

The Beginnings of Gospel Story, a Historico-critical Inquiry into the Sources and Structure of the Gospel according to Mark, with expository notes upon the Text for English Readers. By Benjamin Wisner Bacon, D.D., LL.D., Buckingham Professor of New Testament Criticism and Exegesis in Yale University. New Haven, Connecticut. Yale University Press.

The general character of this work may be judged from the following from the preface: "The real interest of our time lies no longer in the exact apprehension of the sense the writer of 70-90 A. D. may have given to the evangelistic tradition. We no longer attempt to say, Thus the sacred writer conceived the event to have been, therefore thus it was; for we have four sacred historians, no two of whom conceive the event in just the same way. The point of real interest for our time is at least a generation earlier. What was the event which gave rise to the story? Through what phases has the tradition passed to acquire its canonical form? Such have been the burning questions of modern scholars in respect to the historic origins of the Christian faith, and the intelligent layman is entitled to expect that he shall not be put off with mere exegesis. He will not be satisfied to be told, Such and such is the sacred writer's meaning. He demands an opinion on the question, Was it so, or was it not so? What was the common starting point from which the varying forms of the tradition diverge?

It has been the endeavor of the present commentary to give an answer to such questions with absolute frankness, without mental reservation, in terms intelligible even to the student unfamiliar with Greek and ignorant of the course of technical discussion, leaving it to the reader himself to decide whether the discussion of such questions is serviceable to religious faith."

The method applied, that of "pragmatic values," is thus explained: "The key to all genuinely scientific appreciation of biblical narrative, whether in Old Testament or New, is the recognition of motive. The motive of the biblical writers in reporting the tradition current around them is never strictly historical, but always aetiological, and frequently apologetic. . . . It follows that a judgment of the modifications which the tradition, or any part of it, may have undergone, to have any

value, must take account of the actual conditions, the environment, under which the tradition developed to its present form. Herein lies the occasion for applying to the criticism of the Gospels the same principle which the great Graf-Kuenen school applied to the historical tradition of the Old Testament."

This means, of course, that this particular type of criticism has now come over to the New Testament, as has long been seen to be inevitable. Wellhausen himself entered the New Testament field some years ago and Professor Bacon follows jauntily in his steps. And with what result?

Well, we have long been familiar with the symbols E, J, P, D, R, etc., in Old Testament discussions. Here we are introduced to P (an early Petrine narrative), Q (a document not necessarily the Logia, combining some narrative with a type of teaching which gives a strongly humanitarian view of Jesus), Q^{MT} and Q^{LK} (sources used independently by Matthew and Luke), X (an unknown source), and R (the actual author of our second Gospel, a man of the radical Pauline type). To such symbols there can be no possible objections. They are convenient and enable one to state in clear and simple fashion his opinion of the sources and purpose of the book. Professor Bacon's general view of this Gospel is that it was produced between 70 and 75 A. D., and that the author, a thorough-going Paulinist, used the current common source of Matthew and Luke (Q) to embellish and supplement an earlier and simpler narrative which, not from tradition only, but from its intrinsic characteristics, may be appropriately designated as Petrine (P).

This the Professor holds in substantial harmony with the now common synoptic theory that Mark forms the literary groundwork of Matthew and Luke, who however independently of each other added to it other material borrowed from Q. Matthew he would date soon after Mark.

And how about the historical reliability of the book? We have become familiar with the terms legend, myth, error, etc., in Old Testament discussions. Does Mark fare any better? A few brief quotations will suffice for answer:

"The account given by R of the Baptist's fate is in the highest degree inaccurate and legendary"—"the very pattern of

legend." Evidence of this appears "in the flagrant historical errors." "A more complete tissue of absurdities would be hard to frame than the story thus interjected by Mark." So much for the historicity of Mark's account of the Baptist's death. Similar quotation might be made touching the experiences of Jesus on the cross. The cry 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me' "has no real place in history. "It is an interpretation in terms of Ps. 22:1 of v. 37" following—"And Jesus uttered a loud voice, and gave up the ghost." This, of course, is the kind of thing that Strauss indulged in so fully. They believed that Jesus was Messiah and began to credit to him all the things that in their judgment the Scriptures predicted of the Messiah. The account of the resurrection fares little better. In this gospel the early Petrine narrative "is becoming less spiritual and more crassly material."

It is unnecessary to indicate more fully the author's attitude on the historical reliability of this gospel. According to him, the gospel is written by an ardent Paulinist, who, in defence of Paulinism, feels free to ascribe to Jesus words and deeds that have no real historical foundation, to lay hold on any floating story, embellish it to suit his purpose especially with Old Testament psalm or story and incorporate it in the life of Jesus.

Of course, if these things are true, we must accept them, whatever the consequences may be. But are they proved? Not here, certainly. Assertions are made, but no demonstrations are given. Professor Bacon, however, does not profess to give processes and reasons, but only results. That, strange to say, is uncommonly common, with the result that it is not easy to get into one's hands a clear simple statement of the reasons. One cannot but think that it is mostly assertion. It is time that the actual reasons were stated in such a way that the ordinary man can see and weigh them. It is surprising to find how flimsy the reasons often prove to be.

For example: anachronisms are here freely charged. One is that Mark places the title "Son of Man" in the mouth of Jesus in the story of the paralytic. The author believes that the significance attached to the title in this passage is the one understood by Christians forty years later, and that it could not

have been understood by the bystanders at the time. But suppose we grant that the bystanders did not so understand; does that prove that Jesus could not have used it? Certainly not if the gospels themselves are of any weight in such a matter, for they represent him again and again as saying things which were not understood at the time. Moreover, what is there impossible or improbable in the idea that Jesus uttered words that would stir enquiry, as this very term evidently did, or that would have light thrown on them by the very action he was about to perform? Neither Professor Bacon nor anyone else is justified in charging any reputable author with anachronism, unless he can support it with clearer proof than this. Mark has a right to protest against that kind of treatment, and none of the cases of anachronism here alleged are any better supported than this.

It is quite understood that Professor Bacon regards historical accuracy as unnecessary to the conveyance of a religious message. But there are cases here where even the religious message is represented as distorted. Surely the atonement comes very near the heart of religion. Commonly these days Paul is represented as the one who has switched us off the track of the clear ethics of Jesus. Professor Bacon finds in Mark (or rather R, for he may or may not be Mark), one who outdoes Paul in this. Take this quotation, for example: "Paul never employs this Isaian 'Scripture' (Isaiah 53) and avoids the immoral crudity of the preposition 'instead of' (anti) by which the view is expressed." Is that quite ingenuous? Nay, is it true? In 1 Tim. 2:6 Paul uses the expression *ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων*. Moreover, does not the logic of 1 Cor. 5:14f require the substitutionary thought as being at least involved in *ὑπέρ*. On the same page (149) we are told that "contrary to a widespread impression the comparison implied in the word here rendered ransom is unknown to Paul," that "the stem occurs nowhere in the Pauline Epistles but Tit. 2:14." But what about 1 Tim. 2:6 already referred to? There is a compound of this very word. And has the Professor never read Col. 1:14, Eph. 1:7, nor the great classical passage Rom. 3:24f? Assertions like that are simply amazing.

Further, any unsophisticated reader would surely be sur-

prised, after reading the author's criticism of Mark here, to be informed that Matthew uses the very same preposition in 20:28.

The learned Professor is flatly wrong here. He becomes absurd when on p. 156 he represents Matthew, so misrepresenting the facts as to make Jesus ride two animals because, forsooth, he uses the words "an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."

The fact is like too many critics of the day, Professor Bacon sees mistakes altogether too easily. He is entirely too dogmatic in many places. He illustrates repeatedly how extremes meet, for he becomes wildly allegorical in his interpretations. His work would make disappointing reading for an intelligent Sunday school teacher who might come to it seeking help for his class. And it will be out of date very shortly. Otherwise it would be worth while to point out the misprint of 4 for 5 at the top of page 61. Yet one cannot but admire the industry which is shown on every page and regret that it is not more wisely directed.

J. H. FARMER.

The Participle in the Book of Acts. By Charles Bray Williams. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago. Pp. 80. Paper. Price, postpaid, \$0.54.

The work is divided into two nearly equal parts, the one carefully collating and clearly presenting the facts concerning the use of the participle in the book, the other giving the inferences to be deduced from these facts. The author shows excellent scholarship and his inferences are drawn with good judgment. The result is a creditable and valuable piece of work which must be reckoned with by anyone who deals with the authorship and sources of the book.

Touching authorship, Mr. Williams reaches the following conclusions: "The similarity between the participial usage of the two books (the Third Gospel and Acts) is so great, notwithstanding different kinds of sources in the two, as to point unmistakably to one author for the two books." "The participial usage seems to substantiate, in a collateral way, the conclusion