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THE HEADINGS OF THE PSALMS

It is the purpose of this article to treat of the reliability of the headings of the Psalms; to show that, as far as the evidence goes, there is a reasonable ground for believing that the headings are what they purport to be.

No one can doubt that comparative literature and history are in favor of the probability of psalms having been composed in Hebrew as early as the time of Jacob. Before Abram left Ur of the Chaldees, the Sumerians and Egyptians had hundreds of poems used in the temple worship of their gods.¹ And the Hebrew language was certainly used in Palestine and Syria long before the time of Thothmes III.² That Jacob may have composed the blessing recorded in Gen. xlix. is not, therefore, a question of language so much as one of predictive prophecy. That Moses could have composed and written Exodus xv, Deut. xxxii and xxxiii and the other poetical parts of the Pentateuch and, also, the 90th Psalm may for like reason be maintained and believed. So, likewise, the songs of Deborah and Hannah (Judg. v and 1 Sam. ii) may, for ought anyone *knows* to the contrary, have been composed by these two women, as the superscriptions indicate. As to David himself 2 Sam. i. 17 expressly attributes to

¹ Frequent references to songs and musical instruments used in the temples occur already in the time of Gudea. See F. Thureau-Dangin, *Die Sumerischen und Akkadischen Königsinschriften (passim)*. For music among the ancient Egyptians, see especially Erman, *Aegypten und Aegyptisches Leben im Altertum*. I. 340 f, II. 521 f.

² Thothmes III, on his inscriptions at Karnak which describe his conquests in Asia, gives a list of the cities of Palestine and Syria conquered by him. This list is still preserved on three of the pyla or gates. The names of the cities are almost all certainly Hebrew. See W. Max Müller, in *Die Palestinaliste Thutmosis III.*

REVIEWS OF RECENT LITERATURE

EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY

Christian Beginnings. Three Lectures. By F. C. BURKITT, D.D., Norrisian Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge. London: University of London Press, Ltd., 1924. Pp. 152. Price 4 sh. 6 d. net.

This little book presents Dr. Burkitt's views about Christian origins in very brief form and with special reference to the work of Lake and Jackson on *The Beginnings of Christianity*. In the case of most authors the brevity of the book might prevent it from being seriously regarded, but such is not the case with Professor Burkitt. It is always interesting to hear what so able a scholar has to say upon any mooted question of New Testament study, even though the brevity of the treatment prevents a full grounding of the author's views.

Certainly in the present case the views that are expressed are not wanting in originality. That does not mean that these views are always, or even in most cases, unique; but it does mean that the reader always has the feeling that the author has come to his opinions through independent thinking, based upon a fresh examination of the sources. It may be worth while, therefore, to set forth the salient features of the book.

The starting point of the reconstruction is that which was favored by the older "Liberal" historians—namely the reduced Jesus of modern naturalism. What was primary in Jesus' consciousness was "a sense of vocation," a sense that God "had called Him Son in a special sense not shared by others" (p. 29). This sense of sonship took shape in His acceptance of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi, in His own designation of Himself as Son of Man or "the Man," and in the conviction that God had marked Him out "as the instrument of bringing in (or at least hastening) the End of the present state of things by His becoming in some way a sacrifice or ransom for the elect" (p. 29). But the really primary thing, according to our author, was the filial consciousness, not the Messianic consciousness, of Jesus.

With regard to the origin of the Church, Dr. Burkitt is a strong opponent of the dominant Galilean hypothesis as to the "appearances" of the risen Christ; the appearances took place, he holds, not in Galilee but in Jerusalem. No doubt Peter was on his way to Galilee when the Lord appeared to him, but he had not gone very far. And the appearance to five hundred brethren which is mentioned by Paul is to be identified, Dr. Burkitt thinks, not with any Galilean happening but with the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Only by this Jerusalem hypothesis, it is urged, can the fact be explained that the disciples were so soon found in Jerusalem after the appearances had taken place. If the Lord

had appeared to Peter in Galilee, what could have led Peter to return to Jerusalem? Would he not have remained on the hallowed Galilean ground?

This hypothesis, we think, is correct for the most part in what it affirms but incorrect in what it denies. It is correct in giving credence to Luke-Acts with regard to the Jerusalem appearances, but incorrect in refusing credence to Matthew and to John xxi. in their account of appearances in Galilee. Especially is it incorrect in its identification of the appearance to five hundred brethren (I Cor. xv. 6) with the event on the day of Pentecost. The return to Jerusalem from Galilee may of course be explained if the disciples were acting under actual instructions from the risen Christ.

With regard to the nature of the appearances, Dr. Burkitt preserves the customary attitude of modern naturalism. The records, he thinks, justify the historian "in postulating something surprising, some event following the Crucifixion of Jesus which is not quite explicable." But he continues: "Whether Peter and Paul were mistaken in their belief that they had seen the Lord Jesus is at this time of day, strictly speaking, unprovable; what I do think we are bound to recognize is that they were fully convinced that they had seen Him" (pp. 78 f.).

The early Church in Jerusalem, our author maintains, did regard Jesus as "Lord"; the *Κύριος* title was not, as Bousset supposes, applied to Jesus for the first time in Damascus or Antioch. Dr. Burkitt has a peculiar view of the Epistle of James; it was originally written, he thinks, in Aramaic by James the brother of the Lord, and what we now have is a free Greek translation. Somewhat related to this hypothesis is the suggestion that Silas drafted the Thessalonian Epistles, and that Sosthenes may have had a considerable part in the arrangement of material in I Corinthians.

One of the most distinctive features of the book is the defence of the relative trustworthiness of Luke-Acts. That defence cannot of course be more than relative, since Dr. Burkitt rejects the supernatural content of the book. But at least the Tübingen objections are here overcome. The Apostolic Decree, in particular, is regarded as historical.

This defence of Acts is accomplished by the dating of Galatians before the Apostolic Council; Paul could not have mentioned the Apostolic Council in Galatians, it is held, for the simple reason that the Council had not yet taken place when the Epistle was written. In order then to explain the similarity between Galatians and Romans, the hypothesis advanced by Kirsopp Lake is adopted, to the effect that the bulk of Romans is a theological treatise, written as a circular letter at an early time and then, on the third missionary journey, fitted with certain personal matters and sent to Rome. The simplicity (Dr. Burkitt would say rather "weakness") of the Thessalonian Epistles as over against Galatians and Romans is then explained by the hypothesis that Silas was really the writer, though the content of the Epistles was approved by Paul.

The early dating of Galatians can no longer be regarded as a mere

curiosity of criticism. We do not indeed think that it constitutes the only means of defending the trustworthiness of Acts, or that it has as yet established itself. But it is at least interesting; and the weighty support of Dr. Burkitt will increase the consideration that it will receive from students of the New Testament.

The comparatively conservative views of our author in the sphere of literary criticism are harmonized with the rejection of the supernatural by a curious return, here and there at least, to a rationalizing treatment of the New Testament somewhat similar to that which prevailed before the days of Strauss. Thus the extraordinarily strong attestation of the feeding of the five thousand leads Dr. Burkitt to suggest that we are "justified in 'rationalizing' the narratives, in seeking a more or less rationalistic account of them, in explaining the miraculous details away" (p. 78). And the story of Peter's escape from prison in Acts xii. gives our author "the impression that some human sympathizer was at work, who had drugged the guards and bribed the turnkey" (p. 103). If this rationalizing process goes on much further—beginnings of it appear in C. C. Torrey and in Harnack, as well as in Dr. Burkitt—we shall really need some twentieth century Strauss to put a stop to it. Bousset, unfortunately, is dead, but there will probably be others to take his place.

In general Dr. Burkitt's own book is itself the best refutation of his suggestion that there may "come a time in the not very distant future when the direct investigation of these early days of Christianity will have come to a standstill, when the task of re-writing the beginnings of the Christian Society will have been carried as far as the materials at our disposal will carry us" (p. 140). The way in which this interesting little book rejects what have long been regarded as established results of criticism joins forces with the work of radicals like President McGiffert to show that there is as yet not the slightest indication that any one naturalistic reconstruction of early Christianity will win universal acceptance. On the contrary, the whole question is ever anew being thrown into a state of flux. And the reason, we think, is that the naturalistic historians are engaged in an impossible task. One hypothesis must necessarily give place to another for the simple reason that the starting point of all the hypotheses is wrong. Real consistency and real agreement can be attained only when men abandon the hopeless task and decide to ground Christian history where the New Testament grounds it—in a supernatural act of God.

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The Credibility of the Virgin Birth. By ORVILLE E. CRAIN. New York, Cincinnati: The Abingdon Press, 1925. Pp. 105. Price 50 cents.

Mr. Crain defends the historicity of the virgin birth, but is inclined to deny its doctrinal importance.

The defence of the historicity is not characterized by any great knowledge of New Testament criticism or by any great command of historical method. Thus the reader may be somewhat surprised to hear