

CRITICAL NOTES

GERMANY AND BIBLICAL CRITICISM

THROUGH the kindness of Mr. Harold M. Wiener, which I thankfully acknowledge, I have received a great part of the numbers of the *BIBLIOTHECA SACRA* which appeared during the momentous war. My attention has been particularly attracted by the article entitled "German Moral Abnormality" (1919, pp. 84 ff.). It is by no means my purpose to go into the subject at length, but I must beg permission to say a few words in reference to the *theological field*, which is touched upon in the article.

The esteemed author of the article [Professor W. H. Griffith Thomas] several times (pp. 101 ff.) attacks the German scholars as the original causes for the depreciation of the Bible which is widely diffused in England and America. He traces this depreciation of the Bible ultimately to the dominance of the so-called "higher criticism" (p. 103). The same complaint is also made in the article "The German Attitude towards the Bible" (pp. 165 ff.), whose author summarizes it in the question, the very form of which implies a negative assent, "Has anything emanated from Germany or elsewhere, during the last century, to give us ground for believing that the claim of the Bible is unwarranted?" (p. 166). Again he writes: "The fundamental issue is whether the Bible is a supernatural Book. The tendency in Germany for the last hundred years has been to deny this" (p. 172). And again: "For forty years the Germans have been reading philosophy, and have forgotten to read the Bible" (p. 174).

These conclusions mistake the reality very greatly. The facts may be presented as follows:—

1. No one will dispute the statement that the "higher criticism" has been very actively pursued in Germany. But (*a*) let us inquire whether it originated in Germany? Everybody must know that the modern criticism of the Pentateuch was introduced by an essay of the Frenchman

Astruc, in 1753. The method which he applied has been followed in Germany in exactly the same way as in France, Holland, England, America, etc., and only so. Has Germany, as it were, *compelled* the scholars of other countries to follow this kind of criticism? No! These scholars, among whom I will mention only my deceased friend, S. R. Driver (Oxford), would certainly repel this imputation if it were made to them. They followed and still follow of their own accord. Further, the various species of the criticism have been pursued outside Germany by many in more extreme manner than in Germany. I mention only T. K. Cheyne's (Oxford) unrestrained [wild] criticism of the text, with his hypothesis of Jerachmeel; and Badè (of California), who in his book, "The Decalogue a Problem of Ethical Development" (1914), does not even ascribe to Moses any original form of the Decalogue. And who does not know that the Dutchmen Pierson, van Manen, Loman, have styled even the so-called chief epistles of Paul, the genuineness of which was defended by the "Tübingen school," forgeries?

(b) But there is more to be said. Has Germany produced only assailants of the Bible? I will not mention the scholars of former days such as Hengstenberg, Tholuck, Beck, Keil, Luthardt, Cremer, and others; but there are also, even in the department of the Old Testament, a long list of workers who absolutely maintain the religious authority of the Holy Scriptures. I may be permitted to name myself first, because I opened the contest against the evolutionary modifications of the Biblical history by my essay, "The chief Problems of the History of the Religion of Ancient Israel examined in Reply to the Representatives of the Theory of Evolution" (1884). I was sustained, and am still sustained, by C. von Orelli (Basel), Strack (Berlin), Lotz (Erlangen), Rothstein (Münster), Sellin (Kiel), Procksch (Greifswald), Wilke (Vienna), Herrmann (Rostock), and other younger scholars. One of the sentences which has been quoted above from the BIBLIOTHECA SACRA makes the sweeping assertion that the

tendency in Germany has been of late towards the denial of the supernatural origin of the Bible. But who wrote the book "The Concept of Revelation in the Old Testament" (1882)? In that book I defended the reality of the supernatural revelation with every weapon. The same view is defended in my "History of the Religion of the Old Testament" (1912, 2d ed. 1915) and in my Commentary on Genesis (1919). I expect with perfect confidence that it will be decided that few books have more earnestly or more amply contended against the modern distortion and evacuation of the Holy Scriptures than these. An equally large number of orthodox representatives in Germany of New Testament criticism and of dogmatics might be mentioned. I mention, for example's sake, Th. Zahn (Erlangen), Lemme (Heidelberg), Schlatter (Tübingen), Grützmacher (Erlangen), Ecke and Weber (Bonn), Kähler (Halle), Schaefer (Breslau).

2. But Germany also possesses many other groups of friends and defenders of Biblical truth. To give a brief *résumé* of these:—a large portion of the ecclesiastical officials (members of consistories, general superintendents, etc.) hold fast to the ancient confession of the apostles and reformers, as I know from personal observation during my term of office as the representative of the theological Faculty of Bonn in the General Synod at Berlin (1903–08). The old confession is also defended by great bodies of the "confessional Lutherans," and "the positive Union." The "general positive Union" was formed but a few years since (1912). There is also a great "Union for the preservation of the evangelical Common School," a Union of positive evangelical [male] Teachers of Religion and an entirely orthodox Conference of evangelical female teachers of Religion." When, some months ago, there was a threat of the separation of church and state, there were gathered, in a few weeks, from five to six millions of signatures for the maintenance of religious instruction in the schools. I was delighted to see in the January number of the BIBLIOTHECA SACRA for 1919 the article on "Die

Heiligungsbewegung," in which it is expressly acknowledged that in wide circles of the German people there is found religious "life and health" (p. 6) and that there may be found here an earnest effort to secure "a return to the reformation" (p. 29).

Well, then! the light of Biblical truth, thank God, is not yet extinguished in Germany; and even here there are many souls who pray daily to the Father in Heaven and to His Son that they shall not permit this sun of comfort to sink beneath our horizon.

EDWARD KÖNIG

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IN reply to Dr. König's helpful communication, I should like to say:—

1. It is of course perfectly true and well-known that the "Higher Criticism" did not originate in Germany, but I am sure it will be admitted that it has been elaborated and pursued there as in no other country. Dr. König knows better than most of us that the method of Astruc and the conclusions he drew, were very soon transformed and given entirely new conceptions in Germany. Then, too, together with this and perhaps influenced by it, there came the doctrine of Evolution in history put forth by Hegel, and afterwards the similar doctrine in physical science associated with Darwin. The prevalence of this view undoubtedly affected critical studies, with the result that the whole tendency of criticism was in the direction of minimizing and often denying the supernatural. This effect has been seen in Germany as perhaps nowhere else. It is of course true that scholars in every country were not compelled to follow this kind of criticism, but it is perfectly well-known that scholarship, like everything else, tends to follow the fashion, and while there have been scholars in England and elsewhere who have attempted to unite belief in the supernatural with their critical views of Israel's history and literature the result has not been satisfactory. For, as shown by Dr. Orr in his "Problem of the Old Testa-

ment," it is impossible to fit the supernatural into a Wellhausen framework. Some of us are inclined to think that even the wild excesses of Cheyne are the logical conclusion of that which preceded him, especially in German circles, while the extremes of certain Dutch scholars in regard to the New Testament are the logical conclusion of the Tübingen theory of Baur. If Dr. König will give special attention to an article which appeared in the *BIBLIOTHECA SACRA* in January, 1918, by Mr. Weir, of Glasgow University, entitled "German Critics and the Hebrew Bible," he will see, among other things, Mr. Weir's contention that the "whole of the modern criticism of the Hebrew Bible rests in theory upon the doctrine of Evolution, and the doctrine of Evolution does not apply to the East." Mr. Weir also expresses his opinion that the critical theory taught during the last twenty or thirty years is erroneous.

2. I thankfully admit that Germany has produced advocates as well as assailants of the Bible, though I cannot help noticing that Dr. König's names are those of men whom he calls "the scholars of former days." I would also gratefully acknowledge the work of Dr. König himself in this connection, together with the names of those whom he mentions as sustaining him, but many of us are puzzled to know why these men have not made their voices more definitely heard in support of the supernatural element in the Bible. As it has been in German politics, it would also seem to be the case with orthodoxy in religion. Men have been silenced, either by force or fear. Making every allowance for Dr. König himself, and the other names he mentions, it is still true that "one swallow does not make a summer," and no one knows better than Dr. König himself how for years the Wellhausen theory has been dominant in the realm of scholarship, so much so that when Sir George Smith wrote his book on the subject he was venturesome enough to say that the critical position had won the fight and that it only remained to "fix the indemnity." Then, too, with regard to the New Testament, while of course there have been and still are many in Germany who are

supporters of the supernatural element in our Lord, it is hardly possible to doubt that the prevalent tendency has been to set aside His Divine uniqueness. A reference to one book alone will suffice to prove this, "Jesus in the Nineteenth Century," by Weinel. I think it was none other than Dr. Warfield who said a few years ago that he questioned whether there was any scholar of first rank in Germany who still holds to the orthodox doctrine of our Lord's two natures.

3. I am ready to admit with the greatest possible frankness and appreciation that "Germany also possesses many other groups of friends and defenders of Biblical truth." But here again I cannot help enquiring why it is that we have heard so little of these men. Surely, even in Germany, they could and should have made their voices heard, so that we, in other countries, who are in sympathy with them religiously, could have used them in support of our position. Instead of this we have been given a book of extracts from Pastors and Professors, with the title "Hurrah and Hallelujah," containing sermons and prayers of the most deplorable and terrible kind. Why should not the "defenders of Biblical truth" have been equally courageous in proclaiming their position? Dr. König's reference to the prompt gathering of millions of signatures for the maintenance of religious instruction in the Sunday Schools is a proof of what could have been done by courageous-minded people. And so with all respect to him, and with real gratitude for his articles which I have read from time to time, I am still of the opinion that the view set forth in my article is substantially correct, and that the whole critical position, so wonderfully elaborated in Germany and accepted by scholars in the Anglo-Saxon world, is based almost entirely on a view of the Bible which is altogether subversive of its supernatural character. We are reaping the fruits of this to-day in many educational and ecclesiastical quarters, but let us hope that one result of the war will be to make the younger generations of scholars in Germany and in all other countries, face the

facts of Divine revelation instead of starting with presuppositions of what (it is thought) it ought to have contained.

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GARNISHING THE TOMBS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

A RECENT book, noticed on another page,¹ written by a professor of New Testament Literature in one of the leading Congregational theological seminaries of the country, reveals what is going on in a considerable number of the seats of sacred learning in several denominations of the Protestant Church. This should lead us to consider whether the frantic efforts to raise tens and even hundreds of millions of dollars to propagate present conceptions of Christianity will accomplish anything more for religion than did the building of tombs for the prophets and the garnishing of the sepulchers of the righteous by the Pharisees in the time of Christ. What would the leaders of the German and Genevan reformations and the founders of the Congregational, the Baptist, and the Methodist churches say to spending hundreds of millions of dollars to spread the denial of all the basic facts of the Bible upon which the Christian hope is founded? What would they say to the filling of our pulpits and our mission fields with teachers who regard both the New Testament and the Old as a compound of illusions and forgeries which, when uncovered, can furnish no basis of hope for the life which is to come, and no stimulus to aid man in his recovery from the slough of sin into which he has fallen? Is this pall of darkness the light which John Robinson thought might yet burst forth from a fuller understanding of the Scriptures?

We no longer kill the prophets and slay the righteous, but we cast them out from the seats of learning which their fathers founded amid agonizing cries and tears, and we fill the pulpits of the churches with teachers who disbelieve

¹Is Mark a Roman Gospel? By Professor Benjamin Bacon.

the miracles and discredit the supernatural claims of the Bible and yet join with their congregations in the celebration of Christmas, Easter, and the Lord's Supper, which, according to them, memorialize events which are entirely fictitious. At the same time that they fill these posts of influence and enjoy the emoluments that appertain to them, they professedly aim to undermine that whole fabric of the faith of the churches which has been the mainspring of Christian activity during the last nineteen hundred years. This they do by systematically omitting to defend and bring before their congregations the great mass of supernatural facts which form the mainspring of the Christian revelation. By this systematic diversion of attention from the supernatural elements of the Bible they hope and aim gradually to transform the faith of the churches and place it on a basis of pure naturalism.

Thus one of the most prominent ministers of the Congregational Church, filling one of the most prominent pulpits, has recently in a leading theological quarterly¹ expressed himself as follows:—

“I do not believe that anybody, in the time of Jesus, thought he raised the dead, or did these other miraculous things.”

“It has often been asked, ‘Without the physical resurrection, what do you do with the empty tomb?’ I do not do anything with it, nor with the body of Jesus. It is merely an item in the whole story, and the whole story is the growth of a later time.”

“If a preacher does not believe in miracles, he should preach a religion which, as manifestly as possible, has some basis other than the miraculous. . . . He need not read, for instance, the story of the miracle at Cana, nor the raising of Lazarus, . . .”

“He will have done with the old distinction between nature and the supernatural, and with the pious dualism that has been based upon it.”

“For the most part he will let miracles alone — not, how-

¹ Rev. Carl S. Patton, Ph.D., in *American Journal of Theology*, Jan. 1916.

ever, because he is afraid of them, but because this is the easiest way to get rid of them."

In line with these suggestions we are now having expurgated editions of the Bible issued, one, of the New Testament, having been recently published by another New Haven professor, in which he omits not only the miraculous conception of Christ as given in Matthew but as well the accounts of the miracle at Cana, of the resurrection of Lazarus, and of a considerable number of the other most striking miracles of Christ and the apostles.

We will not at present discuss the question of the truth of the statements of fact upon which rests the faith once delivered to the saints; but we submit that the millions of dollars now being raised to garnish the sepulchers of the Pilgrim Fathers will be of little avail to promote the interests for which they sacrificed so much unless something adequate is done to restore the faith for which they endured such untold hardships.

In view of the materialism which has taken possession of our leading colleges and universities, and of their neglect adequately to teach the evidences of Christianity and the fundamental principles of theism, it is time for the Christian church to arouse herself and try to save the rising generation from sinking into a slough of despond from which there is no deliverance. If the church ceases to believe that Christ rose from the dead, and that God has at sundry times and in divers manners broken through the chain of natural causes to speak to the world through prophets and holy men whose messages were certified to by the signs and wonders recorded in the Bible, a pall worse than Egyptian darkness will settle over the world.

"If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain." Those who discard the plain fundamental facts of the gospel should drop the name "Christian" and openly join the ranks of the more honest advocates of infidelity.

G. F. W.