

in any purely Jewish circle any expectation that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. Neither the correction of *παρθένος* into *νεάνις* by Symmachus, Theodotion and Aquila, nor the line of argument in Justin is ground for asserting that such a belief prevailed; and Justin's dialogue rather suggests the reverse. Consequently the Christian belief that Jesus was born of a virgin rests either on fact or on the influence in early Christian circles of Gentile thought.

G. BUCHANAN GRAY.

*A MODERN EXPERT'S JUDGMENT ON THE OLD
TESTAMENT HISTORICAL WRITINGS.*

FROM our own reading or from some other personal experience, we all know very well what a mass of depreciatory writing with regard to the historical books of the Old Testament has appeared in the more popular journalism of recent times. Even if no other fault-finding words about these books have reached our ears, we must at any rate have heard the shrill cry of the Anti-Semites: "Away with the Old Testament!" But what does modern scientific knowledge tell us about the character of Hebrew historical writing? Many of its representatives, it must be admitted, agree with that minimising depreciatory verdict. For instance, Hugo Winckler's *History of Israel* in two volumes contains incredibly harsh passages on the untrustworthiness of the Old Testament historical books. And even those scholars who approach the question in a more respectful and dignified manner, tell us that in these books we see only the presentation of a "philosophy of history." This is the conclusion of Hermann Schneider, "Privatdozent" at the University of Leipzig, in his book, *Two Essays on the History of Religion* (1909), p. 2, but as if he felt that in pronouncing this judgment he had done too much honour

to the authors of the Old Testament historical books, he immediately adds that they did not, of course, produce "modern historico-philosophical work"; for they had no theory based on knowledge, which could enable them to distinguish between reality and idea. Quite recently, however, an opinion *which differs entirely from the customary tone of criticism*, has been expressed upon the Hebrew historical writings, and I consider it a very opportune task to call attention to this view, and to use it as the starting point for a few remarks of my own upon the value of the historical writing of the Old Testament.

No less a man than the foremost expert in the science of the history of antiquity at the University of Berlin, the well-known Professor Edward Meyer, pronounces, in the new edition of his great *Geschichte des Altertums*, the following verdict on the historical writing of the Hebrews: "It was only among the Israelites and the Greeks that true historical literature had an entirely independent origin. Among the Israelites, who in this respect as in others occupy a separate position among all the civilised peoples of the East, it arose at an amazingly early period, and begins with highly important creations, on the one hand the purely historical narratives in the books of Judges and Samuel, and on the other the reconstruction of legend by the Jahvist."¹ In another important work² he further develops the same view, and gives the following reasons for his conclusion: "The narratives about David, especially in 2 Samuel ix.-xx., and 1 Kings i. f. show indisputably by their contents that they belong to the time when the events took place, and that the narrator must have been very accurately informed about the doings at court, and about the characters and intrigues of the actors in his story.

¹ Ed. Meyer, *Geschichte des Altertums*, i. 1 (1907), § 131.

² It is entitled *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme*.

They could not have been written later than in the time of Solomon" (*op. cit.*, p. 484). He is also inclined to the view that in such sections as Judges viii. f. and xvii. f., 1 Samuel xvi. 14 ff., xviii. 10-xxviii. 2, and xxix. 1-2 Samuel iv., we have before us "the ruins of a great historical work," which is much older than the oldest strata of the Pentateuch.¹ He even goes so far as to add: "It is an astonishing thing that a historical literature of this kind should have been possible in Israel at that period. It stands far above every other specimen of ancient Oriental history known to us,—above the dry official annals of the Babylonians and Assyrians, and above the legendary stories of Egyptian literature. *It is really genuine history.* Its roots lie in living interest in the actual events which it strives to comprehend and to grasp. The one and only analogy is found on the soil of Greece. Because of its history, the Israelite civilisation, alone amongst all others, takes rank from the very beginning as on an equal plane with that of Greece" (*op. cit.* p. 486).

This is certainly a very notable judgment, and it is all the more important as coming from a scholar who is equipped with a thorough knowledge of Oriental languages, and who has therefore an unusually far-sighted vision of the origins of ancient history. It is scarcely needful to add that the parts of the Old Testament which are primarily concerned in this appreciative verdict have been recognised by other critics also, e.g., by Driver² and myself as sections of the historical literature of Israel which are specially distinguished by the vividness and perspicuity of the narration.

Therefore we may say that in the almost unanimous opinion of present-day scholarship, there are at least a great

¹ In my opinion the Elohist is still older, as may be seen from my *Einleitung ins A.T.* § 46, 4.

² Driver, *An Introduction*, etc., 8th edition (1909), p. 183.

number of passages in the historical narratives of the Hebrews which bear the character of really genuine historical writing, and are not to be considered as merely the setting forth of a "philosophy of history," as Schneider has expressed himself in the passage cited above.

It follows, then, that the only question which remains for settlement is whether there are not other sections of the Hebrew historical writings which share the same characteristic of genuineness, and whether these do not deserve a higher reputation for trustworthiness than it is now customary to ascribe to them. In seeking an answer to this question we must naturally concern ourselves mainly with the historical sources which exist for the *older* history of Israel. The inquiry on which we enter must have for its object to prove how much further we may go back beyond Judges viii. f. (which even Edward Meyer recognises as genuine historical writing), without entirely losing our foothold on the ground of the trustworthy evidences of historical reality.

(1) To begin with, then, our steps are guided backwards on a safe path till we reach the first part of that heroic age, which we are accustomed to call less happily the "period of the Judges." For the poem which is usually and rightly called "the Song of Deborah" (Judges v. 2-31) is also recognised by the greatest experts in ancient literatures and by the keenest critics, as an immediate echo of the historical event which is there described; ¹ and it is easy to prove that this view of theirs is *fully justified*.

Have not a vivid mass of the most amazingly individual characteristics been gathered together in this poem? There, for instance, the tribe of Dan comes before us—"dwelling

¹ For instance, by the great Arabic scholar Th. Nöldeke in *Die semitischen Sprachen* (2nd edition, 1899, p. 32), and by Ed. Meyer, in *Die Israeliten*, etc., p. 487.

beside the ships as a stranger " (ver. 17) because this tribe had probably entered the maritime service of the Phœnicians, and stands there, a deeply bowed form, in the background of the picture. It symbolises the town of Meroz, which is nowhere else mentioned, and yet is remembered here with a curse (ver. 23). What an exceedingly important notice! For it is true that descriptions like the thrilling section of the song which describes the slaying of Sisera by Jael, the wife of a Kenite (vers. 24-27), or the dramatic delineation of the longing of the mother of Sisera for the home-coming of her son (vers. 28-30) might have been composed at a later time. But accusations and maledictions could not have been introduced into the historical picture without a cause. Such language is uttered here against the unpatriotic dilatoriness of the tribe of Reuben (ver. 15 f.) and against the town of Meroz which betrayed the fatherland (ver. 23). The Song of Deborah, then, is the direct reflection of a true historical event. And this view as to the age of that song of victory corresponds very well with the results of scholarly research, in our own day, into comparative literature. For the fact which such keen minds as those of Strabo and Varro recognised, that poetic productions belong to the most ancient portions of the world-literatures,¹ has been amply confirmed by the latest examinations of the literature of the Arabs and other peoples,² and these newest results may be fairly applied also to the poetry which we find in Hebrew literature.

(2) The historical testimonies of the people of Israel lead us back still further on a sure path until we reach the time of *Moses*. For all the older writings of the Hebrews re-echo the fame of his glorious deeds. In poetry (Exod.

¹ Ed. Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa*, vol. i., p. 28 f.

² Carl Brockelmann, *Die Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, vol. i., p. 15.

xv. 2, etc.), in prose addresses (Hosea xii. 14), in those legislative strata which are admittedly the oldest, as in the "book of the covenant" (Exod. xx.-xxiv., etc.), and in the historical narratives, his name receives *equal* honour as that of the great mediator through whom the life of Israel was turned in a wholly new direction. It is perfectly true that the historical narratives with regard to his period contain undeniable differences, but as regards such differences it is important to keep in mind this guiding rule. The material which the various historical sources that it is possible for us to distinguish, contain *in common* about any separate fact in the course of history, is the *principal thing*.

As regards the general purport of differing statements in historical narratives, we may recall the saying of Lessing in his *Duplik*: "Suppose that Livy and Polybius and Tacitus describe the same event, engagement, or siege with such differing circumstances that the details as given by one writer seem to contradict entirely those narrated by another, has there ever been any doubt about the *event itself* on which they all agree?"

But the duty incumbent on the historical inquirer to give the fullest consideration to these portions of the original narratives in which there is a definite agreement, may be safely founded on the very nature of the facts themselves. For the light which is borne to us in the vibrations of the ether, though often broken up into the seven primary colours, tells us of something outside the medium in which it vibrates and is refracted. That something is the impulse which directs these vibrations of the ether: the *light itself*. Would the evening sky glow with a many-tinted, ever-changing play of colours if the sun had not gone down beneath the western horizon? We may therefore safely assume that the historic consciousness of Israel possessed

in the epoch-making deeds of Moses a new point of departure for the actual life of history.

(3) But do the historical writings of Israel lead us still further back on a safe path towards the origins of this people? To that question I reply that even if we cannot advance without interruption on a smooth, straight road we do find a line of granite boulders whose summits rise above the wind-swept sandheaps of tradition. These craggy rocks mark for us the borderline within which the more ancient history of Israel is contained. There are three of these boulders to which I desire to call attention here.

(a) One most interesting feature in the general character of Israel's historical writing is to be found in the *distinguishing of a period before Moses*. So we see that amidst all the splendour in which the Mosaic age shone forth as the period of Israel's youth (Hosea xi. 1; Jer. iii. 4) there was not any paling of that light which gleamed on Israel's memory from an age before the age of Moses. We find, on the contrary, that, notwithstanding the supreme greatness ascribed in these historical writings to the man whose glorious intervention brought about a vital change in the political and historical life of Israel, all honour is duly paid to Abraham and to Jacob as the founders of the national existence and of the people's religious mission. And yet how natural it would have been if the fame of Moses had misled the Hebrews, and made them regard *all* the foundations of their existence as laid in his time. We can see how easily this might have happened from the later books which describe the period reaching up to Moses, as, for instance, we may specially notice in the *Book of the Jubilees*. For in these books the distinctions which we find in the older historical writings between the periods before Abraham and Moses are very often obliterated. Indeed, it may be

said that if the historical memories of Israel had not been linked to sure facts of the past, Moses might have been transformed into an eponymous hero, like those who were accepted among the Greeks under the name of Achaios, Aiolos, etc. The beginnings of *all* lines of development would have been traced back to him. But the historical writers of Israel knew that there were roots of Israel's historical existence and religious position which reached further back than Moses. To sum up, then, the distinction of a *pre-Mosaic* period in the historical consciousness of Israel is a cardinal point for the appreciation of the historiography of that people. This point has not received nearly sufficient consideration.

(b) But a second ground on which we may base our judgment of the historical writings of Israel as regards its earlier time will be found, if we note the fact that in the historical books which have come down to us *ancient original sources* are quoted.

The first of these is *The Book of the Wars of Jahveh* (Num. xxi. 14), i.e., an account of the conflicts which were waged under the invisible leadership of the Lord,¹ and for the glory of His name. The second original document which is quoted is *The Book of the Upright* (Josh. x. 13, and 2 Sam. i. 18), i.e., the book which described, or rather glorified with poetic lustre, deeds or model types of the ideal Israelite. For this second original source contained, according to the express declaration of 2 Samuel i. 18, the elegy of David on the death of Saul and Jonathan, which was to be sung at the archery meetings of the young men, so that their thoughts might be directed towards the example of both heroes.

The other quotation from this book, "Sun, stand thou still," etc. (Josh. x. 12), is a rhythmic utterance. There-

¹ Cf. Joshua v. 14, "As captain of the host of the Lord am I now come."

fore we may gather that the second ancient original document was a kind of poetic anthology, and it may very probably have contained poetical texts such as those which are scattered amidst the narratives on the earlier times; e.g. the song of the well ("Spring up, O well," Numbers xxi. 17), or the "signal words" ("Rise up, Lord," etc., Numbers x. 35) or the original material for Exodus xv. 2 ff., or at least the chief portions of Genesis xlix. 3 ff., especially verses 5 to 7, which we cannot explain from our knowledge of later times. Therefore we must not presuppose that there were *no literary sources* for the historical books of Israel which exist to-day, and which form the original records of our Pentateuch (the Elohist, the Jahvist, etc.); and this conclusion is of very great importance in our appreciation of these historical narratives.

(c) A third cardinal fact on which we may base our judgment as to the value of the historical sources for the narratives of Hebrew writers on the earliest stages of the people's development, is an idea rather than a fact, perhaps, but I think the true greatness of this idea will disclose itself as we consider its practical influence. This ideal, and yet real, greatness is that *feeling for the preservation of memories* which existed as an actual factor in the life of Israel in ways which we can easily understand.

This feeling shows itself, when once our attention has been called to it, in surprisingly varied manifestations. For in ancient Israel men's attention was not directed solely to the changes and chances of political life, and to the varying circumstances of progress and reaction in the material prosperity of the nation. The men of these times earnestly desired that due notice should be taken and due account given of the changes which took place in the existence of the people as a civilised race, including the highest and most sacred departments of their religious life. Thus they

noted the change in the names of places, as we read very frequently from Genesis xiv. and onwards.

Further, the change in the titles of God is expressly mentioned (Exod. vi. 2 f., Hosea ii. 16); and we find also notices as to the change in the popular designation of the prophets (1 Sam. ix. 9), or in the development of popular customs (1 Sam. xxx. 25), or in the date of the building of a town (Num. xiii. 22). How often, too, do we find an express notice of an advance in the unfolding of the legislative precepts (Gen. i. 29; ix. 2, etc.), or of the promises (Jer. xxxi. 31-34).

Along with these we note also the striking passages in which a sharp distinction is drawn between the various *degrees* of deviation from the lawful religion. For on a threefold ascending scale blame is meted out, first to those who had merely tolerated a multiplicity of places of worship, next to those who had practised the worship of images, and thirdly to those who had introduced the worship of strange gods (1 Kings xvi. 31, etc.). And did not this striving after the preservation of memories lead also to the provision of outward spots round which memory could cling? Even the planting of trees (Gen. xxi. 33, etc.) lent an indirect aid to this yearning, but in direct association with this desire for a faithful guarding of tradition, we observe such facts as the preservation of the pot of manna, etc., the erection of a monument of victory,¹ the hanging up of Goliath's sword in the sanctuary at Nob, etc., as may be seen from the introductory remarks of my *Geschichte des Reiches Gottes* (1908), p. 18 ff. Nor must we forget in this connexion the mention, repeated five times in Genesis in the different sources, of the cavern-grave at Hebron. And surely these many traces which bear the

¹ With the inscription "Ebenezer," 1 Samuel vii. 12, i.e., "Stone of Help" [of the Lord].

stamp of Israel's eager desire for the cherishing of ancient memories, are like footprints which will lead us to the true historical life of the earlier time.

But is any student of the Old Testament historical writing likely to ignore the lessons taught us by modern discoveries as to the *age of the art of writing* in Hither Asia? The Dolorite pillar which was found in the year 1902 at Schuster (the ancient Susa), and which in its original state contains 282 paragraphs of the Code of Hammurabi, expressly presupposes in several passages an acquaintance, even amongst the people, with the art of writing. For example, § 128 runs as follows: "If a man take a wife, but makes no treaty with her, this woman is not a wife."¹ What a singular assumption it would be if we supposed that Abraham, who emigrated from southern Babylonia, was unacquainted with the practice of writing! The "signet" which is mentioned in the case of Judah (Gen. xxxviii. 18), and which was probably inscribed with written characters, is now fully explained, for seals have been found in very large numbers during the excavations in Babylonia and Palestine.² We have further confirmations from the Babylonian historical records. For the king Amraphel of Genesis xiv. 1 is no other than Hammurabi, who founded the united state of Babylon about 2100 B.C. If Amraphel was not the same as Hammurabi, with what ruler of the ancient world are we to identify him? The fourteenth chapter of Genesis, through the many glosses which have been added to older expressions, bears clear evidence, moreover, that it is based upon an early foundation for the present text, and this early foundation may very probably have been contained in the above mentioned original document, *The Book of the Wars of the Lord*. The

¹ C. H. W. Johns, *The Oldest Code of Laws in the World*, 1903, p. 25.

² *Mitteilungen der deutschen Orientgesellschaft*, Dec., 1908, p. 35, etc.

period of Hammurabi and that of Abraham correspond, for the first patriarch, according to Scriptural chronology, immigrated into Canaan in the year 2099.

But I may break off at this point. For I think I have shown with sufficient clearness that the opinion of a leading expert of our day as to the value of the Hebrew historical writings, which formed the starting-point of this paper, will give an impulse towards further investigation. Such studies, I am convinced, can have only one result. Through them the right valuation of the Old Testament historical books will be more and more the object of a kind of research which will weigh the importance of the common factors in the sources, as well as of their differences. This kind of investigation, and this only, deserves to be called purely scientific.

ED. KÖNIG.

*SONGS OF THE LORD'S "BELOVED" **

II.

THE method outlined in the preceding article † implies an approach toward the great question of localising the Odes of Solomon in their true historical environment along two well-defined lines. We must first characterise the Judaism admittedly present in them with relation to the Judaism of 50 B.C. to 100 A.D. If the known conceptions of this age and literature cover all the dominant ideas of the Odist, leaving nothing but the superficial, irrelevant, and incongruous unaccounted for, the inference will be hardly avoidable that the Odes, however manipulated, interpolated, adapted, and interpreted, during their sojourn in the tents of Japhet, are fundamentally a Jewish product. As already noted,

* Is. v. 1; cf. Ode 3.

† "The Odes of the Lord's Rest," I, EXPOSITOR, March, 1911.