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SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CRITICISM AND THEOLOGY.

Fashion in religious controversy, as in other things, is continually changing, and the methods of apologetics have to change with them. Instead of discussing either the attack or the defence in the abstract, I propose in this paper to illustrate the temper of the times, on both sides, from a few books which lie at this moment on my study table, and seem to me to be exceptionally suggestive.

I do not know that there has been a time within recent memory when the attack on the foundations, records, and doctrines of revealed religion has been more outspoken, confident, and daring. It seems in many quarters to be quite assumed that the older Christianity is dead; that the new conception of the world evolved within the last fifty years or so has given it its death-blow; that the kindest thing the world can now do for it is to see it decently buried. In such a learned quarterly, for example, as *The Hibbert Journal*, on this side of the Atlantic, the assumption in many articles openly is that Christianity, in the old sense, is obsolete, and that the only question left to ask is, what substitute can we find for it? The supernatural, of course, is to be given up; there must be an end, as one article puts it, to "the entangling alliance of religion with history"; religion is to be based on moral and spiritual, or on rational,

things really requiring explanation; they never dodge difficulties and do not shun either the niceties of philology or the archaeological details. Perhaps the passages selected have a little too much sameness about them. They are all historical incidents, chosen apparently largely for the story they present: the story of Joseph, the story of the Exodus, the story of Balaam and Balak, the story of Samson, the story of David and Goliath, the story of Elijah, the story of Hezekiah and Sennacherib. Thus only one form of composition is brought to the attention of the reader. We should suppose a greater variety would have been desirable: some of the Psalms, some of the great passages from the Prophets, some of the orations of Job, some of the wisdom of the Solomonic books. By thus widening the selections, the resources of the student would have been drawn upon more than is done by the simple historic narratives; and from them he would have learned more about the peculiarities of Septuagint Greek. Perhaps, however, this is only the first of two Septuagint readers, and the second is yet in store for us. We hope so: and we hope that, in that second reader, the authors will eschew excursions into the region of Biblical Criticism in which they are not good guides, and confine themselves to helping their readers to read and understand Septuagint Greek for which they have shown an admirable competency.

Princeton.

B. B. WARFIELD.

THE BIRTH AND INFANCY OF JESUS CHRIST according to the Gospel Narratives. By the REV. LOUIS MATTHEWS SWEET, M.A. With an Introduction by James Stevenson Riggs, D.D., Professor of New Testament Literature in the Auburn Theological Seminary. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press. 1906. pp. 365.

Mr. Sweet's book is a very welcome addition to the discussion of the narratives of the Nativity. Starting, as he tells us in the preface, "with a bias rather unfavorable to the doctrine of the miraculous birth", the author has through his investigations been led to an assured belief in the historicity of the narratives; and of the earnestness and conscientiousness of these investigations the present treatise affords convincing proof. The table of contents includes: I. Statement of the Problem; II. Influence of the Old Testament Prophecies in the Formation of the Infancy Story; III. The Theory of Late Jewish-Christian Interpolation; IV. The Theory of Late Composite Origin; V. The Theory of Early Mytho-Theological Origin; VI. The Theory of Heathen Influence; VII. The Exegetical Construction of the Sections; VIII. The Uniqueness of Christ in Its Bearing upon the Question of His Birth; IX. The Doctrinal Construction of the Historic Fact; Author's Notes.

The book is perhaps stronger in the fields of philosophy and of theology (in which fields, to a far greater extent than might be supposed, the objections to the narratives lie) and in the field of comparative religion, than in that of literary criticism. Thus the elaborate attempts of Hillmann, Harnack, and Weinel to eliminate the mention of the Virgin Birth from Lk. i. 5-ii. 52 should not have been ignored.

In this omission, however, the author has been guilty of slurring over an objection not against the historicity of the narrative, but rather against the recent attempts to explain the genesis of the narratives, supposing them not to be true to the facts. Lk. i. 5-ii. 52 is clearly Jewish in character, but according to most modern opponents of the historicity of the narrative, the genesis of the idea of the Virgin Birth cannot be explained without recourse to Gentile influences. The problem therefore becomes acute: How did a heathen idea come to be embodied in just the most strikingly Jewish narrative in the New Testament? The only possible solution seems to be that it was done by interpolation; the popularity of the interpolation theory, therefore, it due not to accident but to the necessities of the case. At any rate, its popularity is certainly not due to its inherent merits, as a piece of literary criticism; for a fair examination leads inevitably to the conclusion that there is absolutely no ground in the text itself for eliminating the mention of the Virgin Birth from the original form of Lk. i. 5-ii. 52. There is hardly any more serious line of criticism of the theories of heathen origin of the idea of the Virgin Birth than that which exhibits (1) the necessity, if those theories be correct, of supposing an interpolation in the infancy narrative of Luke, and (2) the absolute groundlessness of such a supposition. This line of argument the author has not entirely ignored (see p. 150), but he has not given it that prominence to which its importance both intrinsically, and in the minds of recent opponents of the historicity of the narratives, would entitle it.

The one theory of heathen origin for the idea of the Virgin Birth, which is not exposed to the objection we have just mentioned, is that of Gunkel and Cheyne, who maintain that the idea had its roots in the heathen religions of the East, but had, in essence, already passed into Judaism before our canonical narratives were written. This theory avoids the purely literary objection only to expose itself to others still more serious, which are well stated by Mr. Sweet.

To the bibliography should be added Conrady, *Die Quelle der kanonischen Kindheitsgeschichte Jesus'*; and important articles by Hilgenfeld, Zimmermann, Corssen, Harnack, Bardenhewer, Weinel, Box and others in various foreign journals. The author has almost consistently omitted from the bibliography articles in other than English and American journals,—certainly an artificial limitation since foreign books and monographs are included. The bibliography is marred by errors in spelling or printing; on p. 216, footnote (2), read Vol. II. for Vol. I.

Princeton.

J. GRESHAM MACHEN.

DAS BERUFSBEWUSSTSEIN JESU mit Berücksichtigung geschichtlicher Analogien untersucht. Von Lic. theol. VOLKMAR FRITZSCHE, Oberlehrer am Königlichen Realgymnasium Zittau. Leipzig: Kommissionsverlag der Dürr'schen Buchhandlung, 1905. 8vo. pp. 57.

"Volkmar Fritzsche!" The combination of names is certainly very striking, and leads one to anticipate something very choice in a bro-