

**THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS. A
JUSTIFICATION OF ITS NATIONAL TITLE AND
CHARACTER, AND AN EXPOSITION OF
CONTROVERTED PASSAGES IN CONFORMITY
THEREWITH. THE DONNELLAN LECTURES,
PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF
DUBLIN, IN THE YEARS 1871 & 1872**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649575770

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FOR
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CONFORMITY THEREWITH.


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THE YEARS 1871 & 1872.

BY

JOHN LEECH, M.A., T.C.D.

DUBLIN :
HODGES, FOSTER AND CO.,
PUBLISHERS TO THE UNIVERSITY.
LONDON: RIVINGTONS, WATERLOO PLACE.
1874.



100. 7. 203.

PREFACE.

THE writer, while preparing many years ago to take Holy Orders in the United Church of England and Ireland, felt dissatisfied with the explanations hitherto given by Commentators to Heb. xiii. 10-17, and framed an explanation contained in a letter published in "The Christian Examiner," Jan. 7, 1860. This exposition he subsequently supported by another letter, published in the same periodical, in reply to a serious objection raised by a learned Divine,—an ornament of the Church of Ireland. The principle laid down in those letters (embodied and expanded in the sixth lecture) is,—that the passage refers to the Hebrew people, and not to any Christian Church. This principle has been in the following pages extended to the Epistle itself,—by attempting (as in the first lecture), to shew that the Epistle (to whomsoever sent) was designed for the benefit of the Hebrew people, and not for only the believing section thereof, and by explaining in that sense, portions of the epistle, which in their ordinary

application have been encompassed with considerable difficulty.

To the kindness of the Provost and Senior Fellows of Trinity College in the University of Dublin, the writer is deeply indebted for the favourable auspices under which he is enabled to bring these lectures before the public.

The views advocated in the following pages are, he confesses, new ; and run counter to those found in even the latest and most esteemed commentaries ; but the author would respectfully ask of his readers the favour of a patient and impartial hearing before the verdict is pronounced.

MITCHELSTOWN,

April 10, 1874.

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LECTURE I.

A JUSTIFICATION OF TITLE.

"God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."—HEB. i. 1, 2.

IN the first of this course of lectures we shall endeavour to ascertain 'for what readers the Epistle was designed;' for this question once settled will materially aid us in our subsequent investigations.

Commentators have carelessly treated as one the two very distinct questions,—'To whom was the Epistle sent?'—and, 'For what readers was it designed?' In our search for the answer to the latter question, we shall endeavour to avoid this confusion.

In their views with regard to our question expositors seem to us to be as inconsistent with the truth, as they are divergent from each other: they have not even noticed the only answer, which appears to us to satisfy the question, 'For what readers was it written?'—an answer, nevertheless, suggested by the very title, which for ages the Epistle has borne, 'The Epistle to the Hebrews.'

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