

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

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I.

THE MEANING AND VALUE OF THE DOCTRINE OF DECREES.

THE proposal to revise the Westminster Standards has brought the doctrine of the Divine decrees into the foreground. The controversy turns upon this pivot. Other features come in incidentally, but this is capital and controlling. This is the stone of stumbling and rock of offense. If election and reprobation were not in the Confession and Catechism, probably the fifteen Presbyteries would not have overtured the Assembly. It is for this reason that we purpose to discuss the *Meaning and Value of the Doctrine of Decrees*, so plainly inculcated in the Scriptures, and from them introduced into the Westminster symbol. We are certain that the Biblical truth of the sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners, and of His just liberty to determine how many He will save from their sin, and how many He will leave to their self-will in sin, is greatly misunderstood by many who profess the Presbyterian faith, and who sometimes describe it in much the same terms with the anti-Calvinist, and inveigh against it with something of the same bitterness. The conservative and the radical reviser meet together at this point, and while the former asserts that he has no intention to make any changes respecting the doctrine of decrees that in his opinion will essentially impair the integrity of the Calvinistic system, he nevertheless practically coöperates with the radical in bringing about a revolution in the sentiment and creed of the Presbyterian Church concerning one of the most distinctive articles of its belief. Because revision, be it conservative or radical, contends that there is more or less that is *un-Scriptural* in the tenets of election and reprobation as they are formulated in the Standards, and that

fellow-men. Dr. Kurtz has done the work well. He has given us a book not too bulky and yet not too contracted. He has one fault as a historian such as we never find 'in Neander—Kurtz cannot forget that he is a Lutheran. The true historic spirit is impartial; it cannot be swayed by churchly or other prejudice; it treats an enemy as fairly as a friend. Its purpose is not to uphold or condemn a party, but to present a history. Our author sometimes forgets this. We select a single illustration. He represents Zwingli at the celebration of the Lord's Supper in Zurich, 1525, as using wooden plates and cups in order to conform to the usage of the primitive Church. An exclamation point follows this statement. The real truth is that the gold and silver vessels were found not to be sufficient to serve the great multitude of people who were waiting to receive the elements. We can easily condone the faults of Kurtz in view of the great service he has rendered the Church. This new edition is by far the best of all the editions issued. The changes are for the better; the additions, such as an account of the Didache, are valuable. These smaller volumes are also more easily handled. We find, however, two faults; each volume should have its number on the back, and each should have its own index.

New Brunswick.

S. M. WOODBRIDGE.

LIBELLUM DE ALEATORIBUS inter Cypriani scripta conservatum edidit et commentario critico, exegetico, historico instruxit ADOLFUS HILGENFELD. Freiburg i. Breslau, 1889. 8vo, pp. 87.

ANONYMUS ADVERSUS ALEATORES (Gegen das Hazardspiel), und die Briefe an Cyprian, Lucian, Celerinus und an den karthaginensischen Klerus (Cypr. Epist. 8, 21-24). Kritisch verbessert, erläutert und ins Deutsche übersetzt von Dr. Phil. ADAM MIODOŃSKI. Mit einem Vorwort von Prof. Eduard Wölfflin. Erlangen und Leipzig: Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf., 1889. Small 8vo, pp. 128. New York: B. Westermann & Co.

Harnack's tractate, in which he attempts to show that this little homily came from the hand of Victor of Rome, and is, consequently, the earliest Christian Latin treatise we have (carefully reviewed in the *Presbyterian Review*, for January, 1889, p. 143 *sq.*, by Dr. McGiffert), is but a little more than a year old, and yet has given birth already to quite a little literature. Krieger, Bonwetch, Grisar, Achelis and Lejay have declared themselves as convinced by Harnack's arguments. While Dr. McGiffert has Funk, Haussleiter, Langen, Wölfflin, Sanday, and now Hilgenfeld and Miodoński to support him in doubting whether the case is made out. The rest of these writers, indeed, go farther than Dr. McGiffert. He only expresses a verdict of *non liquet*, they are decidedly convinced against Victor's claims; he considers Harnack to have shown the book to belong to the first half of the third century, they are sure that it cannot be earlier than Cyprian. Langen is inclined, indeed, to vindicate it to Cyprian himself; Wölfflin assigns it to a post-Cyprianic African writer; Funk leaves the place undetermined; Sanday and Miodoński fix on Rome as the place and conjecture Pope Miltiades (310-314) as the author; Hilgenfeld looks to the Novatianic Bishop Acesius (about 325) or one of his immediate predecessors. The drift of the argument seems to us to set against the very early date, which Harnack endeavored to prove, and with this date the Victorine authorship also would fall. We cannot but think that the evidence which Haussleiter, Wölfflin and Miodoński have offered that the author of this homily was acquainted with Cyprian's works, formed his Latinity upon them and even drew some of

his Biblical quotations from them, very strong and probably decisive. We are therefore inclined to date the book after 250 A.D. That it was written at Rome seems most probable; and its author appears to have been a bishop with rather high views of his dignity. Beyond that we are not prepared to go. But if its author was the regular bishop of Rome, no guess is better than Miltiades.

Both Hilgenfeld and Miodoński have done much for the reconstruction of the text of the document, and for its linguistic and expository annotation. No student can afford to neglect their commentaries. The study of the treatise is also bearing fruit in enlarging our critical knowledge of the vulgar Latin of the early Christian centuries; and very satisfactory results may be expected from the conjunction of such philologists as Wölflin and Miodoński, with special theological writers in the study of such problems in early Christian literature. We must not omit to mention that Miodonski has incorporated in his introduction a very interesting brief history of Dice-playing among the ancients (p. 40 *sq.*).

Princeton.

BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD.

LIVES OF THE FATHERS. Sketches of Church History in Biography. By FREDERIC W. FARRAR, D.D., F.R.S. London and New York: Macmillan & Co., 1889. 2 vols., xxiii, 582, 556.

In these very readable volumes, Archdeacon Farrar has continued his portrayal of early Christian history beyond the apostolic age into the three centuries which succeeded it. He has continued also the biographical method, and, as he had related the lives of Christ and the apostles, he now sketches those of Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenæus, Justin, Tertullian, Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, Hilary, Martin of Tours, Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and Chrysostom. These were representative actors in the establishment of early Christianity, and the author has done a real service in providing the means by which the English reader can acquaint himself with their characters and their works. The biographical method of presenting Church history has indeed its disadvantages as well as its advantages. On the one hand, it secures unity to the treatment of the subject; it exhibits the concrete relations and effects of historical movements, and it interests the ordinary reader by awakening his personal sympathies or antipathies. It may be so done as to afford a real outlook into the age which forms the background of the portrait and may give vividness and tangibility to forces which in another presentation might seem vague and fanciful. But, on the other hand, the biographer is seldom able to keep his portrait in its true perspective and the reader is very apt not to realize the whole varied picture which the period to which the biography belongs, in fact presents. We feel this on reading the book before us. In the apostolic period the difficulty is not felt, because the lives of a few men tell the whole story. But after the stream of Christian achievement broadened out the biographies of even such representative men as those here noted do not give the history in its actual proportions. It is true that the reader of these volumes will meet with references to or accounts of nearly all the matters of interest connected with the period. But he will not always be made to appreciate their importance, save in their relation to the subject of the sketch. Nevertheless, these volumes will form an admirable introduction to early Church history. They bear evidence of wide reading and marvelous familiarity with the latest investigations, and when we consider the mass of learned literature which pertains to the subject, we cannot but wonder at the industry and skill with which it has been used. The author cannot claim to be an authority on the many questions of critical