

The Romance of New Testament Scholarship.

THERE are not very many books which introduce us to Biblical scholarship from the biographical angle. As a result, many of us are not fully aware of the background of personal life and achievement which lies behind the great, familiar names. It is perhaps especially true of those of us who are young students of the Bible at the present time, that we are not sufficiently well versed in the interests and conflicts of earlier generations to form a just appraisal of the contribution made by outstanding scholars of the past. It is all too easy for instance, when some great names of the last generation are being drastically "de-valued," to join in the current depreciation without much effort to acquaint ourselves with their own work, and to discover their strength as well as their weakness.

Dr. W. F. Howard's recent book *The Romance of New Testament Scholarship*¹ is an eminently helpful one, because it puts the work of some of the most notable pioneers in its true perspective, and in so doing throws a great deal of light on the main concerns of New Testament study throughout the centuries. The content of the volume and the manner of its presentation justify the remark of the publishers, "The biographical approach gives a rich human interest to the study of questions that might not prove so attractive by a severely academic treatment."

The first chapter deals with four "Pioneers in the Ancient Church"—a heretic (Marcion), a great Biblical scholar (Origen), a great historian (Eusebius), and a great translator (Jerome). We are given interesting biographical sketches, together with indications of the significance of each of these figures for the study of the New Testament. This chapter includes also brief and illuminating comments, not so compactly accessible elsewhere, on such matters as the Caesarean text, the anti-Marcionite prologues, and the relation between the Gospel of the Ebionites, the Gospel according to the Hebrews, the Gospel of the Nazarenes, and our Gospel of Matthew.

The second chapter ("Two German Scholars") deals with F. C. Baur and Harnack, with a brief excursus on Schweitzer.

¹ Epworth Press, 7s. 6d.

It is unfortunate that the compass of the lectures demanded a leap from the fifth to the nineteenth century, even though there may be no one in the long interval to compare with Baur in his influence on the critical study of the New Testament. But some account of Erasmus and his work, for instance, would have been interesting. The portrayal of Baur's personal qualities helps to remove certain misconceptions, while there is an excellent treatment both of those aspects of his work which are now antiquated and of his abiding contribution. Harnack's life and career are attractively described. Dr. Howard fully recognises the inadequacy of his teaching on the theological side, but reminds us of the amazingly wide and brilliant contributions which he made in the more literary and historical phases of his work. It is good to read such a summary of his achievements in these days, when one may assume that wherever the theological forger, the debunking of Harnack will be an inevitable part of the proceedings! It is sometimes all too evident that the aim is "to bury him and not to praise him," but the first obligation is to read him, and this is no small task. Readers might find it interesting to compare with Dr. Howard's account an article by G. D. Henderson (on Harnack) in the *Expository Times* of August, 1930. Henderson, greatly daring, ventured this opinion "He (Harnack) is a splendid justification for the method of allowing scholars to seek truth freely, untrammelled by the tests which have contributed so largely to render Scottish Calvinism so hopelessly unproductive."

The Cambridge Triumvirate (Lightfoot, Hort and Westcott) are dealt with in the third chapter of the book. It is tempting to quote at length from this very readable section, but one or two extracts must suffice. Here is an incident which took place on one of Lightfoot's summer vacations in Norway, in the words of a student of his: "I was driving the Bishop in a stolkjar along a rough road near the Romsdal Horn when he wished to cross from one valley to another. After a few miles the road became so narrow with rocks on one side, and a sheer drop into the lake on the other, that I said to him: 'I wish you would climb out at the back of the vehicle, there is only about four inches to spare on the near side.' The bishop looked down the precipice, and after a moment's pause remarked, 'Other stolkjars must have taken this road. Drive on'—and continued to correct proofs which he had that morning received." Dr. Howard comments on this and another similar incident: "Even more astonishing than his coolness in danger is the fact that Lightfoot was correcting proofs in a situation in which reference to books was out of the question." We are given "what Lightfoot said in 1863," as one might call it (his famous prophecy of the gain

that would result from the study of the papyri) in a later chapter (p. 116). Westcott's years as a master at Harrow, his work as Regius Professor at Cambridge, and as Bishop of Durham (including the details of his settlement of the coal strike of 1892)—are all graphically summed up. There is an interesting comment on the remark attributed to Canon Liddon during a London fog "Canon Westcott has evidently opened his study window at Westminster." Dr. Howard says, with regard to this jocular remark, "Actually fog is the last word to apply to Westcott. The worst that can be said is that sometimes in reading him we find ourselves in a luminous mist, with the sun just breaking through." Some useful guidance is offered in this chapter on the developments in New Testament studies since the days of the great Cambridge trio.

The fourth chapter is entitled "Discoverers of Ancient Manuscripts and Recoverers of Early Christian Writings" (Tischendorf, Rendel Harris, and R. H. Charles). The story of Tischendorf's adventures justifies, more perhaps than any other section, the title of the book, and is skilfully re-told. Warm tribute is paid to Rendel Harris as a pioneer in scholarship and as a saint. The general portrayal is much like that in T. R. Glover's *Cambridge Retrospect*. Readers may remember one of Glover's illustrations of Harris' capacity for nonsense: "What is the evidence?" I asked, concerning a new theory. He answered very gravely, "It rests on something better than evidence." I opened my eyes, and he went on, as gravely, "Conjectural emendation!" Dr. Howard aptly sums up his journeyings, his discoveries and his theories, and memorably describes his appearance at the celebration of his eightieth birthday.

Intimate personal fellowship also lights up the treatment of R. H. Charles' tremendous labours on the apocalyptic literature. (See esp. p. 107 and 109-10.) Though he points out the need for revising some of Charles' judgments, Dr. Howard does not seem to go nearly as far as say, H. J. Cadbury, in desiderating a fresh study of the whole field ("I am afraid that the work of R. H. Charles must be done all over again because of the different perspective in which we can now examine these (apocalyptic) writings"—Cadbury in *The Journal of Religion*, October 1941, on New Testament Study in the Next Generation, cf. also R. Marcus in *The Study of the Bible Today and Tomorrow*, p. 193.)

Chapter Five (The Papyrologists), after an introductory section on Grenfell and Hunt and the Chester Beatty papyri, deals with Deissmann, J. H. Moulton, and George Milligan. Deissmann's contribution to the study of New Testament Greek is authoritatively summed up, and his interpretation of Paul is shown to have been illuminating, even though exaggerated on

some issues. We must agree, for instance, that Deissmann greatly over-stressed the fact that Paul was an artisan. But at any rate we know that he put his theories into practice, in the sense that he maintained close contact with working men! (See an article by W. A. Curtis in the *Expository Times* October, 1928, on Deissmann, with reference to the class for working-men which he held at Mannheim. "I doubt whether any theologian in Germany, except Caspar René Gregory at Leipzig, was in such intimate touch with working-men.")

Dr. Howard writes with the deepest admiration and affection of J. H. Moulton, his former teacher, whose work he himself edited and supplemented (in Vol. II of the *Grammar of New Testament Greek*). Moulton's massive linguistic equipment, his imagination and "irrepressible gaiety," his active public interests, and his tragic death at sea, are all described in such a way as to take us back to his books with a quickened interest and an intensified sense of obligation. In the words of Deissmann, quoted in this chapter, "Dr. Moulton is never wearisome."

An interesting outline is given of the personal career and publications of George Milligan, Moulton's collaborator in *The Vocabulary of the New Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and other Non-literary Sources*. An amusing incident is recounted on p. 135: "Professor Milligan loved to tell the story of a dinner given in London in his honour just after his election as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland the summer after this book appeared. Copies of the book were arranged on the table, festooned with ribbons mischievously representing the racing colours of Mr. B. Irish, whose horse Papyrus (ridden by S. Donoghue) had just won the Derby!"

The last chapter, on Sir W. M. Ramsay, is a paper added to the spoken lectures. It contains a most helpful guide to Ramsay's works, with concrete illustrations of the fresh light which he brought to bear on the New Testament. We are warned that "in his later years the apologetic motive became almost an obsession," but his contributions on the historical and archaeological background of the New Testament are very warmly commended to us.

It may be of interest here to recall the circumstances in which Ramsay was awarded his travelling scholarship in 1879. I quote from Arnold Lunn (*The Third-Day*, p. 42.)—In 1879 a studentship of £300 a year for three years was instituted in the University of Oxford for Travel and Research in Greece and Asia Minor. There were two candidates, a brilliant young man who had graduated at Trinity College, Dublin, and had dazzled Oxford with his brilliance. He had taken First Class Honours with less work than any undergraduate within the memory of

man. The other candidate was a Scot who had graduated at Aberdeen and then taken a scholarship at Oxford. The Electors could not come to a decision between the Irishman and the Scot. "Sir Charles Newton," writes Ramsay, "remarked that it would be necessary to hold an examination to decide. 'In that case,' I replied, 'I am not a candidate.' He asked the reason. I said I had long resolved that I would not compete against men junior to myself, and also that I did not like the examination system. 'But' he replied, 'what is to be done when two candidates are nearly equal? How are we to decide?' 'If you have any doubt, prefer the junior man'." In spite of, or perhaps because of this cavalier attitude to those in whose hands his fate lay, William Ramsay was elected to the studentship. The defeated candidate, after a brilliant social and literary career in London went to Reading gaol and died in exile. His name was Oscar Wilde.

It will be evident from the above discussion that Dr. Howard's book is no mere catalogue. Its graphic personal sketches, its judicious assessments, and its discerning comments on present progress, make it an invaluable guide to all who are interested in New Testament studies. Indeed, no student of the New Testament should on any account be without it.

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