stages at least, included in the subject of "Introduction to the New Testament," because the question *in what sense* the collection of writings known as the New Testament was regarded as a *Canon* of religion is not decided by saying that it was regarded as canonical, but can only be answered by finding out what use was actually made of this collection. No objection, therefore, can be raised against our including the following investigation in our *New Testament Studies*, which deal principally with the subject of "Introduction to the New Testament." The public use of the New Testament in the ancient Church is, as a matter of course, included in every considerable work on the History of the Canon of Scripture—*cf.* Glaue's *Die Vorlesung heiliger Schriften im Gottesdienste* (1907)—and it is simply an oversight that the private use has not also been taken into consideration. The knowledge of the latter use is quite indispensable

if we would know what the New Testament signified as the Canon of the Early Church. It is true that in this investigation the Old Testament should not be separated from the New; but in the Church the Old Testament has stood in the shadow of the New ever since the New Testament came into being.

In the following pages will be found a series of interesting references of which little notice has hitherto been taken in works on Church history, though they throw peculiar light upon the character and life of the Early Church. Though I have aimed at comprehensiveness, it is certain not only that much has escaped my notice, but also that I have only lightly touched upon some questions although they are closely connected with the main problem, such as the character and distribution of religious and theological literature other than Scripture, the relation between public lection and private reading, the use of verses of Scripture as amulets, and so forth. I have also endeavoured to be as concise as possible, and have left the reader to draw complete inferences from many instances which I have quoted. My chief object, as will be seen from the work itself, has been to bring to light, in connection with the use of sacred writings, the peculiar characteristics of the Christian religion, even in its ancient Catholic form, as compared with the mystery-religions. In this sense I might have described my book as belonging to the comparative study of religions. Again, though I did not definitely intend this, it serves to confirm the view that the

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Reformation, by placing the Bible in the hands of every Christian layman, has only returned to the simple confidence of the Early Church. It is therefore with peculiar pleasure that I submit my investigations to the man whom, on the occasion of his jubilee, we greet with thankful acclaim as *vindex reformationis et reformatorem*.¹

A. HARNACK.

BERLIN, 30th March 1912.

¹ The German edition is dedicated by Professor Harnack to Theodor Brieger.

