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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.<sup>1</sup> And the Hebrew language was certainly used in Palestine and Syria long before the time of Thothmes III.<sup>2</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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*.

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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J. GRESHAM MACHEN.

*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

that "no literary criticism has ever been directed against the Lukan origin of the third Gospel" (p. 30); and the way in which the author apparently treats the traditional authorship of the First and Third Gospels as though it were a thing that the opponents would for the most part accept shows that he has not really acquainted himself very extensively with the modern critical debate. Very confusing also is the treatment of "manuscripts" and "versions" on pp. 37-40. Indeed, in almost everything that concerns textual and literary criticism the book is either erroneous or vague.

Nevertheless, the argument for the historicity of the virgin birth is not altogether without value. A layman's sturdy common sense sometimes discerns things that technical scholarship has missed, while specialists are sometimes not able to see the wood for the trees. Mr. Crain's conclusion, at any rate, is to be greeted with satisfaction, and his argument may have a salutary effect upon the lay mind.

In the sphere of doctrine, however, and consequently in the sphere of the Christian heart, the little book can hardly be anything but confusing. At times the author does seem to be aware that the question of the virgin birth is intimately connected with the great question of the supernatural. But the trouble is that he has rather a confused notion of what the supernatural is. "The supernaturalism," he says (pp. 18 f.), "really consists in the power of the Divine to control the laws of his natural world to secure *his aims*." And then he proceeds to cite instances of "parthenogenesis" as illustrations of his point! In contrast with all this, a consistent theism will simply distinguish a miracle as a work of creation from natural events as works of providence. Both are accomplished by God, but in the latter case He uses means, while in the former case He puts forth His creative power.

On the whole, Mr. Crain is inclined to believe that insistence upon the doctrinal importance of the virgin birth is an indication of undue "dogmatism." In opposition to such dogmatism he himself finds the importance of the miracle in its effect as a witness to Joseph and Mary and in its consequent effect upon the child. "Both Matthew and Luke," he says, "make the miracle amount to no more than a witness, that an extraordinary child should be born who should be called the Son of the Most High" (p. 99). "The high and holy confidence which was caused by the miracle upon Mary and reflected in 'The Magnificat' (Luke i. 46, 55) could not do otherwise than exercise a profound reaction upon the child during the pre-natal days" (p. 98).

This last sentence is somewhat connected with the author's suggestion that "the incarnation of Jesus was a progressive experience that culminated in the resurrection, and continued to reveal itself in the further manifestations of his Spirit" (p. 101). Just at this point Mr. Crain has unconsciously established that doctrinal importance of the virgin birth against which he himself is arguing. It is just exactly because it prevents the Church from holding Mr. Crain's tentative view that "the incarnation of Jesus was a progressive experience" that the virgin birth is so supremely important. That notion is quite inimical to Christian faith;

and the virgin birth always has been one great barrier (along with the entire content of New Testament teaching) against its baleful inroads.

Our author has two quite inconsistent elements in his thinking; (1) the historicity of the virgin birth, (2) the progressive incarnation of Jesus. We hope that he will hold fast to the former and (as he then must logically do) will give the latter up. The saneness of much that he says in the historical sphere leads us to believe that our hope is not altogether unlikely to be realized.

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*The Teaching of the Prophets.* By CHARLES ARTHUR HAWLEY, S.T.M., Ph.D., Professor of Biblical Literature in the Springfield Young Men's Christian Association College, and Associate Professor in Mount Holyoke College. New York: Association Press, 1924. 16 mo. Pp. xv, 242.

The aim of this book is stated to be "to introduce to the Christian community the prophets of Israel." The author feels that "The small number of sermons one hears from the heart of the Old Testament is lamentable. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and the Kings, are either praised or blamed by pastors and Sunday School 'Quarterlies,' but the great forerunners of Jesus remain silent. This condition must be remedied if we are to remain a people who rank high in the moral life." Clearly the writer of these words attaches great importance to "the Hebrew prophets" and deeply deplors the fact, as he considers it, that they "have remained almost unknown men." This is a serious charge. But before the reader decides whether or to what extent he agrees with Dr. Hawley, it will be well for him to ascertain what is meant by this statement and why such prime importance is attached to "the prophets" as distinguished from other parts of the Bible.

"Human nature," we read, "manifests itself in various ways of life. The three ways that confronted the prophets and yet abide with us are simply the three brands of religion today" (p. xi.). These three "brands" are folk-religion, priestly religion, and prophetic religion. "Folk-religion interests itself in what we call superstitions. . . ." Priestly religion "is characterized by performing a certain set of ritual with meticulous exactitude under the leadership of one especially set apart for this function." Both of these conceptions are affirmed to be false. "In opposition to these two ways, stood the *prophetic religion*, clear, simple, straight-forward, and it may be summed up thus: There can be no fellowship with God except that based on a strictly moral life. All folk religion is swept away along with the priestly cult." Micah's familiar "definition" of religion is quoted and then we read "Jesus' way of life completed the prophetic religion."

The quotations we have given from the preface of this little volume indicate clearly the general character of the discussion. A few remarks by way of criticism will now be in order.

It is to be noted in the first place that while folk-religion as defined by Dr. Hawley includes what all intelligent people should regard as