A Critical Analysis of the Gospel according to the Hebrews

The Gospel according to the Hebrews has attracted religious scholars because of its peculiarity as a component of the New Testament(*This class is about apocryphal texts, that is to say, about texts that do not make it into the New Testament. The Gospel according to the Hebrews is not in the New Testament!)* Its main purpose was to restore confidence in Christians by strengthening faith. No one exactly knows the Gospel according to the Hebrews’ author [it is anonymous] until today although several guesses exist on the identity, and (*You are confusing the Letter to the Hebrews, which is part of the New Testament, with the Gospel according to the Hebrews, which is not. As you are attending a class on apocryphal literature, you should have wondered if you were not wrong in choosing to write on a canonical text*.)Apostle Paul is at the frontline for being the author. *(Where does this explanation come from? You must quote your source. In any case, this is not relevant, since it does not refer to the right text.)*The gospel to the Hebrews outshines other New Testament books in interpreting the Old Testament by portraying Jesus as a priest, acknowledging the priestly roles of the Old Testament as critical to the life and times of Jesus, and giving power to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

*(This analysis would be rather interesting, if you would have been asked to speak about the Letter to the Hebrews, but unfortunately nothing in this is pertinent for the Gospel according to the Hebrews.)*The gospel to the Hebrews differs from other writings of the New Testament in the manner in which it interprets the life and times of Jesus. According to the author, Jesus was the great high priest whose functions mirrored those of the Old Testament priests (Westfall 263). This contravenes the position in the New Testament where Jesus is a prophet. Indeed, the roles of priests and prophets varied to the extent that the terms cannot apply interchangeably. Prophet such as Elijah focused on inducing social transformations such as convincing people to stop worshipping the Baal. On the contrary, priests’ roles were confined to the temples where they helped people through ministry, offerings, sacrifices, and administering confessions. Farmer notes that the temple in Jerusalem waned through destruction to the extent that the role of priests became obsolete, as people preferred prophets instead (3).

Consequently, the gospel the Hebrews was keen to induce a turn-around effect where people could see Jesus as a priest.

Hebrew does not mention any of the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament as most of the books in the New Testament do. Instead, the letter emphasizes on the sacrificial offerings that the priests made in preparation for the dawn of Jesus Christ and His death. It means that the letter owes much of Jesus’ coming and His experiences on earth as a manifest work of the Old Testament priests who knew how everything would turn out for the Messiah. From this perspective, the gospel portrays the Old Testament as more of a Christian than a Jewish thing (Docherty 129). The author of Hebrews insinuates that the audience of the Old Testament could not understand it without interpreting it later through the New Testament.

Despite the departure of the letter of Hebrews from other New Testament writings, it acknowledges popularly accepted practices in the Christian Church. One such practice has to do with blood atonement in which the shedding of blood on the cross by Jesus meant that He was serving the ultimate penalty for the sins of humanity. Furthermore, Christians become saved by having faith in Jesus’ death on the cross so that the sins of humanity are washed. Hebrews anchors itself on the deeds of Jesus that went to great depths to save humanity from sin and give the Church some fresh energy (Westfall 205). On the other hand, the letter explains the relationship between Jesus and God in a clearer way by depicting it as “the radiance of God’s glory” (Westfall 88). This means that Christians should see Jesus as God’s shining light upon them.

In conclusion, the gospel to the Hebrews stands out in the New Testament as the book that interprets Jesus’ coming and death sensibly. The gospel came at a time when Christianity was losing its hold in Jerusalem and there was the need to sensitize Christians.

To begin with, the(This should have alerted you: a letter (or epistle) is not the same as a Gospel.)letter portrays Jesus as a priest but not a prophet as most of the New Testament books do. Understanding Jesus from this sense makes his role quiet manifest and crucial. In fact, this sense leads to the second peculiarity of Hebrews: it gives a better understanding of the Old Testament. The gospel is also worthy because it gives power to Jesus’s death and upholds the practice of atonement.

***Bibliography***

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*All those books/texts were extremely helpful for the purposes of my analysis. I based myself on them to discover more about the whole theme. All the sources have different forms of expression, however they all share the same idea which helps the readers to understand better.*