A critical and exegetical commentary on the Books of Kings

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THE BOOKS OF KINGS
THE INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL COMMENTARY

A CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL COMMENTARY

ON

THE BOOKS OF KINGS

BY

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TO WHOSE WISE, DEVOTED AND SUCCESSFUL ADMINISTRATIONS OF OUR ALMA MATER THE AUTHOR AS STUDENT, ALUMNUS, PROFESSOR BEARS INTIMATE AND GRATEFUL WITNESS
PREFACE

With Alice Through the Looking-Glass,

"The time has come," the Walrus said,
"To talk of many things;
Of shoes—and ships—and sealing-wax—
Of cabbages—and kings."

Our book is of like category on the human side, from 'ships' and 'seals' and 'the hyssop that grows on the wall' to 'kings' and queens, as well as ordinary folk. But the collection is inspired and dominated by the belief in a unity, which gives the clue to the seemingly crazy checkerboard pattern of human history. It is at once a book 'of the ways of God' and 'of men.' Hence the extent and variety of subject-matter involved in the following composition, which has gone beyond the bounds of the normal Commentary of the day. In English the last extensive Commentary on Kings is that of G. Rawlinson in 1873, largely inspired by the fresh archaeological discoveries in Egypt and Mesopotamia; in German, the too little known but admirable work of the Catholic scholar, A. Šanda, of over a thousand pages, now almost thirty years old. Current interest has lain naturally in the more religiously inspiring books of the Hebrew Bible, the Prophets and the Poets, or critically in the still vexed Pentateuchal problems, or those of many of the Prophetic books. Many notable current histories indeed have included the materials of our book, as a source of history, yet only with indirect display of its character. But the equally divine and human aspect of this book, the compilation of which was inspired by the belief in the God of a people who is also God of human history, deserves attention as part of the catena of the earliest surviving attempt at history in the large sense of the word, and that coming from a politically insignificant people, but unique among the ancients in its sense of a universal Providence, tending mistily to "One far-off divine event, To which the whole creation moves."

In reviewing his work, the writer recognizes its limitations,
which are also his own. He has been primarily a commentator, which duty involves the related linguistics, text-criticism, history of interpretation from the ancient versions down to the present, and the attempt at exact translation with critical display. For lack of room he has not been able to expand on the criticism of the Hebrew text and of the Versions, confining himself mostly to comment ad locos. The marvellous results of modern archaeology have been recorded, however imperfectly, usually without more than reference to the authorities, who then may disagree among themselves, or whose opinions may be shattered by fresh discoveries, for Dame Archæology has been a chastiser of theoretical reconstructions of literary and so of religious history. The writer has been dealing with the materials of history, but for their historical evaluation he must in large part refer to the many excellent historians, whose duty it is to have 'a vision of the whole.' For example, in the section of the Introduction bearing upon Chronology he has not been able to do much more than to present the bases of that vexed theme and to refer to the many authoritative monographs. Again the Biblical book is a religious compilation, but the large field of the history of Israel's religion may only be touched upon au courant, as in the story of the Northern Prophets, or the Southern Isaiah and the problem of Deuteronomy. For this field the reader must refer to the many and ample books on a subject that has especially preoccupied modern interest. In the already too extensive Bibliography there has been omitted reference to such general treatments, the eminent titles among which will be cited in place. Indeed the writer professes that he desires to make the most of these ancient records, to let them speak for themselves, constrained as he is to leave to others their proper placing in the enormous field of Oriental research.

The writer would express his thanks to many good friends for their genial help: to Prof. O. Eissfeldt of the University of Halle for the generous loan of an annotated copy of his Commentary on Kings; to President J. Morgenstern, Professors W. F. Albright, A. D. Nock, A. T. Olmstead, P. K. Hitti. And in particular he records his deep obligations to former students of his, amicis caris clarisque, for their interest and most helpful criticism, some of them having toilfully
read extensive sections of the manuscript book and spent hours of consultation with its author; to Professors H. S. Gehman, Z. S. Harris, F. James, S. L. Skoss, E. A. Speiser C. H. Gordon, H. M. Orlinsky.

And to the Publishers he acknowledges warmly their acceptance of a work that has grown beyond normal bounds.

JAMES A. MONTGOMERY.

February 8, 1941.

The War prevented the American and British publishers from immediate publication of the volume. The writer accordingly took the manuscript back from them *ad interim*, and has spent much time in rectifications and additions, which has been all to the good. A Supplemental Bibliography, only partly drawn upon, exhibits the further extension of the literature on the subject in the intervening years.

But word has at last come from the Messrs. Scribner in New York and T. & T. Clark in Edinburgh that the printing of the volume can begin. The author would express not only his personal gratification, but still more his deep respect for their venture in these days of stress and strain.

J. A. M.

October 18, 1944.

As a graduate student in Semitic Languages and Old Testament at the University of Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia Divinity School the editor took all the courses offered by Professor Montgomery, who aroused his interest in the Septuagint and other versions of the Bible and thus prepared him for his career in Old Testament teaching and research. Twice this manuscript had been ready for publication, as the two dates above indicate, but in each case circumstances beyond the author's control postponed publication. In the meanwhile Professor Montgomery passed his eighty-second year, and for reasons of health he felt that he was not able to make another revision and to read the proofs of his forthcoming work. Under these conditions he asked his former pupil to make the final preparations of the manuscript and see it through the press. The editor was glad to assume this
duty in recognition of Professor Montgomery’s contributions to Old Testament Science and with the personal satisfaction of having had a part in mediating to the world of scholarship the crowning work of his preceptor’s distinguished career. On February 6, 1949, Professor Montgomery passed to his eternal reward, and while he never saw any of the proofs, he had the satisfaction of knowing that the printing of the Commentary had actually commenced.

The editor has brought the Bibliography up to date and incorporated the author’s Supplementary Bibliography in the proper alphabetical order. For the sake of convenience of reference he has also inserted, at Professor Montgomery’s request, his own Biblical Chronology of the period of the kings of Israel and Judah as found in the Westminster Dictionary of the Bible and in the Concordance of the Westminster Study Edition of the Holy Bible. He has also prepared the indexes at the end of the volume. The editor has made some changes and revisions in the manuscript, but these were of the type normally expected of a redactor. The author’s spelling of proper names was in all cases retained, and the editor kept at a minimum alterations of English style. In fairness to the author the editor’s aim was to let the final product remain the work of Professor Montgomery. The editor at this point wishes to express his gratitude to his colleague and former pupil, Dr. John Wm. Wevers, who gave him valuable assistance in the reading of the proof. While claiming no credit for the merits of the Commentary, the editor found pleasure in rendering a service to Biblical scholarship.

Henry Snyder Gehman.

Princeton, N.J.,
June 1, 1950.