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BOOK REVIEWS

PROFESSOR BURTON'S COMMENTARY ON GALATIANS¹

Students of Paulinism, who for long have been looking forward to the appearance of Professor Burton's *Galatians*, will not, when they have studied this volume, regret the time they have had to wait. For very rarely in the history of the New Testament scholarship does a book appear which so remarkably reveals complete mastery of the material, scrupulous balance of judgment, and the capacity of stating conclusions in language which no intelligent reader can mistake.

The writer tells us in the Preface that he determined to give his chief attention to "fresh historical study of the vocabulary of the letter." And he has brilliantly succeeded in his aim. Many of the notes are most important contributions to the lexicography of the New Testament, and he has added full appendixes on some of the most prominent terms of Paul's vocabulary, such as *ἀπόστολος*, *ἐκκλησία*, *χάρις*, *ἁμαρτία*, *νόμος*, *δικαιοσύνη*, *διαθήκη*, and others, which are models of scholarly workmanship, and constantly most valuable studies of New Testament theology. Noteworthy in this respect is the elaborate appendix on "Titles and Predicates of Jesus Recurring in the Pauline Epistle."

As we might expect, from Professor Burton's past work, large emphasis is laid on grammatical considerations, and perhaps nowhere else does he achieve more satisfying lucidity. We are all acquainted with grammatical explanations that leave us utterly befogged. These often spring from lack of clear thinking. Dr. Burton has thought out his expositions to the end, and therefore is not contented with vague remarks. But this clearness is never reached hastily. Seldom have we come across a commentator who states his position with greater caution. Take, e.g., his view of the destination of the epistle. After presenting a very conclusive argument in favor of the South-Galatian theory, he sums up:

In view of all the extant evidence we conclude that the balance of probability is in favor of the South-Galatian view. The North-Galatian theory in the form advocated by Sieffert, Schmiedel and Moffatt is not impossible. If in place of the incomplete and obscure, possibly inaccurate, language of Acts 16:6 and 18:23 we had clear and definite evidence, the evidence might

¹ *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*. By Ernest D. Burton. New York: Scribner, 1920. lxxxix+541 pages. \$4.50.

prove the existence of the North-Galatian churches founded by Paul before the writing of this letter. . . . But the evidence as it stands is not sufficient to bear the weight of theory which this hypothesis involves, including, as it does, the very existence of churches of whose existence we have no direct or definite evidence [p. xlv].

What a contrast to the dogmatic statement of partisans on both sides of this keenly debated controversy. Similarly, Dr. Burton, in deference to the evidence, does not hesitate to oppose the fashionable current of opinion regarding the explanation of the phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου [Gal. 4:3]. After a most careful examination of all the facts, Burton concludes:

While . . . the discovery of convincing evidence that στοιχεῖα was in correct use as a designation of the heavenly bodies conceived of as living beings, or of spirits that inhabit all existence, might make it possible that it was to these that Paul referred, it would become probable only on the basis of new evidence, and even then the contextual evidence is against it [p. 518].

He agrees, therefore, with the older interpretations, as found in Tertullian, Erasmus, Lightfoot, and others, and translates: "The rudimentary religious teachings possessed by the race."

But this scrupulous respect for the evidence does not lead to any haziness of statement. Indeed, one of the special merits of this commentary is that the author invariably prints his interpretation of the passage under review in such a way that one can catch his meaning at once. But that meaning is reached by the most patient investigation. One only fears that in this hurried age readers may not be willing to follow the laborious steps of the editor. The only passage in which we ourselves must plead guilty of this impatience is the appendix on Paul's use of νόμος. We could not help feeling that that discussion was more hairsplitting than the facts demanded. Surely the apostle did not vary between such minute shades of meaning, as he dealt with the Law. We are inclined to think that Dr. Burton has not sufficiently realized Paul's final *antipathy* to the Law, as suggested by such passages as Col. 2:14 and Eph. 2:14-16.

We have little space in which to illustrate the richness of the exposition of the epistle. But we would call special attention to the notes on the difficult verse, 1:10, the examination of the phrase ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Ἰουδαίας, the grammatical investigation of ἠναγκάσθη (2:3), the exhibition of the territorial rather than racial force of εἰς τὰ ἔθνη (2:9), the discussion of the chronology of the dispute at Antioch (p. 105), the meaning of the Jerusalem decision, "a compromise between contradictions," the validity of the Law, and its non-validity (p. 114), the remarkably acute estimate

of the argument in 2:16-17, the exact interpretation of 3:13 (p. 174). Peculiarly convincing is Dr. Burton's treatment of the term *διαθήκη* in the third chapter. He gives the clue to what it means on page 183: "In it God took the initiative, and it was primarily an expression of his grace and authority, not a bargain between *equals*." And again, in the Appendix, page 504:

It remains, therefore, that while it is by no means impossible that Paul should, availing himself of the more common usage of *διαθήκη* in the Greek-speaking world at large, have converted the "covenant" with Abraham into a "will," and based an argument concerning it on the usage of the Greek world in respect to wills, yet the evidence of usage and the passage tend strongly to the conclusion that this is not what he did, but that, though in 4:1 he arrived by successive shadings of thought at the idea of an heir, by *διαθήκη* (3:15,17) he meant not "will" but "covenant" in the sense of the Old Testament *בְּרִית*. It is to be hoped we shall have no more irrelevant Papyri evidence dragged into the discussion, in entire forgetfulness of the fact that Paul was far more a Jew than a Greek.

Dr. Burton inserts some unusually valuable notes when we should have scarcely expected them, e.g., that on *τὸν λόγον*, page 337, in which we have a most illuminating discussion of the elements that entered into early Christian instruction. We hesitate to differ from the editor on a point of grammar, but we are not clear that, to the extent he supposes, *ἐν* in the phrase *ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ* is intended "to mark its object as the causal ground or basis" of something rather than to mean "in fellowship with."

The book is excellently printed. We have noticed some trifling misprints (mostly in Greek words) on pages lxxv, lxxxix, 54, 126, 166, 179, 192, 237, 240, 251, 256, 353, 450, 495.

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¹ *Preaching and Paganism*. ("The Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching.") By Albert Parker Fitch. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920. 229 pages. \$2.00.