

**A BOOK OF OLD TESTAMENT
LESSONS FOR PUBLIC
READING IN CHURCHES; A
LECTIONARY, VOL. I; TEXT**

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ROBERT WILLIAM ROGERS

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LESSONS FOR PUBLIC
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LECTIONARY, VOL. I; TEXT**

A BOOK OF
OLD TESTAMENT LESSONS
For Public Reading in Churches

A LECTIONARY

Edited
with Introduction and Notes
By
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VOLUME I
TEXT



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PREFACE

THE public reading of the Holy Scriptures has fallen upon very sad days, in respect of the Old Testament, in all churches which have no lectionary established and commanded. The duties of a professorship, rather than the care of a church, have for a third of a century carried me on various errands of preaching, lecturing, attendance upon committees or conventions into many Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches. In them all I have seldom found provision made for anything like a regular reading of two lessons, one from the Old and the other from the New Testament. In many a selection of the Psalter is read responsively, and then the New Testament lesson, while the Law, the Prophets, and the Wise Men bring no word to common worship and instruction. If the preacher intends to preach from an Old Testament text, he may read the passage, or one related to it; or if his text be from the New Testament, he may make use of some Old Testament lesson which points toward it or gives it some light or contrast. Apart from these or other more or less related instances the reading of the Old Testament in the ears of a worshiping congregation has disappeared from among us, but for the few, here or there, who love it and are deeply conscious that it has a living message for to-day.

Wherever and whenever the Old Testament is read at all the selection from it tends strongly, among these great and powerful churches, toward the repetition of a few favorite passages which run in a little

round and very largely in Isaiah. Beyond this the great deeps of the divine story, or address of God to the souls of men, lie unexplored, or but lightly traversed. So much is this true in my experience that I used to say at times in my Old Testament lecture room that I had never heard a passage from Jeremiah read in the public congregation. Then one day one of my own students, preaching in the chapel, read from the greatest of the prophets, having quietly remarked to his fellows in advance that I should never be able to say that again! The sense of humor has happily not departed from theological students!

As the years went forward I found myself more and more lamenting the neglect of the Old Testament, and as far as my feeble voice could reach urging young men entering the ministry to find some way, each for himself, to better the condition, to make the prophets, at least, vocal once more. Perhaps it helped. I do not know. But I kept turning it over in my mind seeking some way of encouragement and help until in 1912 I began to make a little Old Testament lectionary, and only now is it finished and very humbly and earnestly and imploringly offered for any use little or much that few or many may find for it.

In the Introduction (Vol. II) I have written a little sketch of the story of the rise and development of lectionaries; I would it might be read, for it should suggest that we have made far less use of the Old Testament in these days than our fathers, whether spiritually ours in Judaism or more closely ours in Protestantism. I could not look forward very hopefully toward the adoption of any scheme of lessons

for twice on Sunday, nor for lessons that were very long. I have therefore made lessons for but one service, but with a goodly selection beyond the ordinary year and alternatives from which an evening lesson might be drawn when occasion served. The lessons are arranged according to the church year, but there is no special need so to use them unless one wills. Very few are so closely attached to any church season that they might not be quite appropriately read at any other season. If one would follow closely or slightly the church year, the calendar will make it easy to find the day; if not, the lessons are numbered simply, and the index will make it easy to find any one.

The choice of these lessons has been spread over years. Some come from the old Church of England lessons, others from the new plan of the same church, to which allusion is made in the Introduction. Some come from John Wesley's selection, others from the lectionaries of the churches of Lutheranism both European and American; still others have been suggested by selections made for literary quality such as the beautiful one by Sir James George Frazer,¹ and perhaps a very few are personal. The list has suffered many revisions, passages have gone in and been taken out, some have been shortened and others lengthened. The order has been bettered, and, alas! perhaps worsened, while the list has lain for weeks or months before another revision; but enthusiasm and interest never died out.

The text chosen is in the most part simply the Revised Version, not the American Standard. It

¹ *Passages from the Bible Chosen for Their Literary Beauty and Interest.* 1895. 2nd Ed., 1909.