

in his death through all the pagan world. The Christian martyr is nobler in that his death was voluntary. He could easily have escaped it if conscience had allowed.

Mr. Allanson Picton is no bibliolater, we have said. He thinks, indeed, that the influence of bibliolatriy has been overstated in our day. The great demand now as always is not for less use of the Bible or less reverence, but more and fuller.

Professor B. W. Bacon of Yale is one of our foremost New Testament scholars. His mind is at once reverent and unfettered, a profitable combination. And he spares no pains. At the Yale University Press he has published *The Beginnings of Gospel Story*, which is 'A Historico-Critical Inquiry into the Sources and Structure of the Gospel according to Mark, with Expository Notes upon the Text, for English Readers.' The criticism, which occupies an introduction of forty pages,

must be mastered first. For the expository notes rest upon it at every step. 'After seventy years of fervent debate,' two things are settled: (1) that Mark is the literary groundwork of Matthew and Luke; (2) that Matthew and Luke have independently used Mark and another evangelical writing, principally made up of the teaching of Jesus, this writing being called Q. To these Dr. Bacon adds that Mark is not simply the preaching of Peter, but is certainly influenced by the Pauline Epistles, and has also made use of Q.

Dr. Bacon is acquainted with the very latest work done on the New Testament. Thus we observe that he is aware of the warning to keep the use of the papyri within bounds—a warning already uttered by so distinguished a papyrist as Dr. Moulton. If the language of the New Testament is the language of the common people, it is something more. And that something is the mind of Christ.

## The Virgin Birth.

BY THE REV. J. S. COOPER, M.A., LIVERPOOL.

Do we view the doctrine of the Virgin Birth from the standpoint of the author of St. Luke's Gospel? The doctrine is regarded to-day, in many quarters, as a proof of the Divinity of our Lord. Surely in Apostolic times it was regarded as a proof of the humanity of our Lord. The particular question was as to whether Christ had come in the flesh. The Christian experience of Him and of the Holy Spirit was vivid enough—so vivid that it seemed hardly credible that the origin of all these Divine impulses was once in a carpenter's shop at Nazareth. And so it was necessary to prove the human motherhood of Jesus. The First Epistle of John emphasizes all this. The Epistle begins by declaring that Christ is no phantom. He is 'that which we have seen, which we have looked right into, which our hands have handled.' In 1 Jn 4<sup>2-3</sup> and 5<sup>20-21</sup> all this is emphasized. And the Epistle ends with a warning against 'idols'—that is, mere appearances lacking substantial reality.

The world has always had a gospel—even a gospel about heaven. Christianity gave this gospel a foundation on the earth. It did not content it-

self with speculating about immortality; it revealed an immortal being, one whose immortality was shown openly and incontestably by resurrection from the dead, one who could not be holden of death.

Thus the labour expended on discovering the mother of our Lord and perpetuating her reality had as its object the certifying of hopes that had previously had no secure foundation in the only realm where human knowledge can substantiate itself.

Again, it is a remarkable fact that the Acts of the Apostles contains nothing directly concerning the Virgin birth, though the book is acknowledged as due to the author of the Third Gospel and written to the same destination. But in the view that the author of St. Luke's Gospel was to emphasize the human reality of our Lord by the stories of the birth, we find the point of view prominent enough in the Acts. In 2<sup>22</sup> He is 'a man approved of God'; in 3<sup>13.26</sup> 4<sup>27</sup> He is 'the Servant' of God; in 3<sup>22</sup> He is 'a prophet from among your brethren, like unto Moses' (see J. Weiss's article

on 'Acts' in *Dictionary of Christ*, p. 27). And all this, not to obscure the Divinity—that is taken for granted right through the book—but to show that the Divine things for man have their foundation in human things; that the Messiah is Jesus of Nazareth, and the Son of God Jesus the Crucified.

The doctrine of the Resurrection is an example of this. We do not recognize as we should that the Pharisees and the Apostles taught the same doctrine—the doctrine of the Resurrection (note Ac 23<sup>6-8</sup>). It is one more instance of the truth that Christ came not to create hopes, but to fulfil hopes. The hope of immortality was there. How it was to be realized was a mere speculation. It was Christ who brought immortality to light. It was He who abolished death. It was His work which for the first time gave substance to the hope. And so we find (Ac 4<sup>2</sup>) they proclaimed 'in Jesus' the resurrection from the dead. The difference between the Pharisee and the Christian Apostle was a difference as to how the resurrection was to come about; or rather, perhaps, we should say the Pharisee contented himself with a speculative philosophy on the subject; the Apostles explained a ground for the hope. It was

a question of the 'Way' to the Father. St. Paul and St. Peter were for this new and living way. Paul bore his chain for the hope of Israel. 'The Acts of the Apostles,' says J. Weiss, 'might have this motto prefixed, "In none other is there salvation, and neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved."'

This is all accounted for by the mental attitude of the people of New Testament times. They were matter-of-fact rather than speculative. Theory possessed a purely academic interest. The crowds, for example, that followed our Lord were unsophisticated. A logical proof, however convincing, would not have satisfied them. They knew better than to trust the skill of argument in matters that really concerned their welfare. And humanity is again and again returning to this point. When the world grows tired of its philosophies and religions it turns to simplicity. And Christianity won, not because it could prove the necessity for belief in the immortality of the soul, but because it was able to point to one who, flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone, had died and risen from the dead and who lived in the heavens dispensing the marvellous graces to His followers.

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