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THE VIRGIN BIRTH IN THE SECOND CENTURY.

At the close of the second century, the virgin birth was a firmly established part of the creed of the Catholic Christian Church. What was the origin of that belief? This question can be answered only after an examination of the birth narratives which are included in our first and third Gospels. But an examination of extra-canonical sources is also not without value. At the time of Irenaeus, belief in the virgin birth was firmly established. Can a gradual establishment of that belief be traced in the history of the second century, or was the belief firmly fixed from the very beginning? The present article will attempt to give some answer to this question, and thus lay the necessary foundation for answering the further and more important question: is the belief in the virgin birth based upon fact, or did it originate in some other way?

Of course, no one denies that the belief in the virgin birth arose long before Irenaeus. The most that could by any possibility be held is that the doctrine did not attain the full assent of the Church until his time. Even such a view, however, can be dismissed very quickly.

In the first place, the virgin birth has a place in the so-called Apostles' Creed.¹ The form of that creed which is now in use was produced in Gaul in the fifth or sixth cen-

¹ The following discussion of the Apostles' Creed is not based upon independent investigation. All that has been attempted is to point out the bearing which the commonly accepted conclusions in this field have upon the question of the virgin birth. See especially Harnack, *Vetus-*

minor poems in the Old Testament, with introductions, metrical translations, and paraphrases. By NATHANIEL SCHMIDT, M.A., New York, Charles Scribner's Sons. Cloth; 16mo; pp. 416.

This volume forms a part of the series entitled "The Messages of the Bible", edited by President Sanders and Professor Kent. It is an interesting example of the conclusions of modern radical criticism. It is alleged "to represent the definite results of sober scholarship"; it would appear, however, that many of its statements are due less to careful investigation than to conjecture. In addition to the commentary on Job and Canticles the volume includes a metrical translation, with notes and interpretations, of thirty minor poems from different parts of the Old Testament.

The Book of Job is shown to be of composite character. The writer states his inability "to share the naive and pathetic faith in the integrity of the book". Part of it may date from the fifth century B. C. The dialogues are much later than the fragmentary prose introduction; the "speech of Jehovah" dates from the early Seleucid period; the Elihu addresses, from the second century B. C. "The speech of Jehovah" is not pertinent to the discussions to which it is appended; and the ground it assumes is "specious". The Book as a whole "leads to no clear cut conclusion" and throws little light upon the problem it discusses.

As to the "Canticles" the writer dissents from the ancient endeavor to see in the verses a suggestion of the love of Christ and His Church, and also rejects the more modern endeavors to interpret the book as a dramatic composition. He finds it to be "simply an anthology of love lyrics, describing with much charm and delicacy the frankly sensuous and somewhat unconventional love of man and woman". The Book is composed of nineteen such lyrics.

In the thirty "minor poems" are found what seems even to the author a remarkable embodiment of polytheism and crude religious practices.

The average reader will often find it difficult to recognize the source of many of these so-called "Messages from the Bible".

Princeton,

CHARLES R. ERDMAN.

DAS APOSTELDEKRET (Acts 15, 28, 29) SEINE ENTSTEHUNG UND GELTUNG IN DEN ERSTEN VIER JAHRHUNDERTEN (PREISSCHRIFT). VON K. SIX. S. J. Innsbruck Druck und Verlag von Felizian Rauch (L. Pustet) Regensburg, Rom und New York: bei Friedrich Pustet. Pp. xx, 166.

The treatise bearing the above title forms the fifth instalment of the "Veröffentlichungen des biblisch-patristischen Seminars zu Innsbruck". It confines itself to the discussion of the Apostolic decree strictly so-called, and does not profess to deal with the larger subject of the Apostolic council, or even with the Apostolic letter addressed by that meeting to the churches. Nor does the author examine in detail the relations between Acts xv and Gal ii, except in so far as this proves

unavoidable in dealing with the decree. The treatise is divided into two parts, an exegetical and an historical one, the former relating to the origin of the decree, the latter to its enforcement in the first four centuries of the history of the church. Under the head of the origin the author deals first of all with the textual problem. He rejects the interpretation of the decree as an exclusively moral prescript on the basis of the form in which it appears in the Western text, which omits the words *καὶ πνικτῶν* and adds the golden rule, *καὶ ὅσα μὴ θέλετε ἐαυτοῖς γίνεσθαι ἐτέρῳ μὴ ποιεῖν*, and is therefore understood by most of the advocates of its priority to take αἷμα not in the sense of "eating of blood" but of "murder"; and *εἰδωλοθύτα* in the looser sense of "idolatry" rather than in the strict sense of "meat of animals sacrificed to idols". This peculiar interpretation goes as far back as Tertullian. In modern times it has been advocated by Hilgenfeld, A. Resch, G. Resch, Lake, and especially of late by Harnack, who had at one time rejected both it and the Western text on which it is based, but now is of the opposite opinion and thinks that the moral interpretation of the decree renders support to the credibility of Acts and removes the main obstacle to the reconciliation of Acts with Galatians. It seems to us that Six very properly maintains the separability of the two questions, the textual one and the exegetical one (moral or ceremonial interpretation of the prescripts). Of course, if the *πνικτῶν* is original, the decree cannot be of exclusively moral import. But it does not follow that, if the *πνικτῶν* is secondary, the moral interpretation is thereby made necessary. The author is even willing to concede on purely textual grounds that *πνικτῶν* may be an interpolation dating from the very early part of the second century, and yet maintains with much force, that, after its elimination, what remains must be understood as referring to eating and not to idolatry as such or murder. The omission of *πνικτῶν* and the occurrence of the golden rule should not be allowed cumulative force in favor of the moral exegesis, because on the one hand these two features do not occur uniformly together in the variant texts, and on the other hand it cannot be proven that the addition of the golden rule necessarily imparts to the preceding clauses a moral import, the golden rule being quite in place immediately after the prescript to abstain from certain externals for the sake of not giving offense to Jewish fellow-Christians. For such as may have been captivated by Harnack's skillful presentation of his view we can recommend the reading of these pages. It will probably convince them that the more common view is by no means discredited and can well maintain itself, even if the Western text should come to be accepted.

In the further exegetical examination of the decree Six takes pains to differentiate its contents sharply from the dietary ritual observances prescribed in the Old Testament law for the Jews as such. It rests on a broader basis, which the Old Testament law itself makes obligatory not merely upon the Israelites but upon the sojourners with Israel as well. Its basis is found mainly in Lev. iii. 17; vii. 26 ff.; xvii. 10-14;

xix. 26, passages which emphasize the obligation of the things spoken of for the advenae. On the other hand the prescripts are not to be identified with the so-called "Noachian Commandments", for these were supposed to apply to the Gentiles at large, as well as to people associating themselves with Israel. The rules must be understood on the basis of a regulation of the life of proselytes. As to the question, whether the Apostles for the first time formulated them with this basis in mind, or already found them in existence as proselyte-rules and merely applied them to Gentile-Christians, the author is non-committal. It should be noticed, however, that he rejects A. Seeberg's hypothesis, according to whom the Apostles in the original form of the decree had only forbidden the eating of meat sacrificed to idols and fornication, whilst the other two items, abstinence from blood and things strangled, entered subsequently into the decree, being taken over from the "Wege", a much read Jewish catechism used in connection with the proselyte-baptism. Seeberg thinks that perhaps at the council James may have already proposed to incorporate these items, but that they were not at that time inserted. But at the time of the writing of Acts they had already become a recognized part of the decree.

The purpose of the decree was to facilitate the association of Jewish and Gentile Christians. Only this must not be understood as an attempt to render possible a living together of these two elements without restrictions. Particularly community of eating was not contemplated; for that far more thoroughgoing abstinence would have been required of the Gentiles than these simple, fundamental rules prescribed. What Peter did at Antioch was something lying altogether beyond the scope of the decree. The much-disputed sentence of Acts xv. 21, is interpreted in this sense that the reading of Moses in the synagogues constantly brings to the attention of those who hear it, Jews and proselytes both, that such fundamental requirements are made of all who desire to associate with Israel, and that the Gentile Christians therefore must not give offense to the Jews or Jewish Christians in a matter of which the latter are kept in constant remembrance and in regard to which they are particularly sensitive. But with the enforcement of the Levitical law in the sense in which strict Jews imposed it on themselves this had nothing to do. Hence the author is able to argue that Paul could pass by the decree in silence, when the controversy was about the imposition of the law as such, and even the οὐδὲν προσανέθεντο of Gal. ii. 6 retains its full force, if it should be understood, as usually it is, of legal impositions, although it might in the author's opinion, very well be interpreted of doctrinal additions to the Gospel, as suggested by the Latin version *nihil contulerunt*. At any rate the Apostolic decree is not the *rocher de bronze* on which it can be claimed that the historicity of Acts must suffer shipwreck.

In the second part of the treatise it is shown how subsequently, when, with the disappearance of the Jewish element in the Church, the primary purpose of the decree became obsolete, a new meaning came to

be attached to it and it gradually changed into a dietary rule. In the tracing of this process during the first four centuries the author largely depends on the material collected by Böckenhoff in his work *"Das Apostolische Speisegesetz in den ersten fünf Jahrhunderten"*, 1903. The main element deserving attention in this part of the work is the correction of the presently prevailing views concerning the attitude of the occidental fathers towards the decree. After a period of relative legalism the West returned in a practical and exegetical aspect to the original understanding of the Apostolic rule.

Princeton.

GEERHARDUS VOS.

THE EARLIER EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL. Their Motive and Origin. By KIRSOPP LAKE. Rivingtons. London. 1911. Pp. xi, 466. Price 16s. net.

In this book Lake discusses the Thessalonian Epistles, the Epistle to the Galatians, the Corinthian Epistles, and the Epistle to the Romans. His treatment of them is concerned chiefly with the literary and historical problems of their origin, special attention being given to the religious conditions of the Graeco-Roman world and to the more important textual phenomena of the Epistles and Acts. After reviewing the outline given in Acts of the events of St. Paul's life, there is a chapter on the Judaistic controversy, the Gentile converts, and the background of Gentile Christianity,—with an appendix on the text of the Apostolic decrees.

In explaining the Hellenistic movement in the early Church and the development of the Church at Antioch, Lake calls attention to the presence in Judaism of a liberal party which no longer insisted on the observance of the ceremonial law, citing Josephus, *Ant.* xx. 2.4; Philo, *de migr. Abr.*, Mangey, i. 450, Cohn-Wendland, ii. 285ff; *Oracula Sibyl.* iv. 24-33 and 162-170; Babylonian Talmud, *Yebhamoth*, f. 46a. It is thought probable that the subject was discussed in Jerusalem at the time of the famine visit, even if the theory—which Lake accepts—that this visit is described in Gal. ii. 1-10 be rejected. The historicity of the decrees is defended in the shorter Western form without the Western addition. In this form they are interpreted as a moral and not a food law (following Resch, Wellhausen, and Harnack; cf. also the Ambrosiaster in Wordsworth and White, Wolf, *Curae Phil. et Crit.*, 1742, ii. 1225; and Mill, *Proleg.* 45 col. 2 and 61 col. 2). The origin of the Neutral or Alexandrine form is explained by the influence of a Christian food law, knowledge of which is shown in the West by Irenaeus (Euseb. *H.E.* v. 1. 26) and Tertullian (*Apol.* ix) who do not connect it with the decrees, and in the East by Clement of Alexandria (*Paed.* ii. 7; *Strom.* iv. 15) who does. Πνικτων—Tertullian's "suffocatis"—is supposed to have crept into the text from a marginal gloss in explanation of αἷμαρος and to have originated at Alexandria as a reaction of the Christian food law first on the exegesis and afterwards on the text of the decrees.

The Thessalonian Epistles are held to be genuine,—the Second in