

A Publishing Partnership

B. Howard Mudditt*

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The late Ernest William Barnes, sometime Bishop of Birmingham, had, in the opinion of some evangelicals, much to answer for of an unpleasant nature. Let it at least be counted to his credit that, albeit unwittingly, he brought Professor Bruce and me together in author/publisher relationship, a good deed which, thank God, was not 'interred with his bones'.

It happened this way. In 1947, Bishop Barnes published a book entitled *The Rise of Christianity*. In this book, which went through four impressions in two years, he virtually discarded the supernatural in the Christian story and reduced it to a collection of myths of doubtful authenticity. So great was the outcry from those who respected the integrity of the New Testament that I felt that a book should be published telling the true story. Accordingly, I wrote to Professor Bruce and asked if he would write for me a book entitled *The Dawn of Christianity*. I evidently felt that it was necessary to let a little light into a very dark place!

To my surprise and pleasure the reply came back, 'Yes, I will write the book you ask for, and the typescript will reach you on the 30th June'.

I had received letters like that before from different authors, but on this occasion, *mirabile dicta*, the manuscript did arrive, not on the date when the author said, but the day before! Which was so unusual that I recognised at once that here was an author worth having, and this first impression was more than confirmed when I read the manuscript. First, it was meticulously prepared—I could have sent it to the printer without reading a comma in it. Second, it was written with scholarship, a warm humanity, humour and spiritual purpose. I realized that my original approach to Professor Bruce had been guided by a greater wisdom than my own. That was the beginning of a co-operative effort in the affairs of the Kingdom of God that has increased in spiritual capital gains and worldwide spiritual dividends ever since. As I write, I have before me the proofs of yet another reprint—the twelfth in English, with a translation in Japanese and another in Hindi. This little book was followed in the two succeeding years by two others, *The Growing Day* and *Light in the West*, now combined with *The Dawn of Christianity* as *The Spreading Flame*, which became the first and most frequently reprinted volume in The Paternoster Church History. We now have seven substantial volumes by Professor Bruce, all very much alive, in our current catalogue, and others in preparation; all this, apart from books that have been published under other imprints, notably that of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship, who have done and are doing such splendid work.

To publish for Professor Bruce is to have the privilege of sharing in a joint ministry of Christian literature in which the author-partner not only prepares his MSS with the knowledge and skill of a professional writer, not only always keeps his promise as to time, but also never lets his partner down by introducing some quirk of exegesis or opinion which will at best detract from the value of the book, and at worst will arouse a storm of

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controversy. Professor Bruce knows exactly how to make available his knowledge and insights so that they will be most readily received and assimilated by his readers. More than this, his own sense of responsibility to God informs and directs all his work.

Many years after the first publication of *The Dawn of Christianity* I asked Professor Bruce why he so readily accepted my invitation to write it. 'I had the expense of sending two children to school that Autumn, and your offer of an advance of royalties was a godsend in helping me to do that'. 'I also had two children to send to school that same Autumn', I replied, 'and your MS was a godsend in helping me to do the same!'

The intervening years have made us both glad that it was God, after all, and not just Bishop Barnes, who joined us together in the work of Christian literature.

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