

**THE ALEXANDRINE GOSPEL
(SIRACH, WISDOM,
PHILO, THE EPISTLE TO
THE HEBREWS), NO. XVII**

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The Alexandrine gospel (Sirach, Wisdom, Philo, the Epistle to the Hebrews), No. XVII by A. Nairne

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A. NAIRNE

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Liverpool Diocesan Board of Divinity Publications

No. XVII.

THE
ALEXANDRINE GOSPEL

(SIRACH, WISDOM, PHILO,
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS)

BY THE REV.

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CHURCHMAN OF CHESTER

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PREFACE.

The Diocesan Board of Divinity have allowed me, as they did last year, to print at somewhat greater length than was possible in delivery. For this and much other kindness, especially from the Lord Bishop and the Chancellor of the Diocese and from Canon J. T. Mitchell, I would express my gratitude. All the authors named in the list of books have been of service to me; my obligation to Bréhier in the pages on Philo is very great. To Canon Box and Mr. J. H. A. Hart I owe far more than I have learned from their books, and I thank them for special help, generously given, in the preparation of these lectures.

A. NAIRNE,

CHESTER, JUNE, 1917.

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The Alexandrine Gospel.

SYLLABUS.

I.

THE WISDOM OF SIRACH OR ECCLESIASTICUS.

Alexandria founded by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. : monument of imperial failure and spiritual success : centre of Hellenistic world.

There the Jewish Colony made the Septuagint version of the Law. Thither came the grandson of Jesus the son of Eleazar the son of Sirach in 247 or 132 B.C. with his grandfather's book, and translated it into Greek : the greater part of the Hebrew original was recovered in 1896.

Hebrew Wisdom, a critical theology : quiet and steadfast in Proverbs Sirach and Rabbis : boldly protestant in Job and Ecclesiastes : modern and philosophic in Wisdom of Solomon and Philo.

Sirach keeps the old ways "as one that gleaneth after the grapegatherers ;" righteous, kindly shrewd ; a pious heart ; loyal to the fathers and the sacred books : a friend of the simple, he magnifies the office of the leisured scribe. His book comes home to us

and wins our affection; "example of life and instruction of manners." His whole doctrine of faith works hope love forgiveness springs from direct trust in God as King Saviour Father: he worships the LORD and asks no questions about the Absolute.

What would he have thought of a second edition of his work with enlargements from the new school of the Pharisees? yet thus till lately have we read it; cf. AV with RV: who were the Pharisees and Sadducees?

II.

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON AND PHILO.

WISDOM.

The name and date of the author of Wisdom are unknown; he personates Solomon only as a literary convention; is later than Sirach and earlier than Philo. But he wrote when persecution made love for enemies a hard and therefore important doctrine.

Greek education helped him to solve the problems of his time: (a) in spite of triumphant wickedness God does care for men, but he works indirectly by the mediation of wisdom his effluent spirit: (b) though good men are slain their life is preserved, for the

soul is immortal: (c) the world is good, not evil, for the holy Spirit of God, who loves all men, animates the whole.

His heart is enlarged by philosophy, not changed; his direct Jewish trust in God predominates. How far his Greek training went is doubtful; he treats the language with rude but vigorous genius: the two divisions of the book.

PHILO.

Philo was contemporary with our Lord. A devout Jew of Alexandria but also a discursive student of Greek literature, he interpreted the law philosophically with flowing language and unsystematic reasoning.

Sincerely attached both to synagogue and academy, he found in allegory an instrument for criticism of the sacred books and for modernism in faith: within the plain historical sense lies a more intellectual truth; beyond the simple Jewish conception of God as King Saviour Father extends the all-including abstract reality of God.

But how can such Deity reach the heart of the creature? By the mediating Word, which Philo describes with such a wealth of illustration as almost persuades us that the problem has been solved.