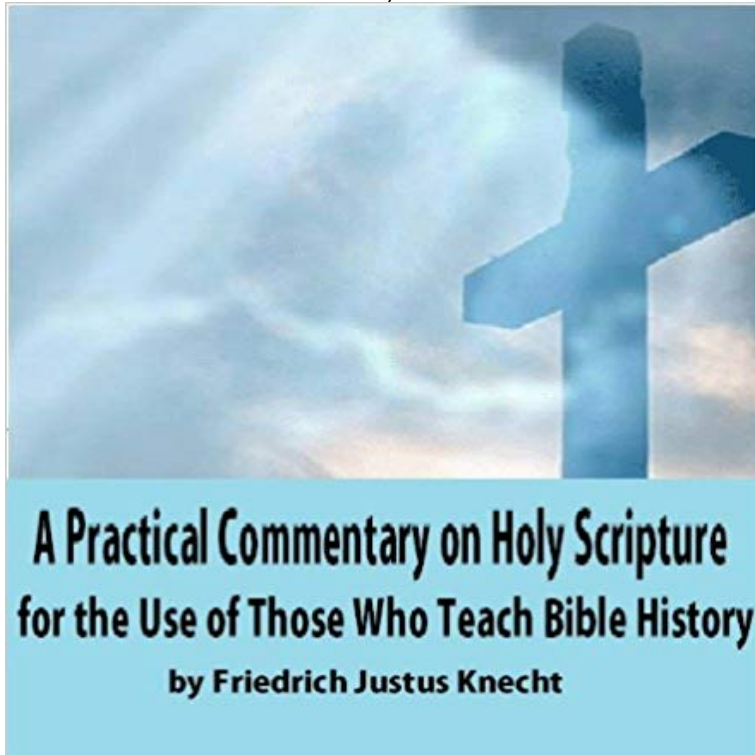


A Practical Commentary on Holy Scripture for the Use of Those Who Teach Bible History



PREFACE TO THE FIRST ENGLISH EDITION. IN no country, perhaps, has the study of Catechetics made such rapid strides, or its importance been so much appreciated, as in Germany. That country can boast of a band of writers who have enriched the world with a most valuable catechetical literature, treating the subject in a way at once scientific and practical. Gruber, Krawutzky, Overberg, Barthel, Hirschfelder, and Benda are names deservedly honoured by those who can appreciate the importance of Catechetics; but more honourable still are the names of Schuster and Mey, to which must now be added the name of Dr. Knecht, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Freiburg, the author of several pamphlets on state education and the school question, but better known as the author of the Practical Commentary, which entitles him to a place in the front rank of Catechists. Besides issuing Catechisms and Histories, these writers have done what in them lay to elevate Catechetics into a science, and to build it up from a solid foundation. They were quick to see that Catechetics is both a science and an art, and that like every other science it must rest on certain broad principles, and move along certain fixed lines. They recognized that Catechisms must be constructed not haphazard, but on a definite plan and principle, and according to rule. Hence, for years past, the principles underlying Catechetics, its various branches e. g. Bible History and Catechism and their mutual interdependence, the catechetical method itself viz. the mode of imparting the several branches, and the rules to be followed by the Catechist all, in a word, that goes to constitute the science, has passed through the sieve of exhaustive discussion. And where do we stand in England? Have we advanced thus far? Or have we so much as grasped the truth that Catechetics is a science at all? On looking into the

dictionary I found, indeed, the word Catechetics, but it was marked with an obelus or death-mark, to show that it was either dying or dead. The thing is not, perhaps, quite as lifeless as its name; but if Catechetics, as a science, still barely lives, it is the utmost that can be said. I am far from saying that there is a lack of earnestness amongst us, or that we have no experienced Catechists who have attained a fair, or, if you will, a large measure of success. Nor am I insinuating that we are not alive to the vast consequences with which success or failure in catechizing is fraught for the future. On the contrary, the steady, if slow, growth of a catechetical literature amongst us points to a growing interest in the subject, and a deepening sense of its importance. All this, however, while proving that we are in point of fact catechizing, only serves to bring out in greater prominence the fact that we are still without the science. Are our tools rusty? Are our weapons broken or blunted? In a word, are our methods right or wrong? Are the instruments we are using adapted to the purpose for which they are intended? Are our Catechisms correctly adjusted, that is, are they set in a manner best calculated to secure their aim? All these are questions on which our future success turns, and which clamour for an answer. If our methods and our instruments are perchance wrong, we are but wasting our energies in attempting to naturalize mistakes, by forming them into a regular system. And what answer can be given to these questions? Until lately no answer has been attempted, even if the question has been asked. But recently an enterprising clerical journal, *Pastoralia* by name, has been rife with discussions that have yet only touched the fringe of these great questions; still I am not without hopes that when the mass of nebulous matter condenses, it may prove to be the beginning of a solid catechetical system. We in England, then, seem to be just entering on the preliminary stage of discussion. In Germany the stage of discussion has long been passed. And, it will ...

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