

SYNONYMS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

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Synonyms of the New Testament by Richard Chenevix Trench

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RICHARD CHENEVIX TRENCH

**SYNONYMS OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT**

SYNONYMS

OF

THE NEW TESTAMENT;

BEING

THE SUBSTANCE OF A COURSE OF
LECTURES ADDRESSED TO THE THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS,
KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON.

BY

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P R E F A C E

THIS little volume has grown out of a short course of lectures on the synonyms of the New Testament, which, in the fulfilment of my duties as Professor of Divinity at King's College, I have more than once addressed to the theological students there. It seemed to me that lectures on such a subject might help, in however partial a measure, to supply a want, of which many of the students themselves are probably conscious, of which those who have to do with their training cannot help being aware. The long, patient and exact studies in philology of our great schools and universities, which form so invaluable a portion of their mental, and, I will add, of their moral discipline also, can find no place during the two years or two years and a half of the theological course at King's College. The time itself is too short to allow this, and it is

in great part claimed by other and more pressing studies. Some, indeed, we rejoice to find, come to us possessing this knowledge in a very respectable degree already; while of others much more than this can be said. Yet where it does not already exist, it is quite impossible that it can be more than in part supplied. At the same time we feel the loss and the deficiency; we are sometimes conscious of it even in those who go forth from us with general theological acquirements, which would bear a favourable comparison with the acquirements of those trained in older institutions. It is a matter of regret, when in papers admirable in all other respects, errors of inexact scholarship are to be found, which seem quite out of keeping with the amount of intelligence, and the standard of knowledge, which every where else they display.

Feeling the immense value of these studies, and how unwise it would be, because we cannot have all which we would desire, to forego what is possible and within our reach, I have two or three times dedicated a brief course of lectures to the comparative value of words in the New Testament—and these, with some subsequent additions and some defalcations, have supplied the materials of the present volume. I have never doubted that, setting aside those higher and more solemn lessons, which in a great measure are out of our reach to

impart, being to be taught rather by God than men, there are few things which we should have more at heart than to awaken in our scholars an enthusiasm for the grammar and the lexicon. We shall have done much, very much for those who come to us for theological training and generally for mental guidance, if we can persuade them to have these continually in their hands; if we can make them believe that with these, and out of these, they may be learning more, obtaining more real and lasting acquisitions, such as will stay by them, such as will form a part of the texture of their own minds for ever, that they shall from these be more effectually accomplishing themselves for their future work, than from many a volume of divinity, studied before its time, even if it were worth studying at all, crudely digested, and therefore turning to no true nourishment of the inner man.

But having now ventured to challenge for these lectures a somewhat wider audience than at first they had, it may be permitted to me to add here a very few observations on the value of the study of synonyms, not any longer considered in reference to our peculiar needs, but generally; and on that of the synonyms of the New Testament in particular; as also on the helps to this study which are at present in existence.

The value of this study as a discipline for

training the mind into close and accurate habits of thought, the amount of instruction which may be drawn from it, the increase of intellectual wealth which it may yield, all this has been implicitly recognized by well-nigh all great writers—for well-nigh all from time to time have paused, themselves to play the dividers and discerners of words—explicitly by not a few who have proclaimed the value which this study had in their eyes. And instructive as in any language it must be, it must be eminently so in the Greek—a language spoken by a people of the finest and subtlest intellect; who saw distinctions where others saw none; who divided out to different words what others often were content to huddle under a common term; who were themselves singularly alive to its value, diligently cultivating the art of synonymous distinction,¹ and sometimes even to an extravagant excess;² who have bequeathed a multitude of fine and delicate observations on the right distinguishing of their own words to the after world.

And while thus, with reference to all Greek, the investigation of the likenesses and differences of words appears especially invited by the characteristic excellences of the language, in respect to

¹ The *ὀνόματα διαπεῖν*, Plato, *Laches*, 197 d.

² Id. *Protag.* 377 a b c.

the Greek of the New Testament, plainly there are reasons additional inviting us to this study. If by it we become aware of delicate variations in an author's meaning, which otherwise we might have missed, where is it so desirable that we should not miss anything, that we should lose no finer intention of the writer, than in those words which are the vehicles of the very mind of God? If it increases the intellectual riches of the student, can this anywhere be of so great importance as there, where the intellectual may, if rightly used, prove spiritual riches as well? If it encourage thoughtful meditation on the exact forces of words, both as they are in themselves, and in their relation to other words, or in any way unveil to us their marvel and their mystery, this can nowhere else have a worth in the least approaching that which it acquires when the words with which we have to do are, to those who receive them aright, words of eternal life; while out of the dead carcasses of the same, if men suffer the spirit of life to depart from them, all manner of corruptions and heresies may be, as they have been, bred.

The *words* of the New Testament are eminently the *στοιχεῖα* of Christian theology, and he who will not begin with a patient study of these, shall never make any considerable, least of all any secure, advances in this: for here, as everywhere else, disap-