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I.

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE TRUTHFULNESS OF BIBLE HISTORY.*

IT will be generally agreed that the above subject has the merit of timeliness. For some time past the assertion has been made, and it is being made in our own day with greater confidence and insistence than ever, that our Christian faith and historical facts have very little or nothing to do with each other. Most frequently this assertion is made with reference to some one particular event of Sacred History, which has for the time being become the subject of debate from the point of view of its historicity. Those who incline to doubt the historical truthfulness of some such narrative as, *e.g.*, that of the supernatural birth or the resurrection of the Saviour, or at least incline to consider it an open question, are, when their skepticism awakens remonstrance from the conservative side, ever ready with the answer that Christianity is something too great and too deep, too inward, ideal and vital to be dependent in its essence on this or that single occurrence in the world of history. They protest that their own faith lives far superior to the level where such questions are discussed and decided, as to whether Christ was supernaturally conceived by the Virgin Mary or rose bodily from the grave on the third day. And they are not slow to make their own subjective faith in this matter the standard of

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would carry with it the recognition that even the Virgin-birth may well have had this as one of the (subsidiary) ends it served in the economy of the Divine salvation, that it should mark out to the seekers after redemption among the nations this Child as the real Redeemer-King of whom all their fathers had spoken and upon whom all their hopes had been built. The real questions which confront us with a book like Dr. Jeremias' in our hand do not concern this question of principle, but rather certain questions of fact: whether a sound or plausible case has been made out by him for the actual ordering of Providence which is assumed and for the indications of it in the New Testament record which are suggested; and whether in his attempt to make out this case Dr. Jeremias has restrained himself in all his suggestions within the limits set by it, or may not have in some instances gone far enough afield to raise the question whether, in case his contentions be allowed, something more than what he pleads for may not seem to follow. We prefer not to attempt a categorical response to these questions, but to leave the matter with the simple acknowledgment that we have our doubts.

The reader may, perhaps, expect a brief formal description of the contents of Dr. Jeremias' booklet before we close. After an Introduction in which he explains the standpoint of his investigation, he presents his material in ten chapters. The earlier of these are fundamental; the later deal more with details. In the first he seeks to uncover traces of the great "calendar-myth of the dying and conquering Year-God." These he seeks in turn in the figurative language of the Apocalypse, in the mocking of the suffering Jesus, and in the parable of the dying seed-corn. This chapter closes with an Appendix on the seven planets in the Apocalypse. The second chapter deals with the manifestation of the Redeemer-King, and the third seeks to discover traces of these myths in the "Birth-history of Jesus in Matthew." In the fourth a Babylonian origin is suggested for the idea of heavenly correspondents to earthly things, as exhibited, for example, in the case of "the holy things" in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The fifth treats of "The Book of Life," and the sixth of "The Water, Bread and Stone of Life," all of which are pronounced Babylonian conceptions. The "Angels" are the subject of the eighth chapter; and that of the ninth is "The Twelve Apostles and the Zodiac, the Four Evangelists and the four corners of the earth"—on the face of it an overstrained parallel. Finally, in the tenth chapter a long series of "Oriental Glosses on particular passages in the New Testament" are given, naturally of very varied character. Probably Dr. Jeremias has called attention to most of the matters in which the influence of Babylonian conceptions in the New Testament can be plausibly suggested. It was well to have attention directed to them: and it is possible that even after their sifting something of importance may remain. But sifting is obviously necessary: and it is just as obvious that there is much that is suggested which after the sifting will not remain.

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CHRISTIANITY IN TALMUD AND MIDRASH. By R. TRAVERS HERFORD, B.A.
London: Williams & Norgate. 1903. Pp. x, 449. 18s. net.

This book presents a careful collection and a minute discussion of all the references in Talmud and Midrash to Jesus and to the heresy designated by these Jewish writings as Minuth. The contents are ordered as follows: In the introduction the author renders a more than usually lucid account of what is comprised in the voluminous bodies called Talmud and Midrash and of how other collections stand related to these, an account for which many a reader who, not being a Jewish scholar, has lost his way in the confusing terminology as frequently given, will be grateful to him. The first division is made up of the passages

collected from the Rabbinical literature: A. Passages relating to Jesus; B. Passages relating to Minim, Minuth. Under the latter head the subdivisions are: 1. Descriptions and definitions of Minim and Minuth; 2. Polemical encounters between Jesus and Minim; 3. Polemical allusions to Minim, Minuth; 4. Miscellaneous passages referring to Minim. The second division deals with the general results obtained by induction from the collected data and deals again separately with the Jesus-tradition and the Minim. In the division containing the passages the author proceeds very methodically, giving each time a careful translation, to which he appends a commentary and a discussion of the chronology of the Rabbinical authorities on whose names the tradition is given. (At the close of the book all these passages are printed in the original.) The comments will to many a reader give the first inkling of what the text means, so obscure and enigmatical is the latter in many places. The author exhibits great skill in expounding it, although occasionally he himself is compelled to own that he does not understand the meaning of a given passage. On the whole, however, the reader who would expect the subject to be dry and uninteresting will be agreeably disappointed. There is a peculiar quaintness and naïveté in these conceits of the Jewish Rabbis which gives them a certain charm; especially their interpretations of Old Testament passages in the interest of meeting the heretical exegesis of the Minim are remarkable for their Rabbinical flavor. As regards the concrete results from the point of view of an increase of our knowledge of the life of Jesus and the early history of Christianity, it must be confessed, and the author himself confesses, that these are immaterial. We learn nothing new from these Jewish traditions that we did not know from the Gospels. In no case, as the author himself tells us, is there ground to correct the Gospel account by the help of the Talmud; it is the Gospel account rather which throws light upon the Talmudic tradition (p. 82). In many cases it is evident that we have to deal not with genuine Jewish tradition come down independently of the Gospel tradition or the written Gospels, but simply with a Jewish version or perversion of knowledge obtained from the Christian sources themselves. Perhaps, the most extreme wing of New Testament critics, who have in all seriousness begun to doubt whether Jesus was an historical character, can learn from the Talmudic accounts about Jeshu ben Pantiri, Jeshu ha-Nötzri and Ben Stada that Jesus really existed (p. 359). Whether genuine Jewish tradition lies at the basis of the statement that Jesus was born out of wedlock, so that we should have here a Jewish version of the fact of the supernatural birth of the Saviour, is not easy to tell. The peculiar representation that Jesus' mother was "Miriam, the dresser of women's hair" (Miriam Magaddela Nashaia), which seems to be an echo of Miriam Magdalaah, i.e., Mary Magdalene, is not decisive, since this might just as well have been derived from historic reminiscence as from confused knowledge of Gospel tradition. Taking the facts as a whole, it is astounding how little impression the great figure of Jesus seems to have made upon the legal tradition of Judaism. Not even the central fact of his having laid claim to Messiahship has been remembered. So confused is the account that his death is located at Lüd, instead of at Jerusalem, and attributed to stoning. The question might be put whether, in view of these meagre results, the amount of labor spent upon this part of the work seems justified. Still, even though the results are small and negative, it is of some value to have thoroughly canvassed the subject and established the facts once for all. It should be added that, according to a note on page 35, the author professes to have done no more in the section relating to Jesus, than to rearrange the material and modify some of the conclusions of Laible's work, *Jesus Christus im Talmud* (1871).

Of a more substantial and positive character are the discussion of the passages relating to Minim and Minuth and the conclusions drawn from this in the second

division of the book. As to the name Min, Herford is of the opinion that it can be explained from the common Hebrew word Min, denoting kind, species (cfr. "sect," "hairetis"), but that through the similarity between its synonym Zan ("kind") and Zannah, "to commit whoredom," Min obtained the connotation of one who commits religious adultery. The Minim are not heretics in general, but a peculiar kind of heretics coördinated with other kinds. They are as a rule Jews by birth, and their specific difference seems to be that they are false at heart and do not necessarily proclaim their apostasy, because they continue to mingle with the Jews in their religion. The author reaches the conclusion that in most cases the Minim of the Talmud are Jewish Christians. In this he takes issue with Friedländer, who in a series of writings has advocated the view that the Minim are mostly Gnostics, and built on the references to them the theory that there was Gnosticism among the Jews of a præ-Christian date. Herford adduces many convincing reasons for reducing the extravagant claims of Friedländer, and exposes in not a few points the inexcusable carelessness of the latter's method of argumentation. He shows that what is said about the belief of the Minim in "the two powers" cannot relate to the Gnostic Demiurge and the highest God, because these two powers are associated in the creation of the world, in which the Supreme God of the Gnostics had no share, and that therefore there must be a reference in these "two powers" to the Christian association of Jesus as divine with the Father. Still, it remains somewhat doubtful in our mind whether our author has not run into the opposite extreme to Friedländer's contention, by hardly allowing any place at all for the Gnostics among the Minim. In his recent work, *Die religiösen Bewegungen innerhalb des Judenthums im Zeitalter Jesu* (1905), Friedländer emphatically repudiates the view imputed to him, as if all Minim were without exception Jewish Gnostics. Some reserve may also be in place with reference to the peculiar form in which Herford carries out his hypothesis of the Jewish-Christian character of the Minim. He thinks that the references to "the two powers" presuppose a knowledge of the Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and makes this Epistle mark a crisis in the history of Jewish Christianity, viz., the definite separation of the Jewish Christians from the synagogue, by which they became Minim. The question of the nationality of those to whom the Epistle is addressed is still *sub judice*, and in simply taking for granted that the first readers were Jewish Christians in Palestine the author gives the impression of dealing too easily with a difficult problem simply because it fits in with his hypothesis. But apart from this, we believe that the whole tenor of the Epistle is against the view that the readers were now first awaking to the consciousness of their religious distinctness from Judaism. Nor is it necessary to account for the Talmudic references to the Christian Christology and other points by assuming knowledge of this one particular writing of the New Testament. We certainly may believe that in the time spoken of there were Jewish Christians in Palestine who believed in the divinity of Jesus.

A slip is the statement on page 106 that James the brother of Jesus was put to death 44 A.D.

Princeton.

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BIBLISCHE ZEITSCHRIFT. In Verbindung mit der Redaktion der "Biblischen Studien" herausgegeben von Dr. JOH. GÜTTSBERGER, Professor an der Universität München, und Dr. JOS. SICKENBERGER, Professor an der Universität Würzburg. Dritter Jahrgang. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herdersche Verlagshandlung. 1905. St. Louis, Mo.: 17 South Broadway. Quarterly. Price, \$3.50.

This periodical, published by Roman Catholic scholars, has during the past year fully maintained its previous high character both for learning and conserva-