

Reden und Aufsätze
Hermann Gunkel
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Eleven essays are collected in this volume which is dedicated to the Collegium Academicum of the University of Christiania in acknowledgment of the degree of Doctor of Theology conferred upon the author. Like every thing that comes from Dr. Gunkel's pen, they are uniformly interesting and suggestive, some of them brilliant pieces of writing. All of them were published before in various periodicals such as the *Deutsche Rundschau*, *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, *Christliche Welt* and other more technical journals. Dr. Gunkel's standpoint as a foremost exponent of the *religionsgeschichtliche* school is too well-known to need description here. It colors every page of this book. In the preface he seeks to correct the sense which has come to be widely attached to the term *religionsgeschichtlich*, as if it meant a method which dealt with the history of religions, whereas, he assures us, in its original intent it merely meant to emphasize the history of religion as an ideal development over against the excess of literary criticism, which had unduly forced the chief end of biblical science into the background. This note of protest against overdoing the critical side, especially in its analytical aspect, recurs in several of the essays. We are told that, while agreement in the main results has been attained, it ceases to exist, when an analysis is carried into the region of detail, the uncertainty increasing at each successive step. This is one of the points in which the school to which Gunkel belongs happens to coincide with the conservative opposition to the Graf-Wellhausen methods. That there are others will appear from the following brief survey of the main import of the eleven papers. The first is devoted to the memory of Bernhard Stade. It describes his eminence within the Wellhausen school, and characteristics as a scholar. It is pointed out that the interdependence along the whole line in his work between the view taken of the development of religious ideas and reconstructive literary criticism at times exposed his results and those of the Wellhausenians in general to reasoning in a circle. Stade's non-receptive attitude toward the recognition of extensive Babylonian and Egyptian influence is also remarked upon. Some of the "universally accepted" conclusions of the Wellhausen school are admitted to be on the point of supersedure, but this is coupled with the confident assertion that the basic structure will stand.

The second paper deals with the Aims and Methods of the Exposition of the Old Testament. It takes a noble view of what the work of the Old Testament exegete at its best ought to be. The disconnectedness of the old method ought to give way to an organic attempt to penetrate beyond linguistic, textual, archaeological detail in to the personality of the author. The exegete must, of course, be scholarly equipped, but his greatest requirement is that he shall be a creative or at least re-creative artist. These are golden words, but it is a pity that the whole procedure recommended is meant to stop short with the subjective personality of the biblical writers. For ascertaining through this the mind of the Spirit as auctor primarius Dr. Gunkel has no thought, for, as is once and again state in these essays, the old theory of inspiration is hopelessly discredited. All that the ideal exegete can hope to attain by his labors is a History of Biblical Religion not a Biblical Theology of the old-fashioned kind.

The third essay unfolds the principles underlying the author's article on Israelitish Literature in *Die Kultur der Gegenwart*. The ideal held up here is that of a *Literaturgeschichte*. It seems to us that the purely accidental view taken of the origin of the Biblical writings precludes not merely the

attainment but even the projection of such an ideal. Such a history of literature is impossible not merely because of our ignorance in the most important matters, but also because of the limited material. A recognition of the factor of inspiration affords the only possibility of organic treatment. Dr. Gunkel has to content himself with the distinction between certain *Literaturgattungen* and the tracing of the history of the same, so far as that is possible.

In the next paper entitled Simson the theory that the Old Testament hero was originally a mythological figure, or Sun-God, is combated. The stories are legendary in character and reflect the ancient hostility between Danites and Philistines.

The fifth contribution gives a popular exposition of the story of Ruth. It is held that the connection between Boaz and the Davidic family was not original to the narrative but subsequently introduced.

The sixth essay deals with the Psalms. A comparison with Babylonian and Egyptian Psalms yields the result that the production of Psalms in Israel antedates the exile. A comparison with the Psalms in the Apocrypha shows that there is no Maccabean element in the Psalter. The oldest Psalms are collective, not individual, for the Psalms ultimately derive from the cultus. None the less in the Psalms we possess the ego is very frequently individual not collective. But whereas the collective Psalm is pre-prophetic in origin, the individualizing spiritualizing Psalm (*geistliche Psalmdichtung*) stands under the influence of prophetism.

There follows a paper dealing with the Eschatology of the Psalmists. This too was learned from the prophets. But post-prophetic, we are warned, should not without more be confounded with post-exilic.

The two next essays deal with Egyptian parallels to the Old Testament, the eighth more in general, the ninth with special reference to the Egyptian *Danklieder* published in 1911 by Erman from memorial stones in the Theban city of graves. The similarity of the latter to certain Old Testament Psalms is pointed out, but the author is very reserved as to offering a theory for its explanation. A direct dependence on Egyptian models is not favored. It is held to be more likely that this type of songs was already known to the Orient in general from the period of 2000-1000 B.C., and so reached Israel through the mediation of the Canaanites. Whether the origin of the type was in Babylon and passed from there to Egypt is left an open question.

Paper ten deals with Jensen's "The Gilgamesh Epic in the Literature of the World". The fantastic, unscientific character of Jensen's comparisons is strikingly exhibited.

The concluding article deals with The Odes of Solomon. As in the previously published article in the ZNTW Gunkel here takes the view that the Odes are the work of a Jewish-Christian Gnostic about 150 A.D. Harnack's hypothesis of a composite origin, partly Jewish, partly Christian, is rejected. New translations of some of the Odes are given with several important conjectural readings. Two, defects in the Odes, from a Christian point of view, are emphasized: the consciousness of sin and of the need of deliverance from guilt is lacking, and the sacred history of the Old and the New Testament has almost entirely passed into oblivion. The singer of the Odes lives far from every thought of historical

happenings in a world of spiritual concepts and transcendental processes. Hence the Church rightly cast off his work, “for the prophets and Jesus are more than the Odes of Solomon.”