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## Miscellanea

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## Miscellanea.

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### Is the Virgin Birth Important?

Prof. W. W. Adams, Th. D., writes as follows in answer to the above question (*Watchman-Examiner*, May 14, 1936):—

"The question of the importance of the incarnation may be answered in brief.

"Modern science in its various fields should make us chary of final conclusions regarding matters in debate. We have been startled so frequently that we live in an atmosphere of high expectancy. In the realms of both natural and historical science we are becoming accustomed to revising former pronouncements of scholarship. If any difference, this situation has proved embarrassing to the doubter more than to the believer. The total result is the enrichment of life, the broadening and deepening and stabilizing of the foundations of faith. This is particularly true for the man of faith in the great basic facts of the Christian religion.

"The truly scientific spirit to-day is humble in the presence of God and the universe. We are finite, earth-bound. 'We are poor judges of what may or may not be involved in so transcendent a fact as the incarnation; and if, according to the evidence we have, this was actually the way in which God brought His Son into the world, it would be wiser for us to assume that there is a doctrinal connection, whether we can see it or not, than hastily to conclude that the Virgin Birth is of indifference to faith.'

"*An Important Fact.*—If the Virgin Birth is a fact, it is important; no fact can be unimportant. Moreover, it must be important for followers of Christ to 'know' facts which are imbedded in Holy Writ. 'If Jesus Christ was really born without human father, if that was really God's way for our Savior to enter into the world, then it may certainly be assumed that it was the best way. . . . We are not concerned now to assert anything so self-evident as that. But what we do assert now is not only that the Virgin Birth was important as an event, but that it is important for us to know, that we could not have remained ignorant of it without loss.' This is profoundly true.

"Yet there are those who deny the importance of the Virgin Birth. This discussion takes various forms. One is that, since the Virgin Birth is not a 'saving' doctrine, it is not essential. The answer to this is that Christ purposes to do more for His followers than merely introduce them to God. Another form is that, since the Virgin Birth is an open question or at least is difficult to comprehend and harmonize with present-day philosophical theories, we had better dispense with the doctrine altogether. The answer to this charge is that no answer is needed for so unscientific an attitude toward history. Again, it is said that the only important thing about the Incarnation is its 'motive'; the 'method' matters little. The answer is that 'the method ought to be commensurate with the motive. Unless it is proportionate to the motive, its insufficiency may be so great the motive becomes abortive.'

"Scholars have frequently pointed out the inconsistency of many who charge that the Virgin Birth is unimportant. The very vehemence and persistency with which the Virgin Birth is assailed and denounced rises up and smites to the ground the idea that that which is so assailed is lacking in importance.

"*Results of Denial.*—Once again, the deep meaning of Christ's incarnation can be measured from the point of view of the results among those who deny the Virgin Birth. Despite frequent claims to the contrary, it is sadly true that as a general rule those who deny the miraculous birth of Christ tend to deny all the miraculous in Him. And when the miraculous, supernatural Christ is gone, essential Christianity is gone.

"Designating the Virgin Birth as the 'vestibule' doctrine of Christianity, Dr. J. B. Champion warns us 'of belittling the seriousness of the situation which to-day confronts the Church of God. Grant a man that it does not matter to you that he is battering down the vestibule of your place of worship; when he has finished that, he will be in a mood to disregard what further you may grant or think. Your indifference has given him a foothold for further work of destruction; and he is more than likely to make use of his opportunity, for his advantage is your disadvantage.'" P. E. K.

### The Series on the *satisfactio vicaria*.

With the present issue the series on the vicarious atonement of Christ is being concluded. A few readers of this monthly have expressed a slight surprise that the matter of the substitutionary sacrifice of the Savior was treated along the lines of Biblical theology on the basis of practically all proof-texts of the New Testament.

But there is a definite reason for presenting this doctrine in such detail. For, in the first place, it is the correlate of the doctrine of justification, according to which the merits of the Redeemer are imputed to men. In the second place, recent events in the world of theological thinking have definitely shown that even men who are classed as conservatives are hopelessly in error with regard to the vicarious atonement and men's relation to it. Thus the recent book by Moore, *The Nature of Religion*, was favorably reviewed by a number of theological journals, while we pointed out some of its glaring mistakes and deficiencies. (See the present volume, p. 797.) Just how serious the aberrations of this leader of theological thought in the East are appears from the following excerpt taken from the section "The Transcendent," under the subhead "Of the Relation of Jesus to God." There we are told: "Our whole conception of salvation is altered. Therewith are altered our conceptions both of the Savior and the saved. We do not now think of salvation in terms which once prevailed in the Greek Church, a sense which is quite obvious in some of the most famous of the Fathers. This was the sense of some sort of union in essence—that was the phrase—of the redeemed man with God, which union in essence was to be fulfilled when life is over. 'Man's becoming God,' the ancient phrase ran. This phrase some of the Fathers used, I suppose, in some mystical sense; 'God became man in order that man might become God.' Or, again, we do not think of salvation, as often in the medieval Church, as a conferment, a benefit, almost externally bestowed,

a reward, or, with others, a consequence of election in the inscrutable goodness of God. It was the alteration of our relation to God or, at all events, the change of God's disposition toward us in view of the merit and satisfaction of our Redeemer Jesus Christ. It was like an acquittal—only not like an acquittal, in that it was conferred upon those who had been guilty, but whose guilt God in mercy passed over. It was imputing to us, even now, of Christ's righteousness—a phrase which some Protestants almost down to our own time have gloried in using. And then, by consequence, it was also our entrance into a heaven of bliss by and by. *We no longer think of salvation as something simply wrought out on our behalf. It is not a favor granted to us in view of something which some one else has done.\** And, frankly, we are simply unable to think of righteousness as imputed to anybody. Whatever else might be imputed, it could not be righteousness in ourselves. We feel that this is a contradiction in terms. We cannot think of blessedness as simply prepared for us. We have to think of ourselves as prepared for blessedness, and this by a measure of blessedness which we now actually share. We cannot think of our being supremely and eternally blessed, unless we are in ourselves prepared in some slight measure, or at least preparing, to be blessed. When we put it in these words, we see how far an interpretation inherited from the medieval Church and descending to us from classical Protestantism no longer avails. . . . In all of these respects it [religious life] has been, is, and it will be, not a mere conferment. It must be, and more and more it has been, my life. It is I who live it, physically, mentally, spiritually. . . . But I am able to think of no reward, and least of all of a reward from the all-knowing God, *for what I have not tried to be and do.* In fact, I do not like to think of it as a reward at all. It is just living recognition of a life which is my life. . . . It needs no saying that there is something transactional, unreal, about the very supposition that man's real guilt could be ascribed by the All-Holy to another and the righteousness of the other avail for man himself." (Pp. 250—253. 303.) We leave it to our readers to judge whether there is need of our constantly emphasizing the vicarious atonement and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ by grace.

P. E. K.

### Educating the Minister for To-Morrow.

This was the topic of an address before the Southern Baptist Convention by Prof. J. B. Weatherspoon, the following paragraph of which is not only informational, but is full of suggestions regarding the situation in our own Synod.

"There are also enlargement needs. The membership of our churches grows at the rate of 100,000 annually, new churches are organized at the rate of 80 to 100 annually, missionary and denominational tasks call for an increasing number of our best-trained men, and multiplied millions wait to be evangelized at home and abroad. The unemployed preachers to-day cannot be attributed to the limitation of the need for either replacement or expansion. Churches and tasks are calling for men, but they are calling for men who in personality and training are capable of adjustment and

\* Italics ours.

leadership. The task of improvement is quite as pressing as that of replacement and enlargement. This is not meant to disparage in the least the work of the noble men who have labored without the advantage of college or seminary training. Among them have been some of our greatest preachers and leaders, both of yesterday and to-day. And they would be the first to urge a better provision for, and insistence upon, a fully trained ministry. Not many years ago I heard one of them in a public address to a group of theological students urging them to use their opportunity fully, reminding them that they could gain in a few years under guidance what he had imperfectly gained only through many years of unguided struggle. Here our need is staggering. But for one of the larger denominations in the South we shall have a 'bad preeminence' in an uneducated ministry. The following figures are ten years old, but they fairly represent our situation. In 1926 only 14.4 per cent. of our preachers (15,000) had both college and seminary training, 14.9 per cent. had a college education only, 5.8 per cent. had seminary training only, while 64.9 per cent. had neither college nor seminary training. These figures do not include the situation in the colored ministry. One has heard of cold facts and cold figures; but these are hot, they burn our cheeks. When less than 15 per cent. of our Southern Baptist preachers have a full academic and theological education, the denomination as a whole must bear the responsibility and raise the question of our place in the world and whether or not we shall bestir ourselves to meet the demands of to-day and to-morrow."

P. E. K.

### Zwei Fragen betreffs Bernhards von Clairvaux.

Die Haupteignisse in dem Leben dieses bedeutenden Lehrers des Mittelalters liegen in jedem einigermaßen vollständigen Geschichtsbuch sowie in jeder größeren Enzyklopädie vor, daß er nämlich von 1090 bis 1153 lebte, daß er Gründer und Abt des Klosters zu Clairvaux wurde und daß er als einer der hervorragenden Männer seiner Zeit gilt.

Zwei Fragen aber sind es, die immer wieder auftauchen. Die erste betrifft seine Lehr- und Glaubensstellung oder, wie man es schon ausgedrückt hat: War Bernhard ein Lutheraner vor Luther? Darauf ist zunächst zu sagen, daß schon sein erster Biograph von ihm redet als magnanimus in fide, longanimis in spe, profusus in charitate, summus in humilitate, praecepius in pietate, wozu ein anderer noch hinzufügt: humanissimus in affectione, magis tam forte in fide.\*) Dabei war aber Bernhard ein rabiater Mönch, wie wir aus der Episode seine Schwester betreffend sehen, die er nach jahrelangem Zureden bewog, sich von ihrem Mann zu trennen und ihre Tage in einem Kloster zu beschließen. Bekannt ist auch Bernhards Eifer für die Kreuzzüge, namentlich den zweiten, zu dem er mit leidenschaftlicher Verehrsamkeit aufgefordert hatte. Bei alledem aber hatte Bernhard eine tiefe Einsicht in die Wahrheit des göttlichen Wortes, besonders auch in die Erlösungstat Christi, und als es mit ihm zum Sterben kam, da tröstete er sich, wie Luther wohl an die zehnmahl erinnert, ganz und gar der Tatsache, daß er Christi Verdienst ergreifen könne. In seinen Predigten über das Evangelium Johannis schreibt Luther: „Wie St. Bernhard auch

\*) Vgl. Schaff, V, 343, nota.

tat; ob er wohl seinen Orden streng gehalten hatte, noch, da er sterben sollte, da hat er vor allen andern Lehrern den lieben Herrn Christum sonderlich ausgestrichen und seine Lust und Freude an ihm gehabt und gesagt: Der Herr Christus ist mein Herr und hat auf zweierlei Weise das Himmelreich und mir dasselbige erworben; dadurch will ich auch selig werden." (VII, 1841 ff.; vgl. Kol. 1950.)

Die zweite Frage betrifft die geistlichen Gesänge Bernhards; denn man hat früher alle Lieder, die etwa zu Anfang des 12. Jahrhunderts entstanden sind, ohne weiteres Bernhard zugeschrieben. Selbst Trench hat diese Ansicht noch im allgemeinen geteilt und wollte nur *Cur mundus militat* und *O miranda vanitas* ausgenommen haben. Julian (*Dictionary of Hymnology*) ist bedeutend vorsichtiger. Er nennt nur die folgenden Lieder als von Bernhard verfaßt: *Iesu dulcis memoria* („O Jesu süß, wer dein gedenkt“; „O Jesus, King most wonderful“), *Laetabundus, exultet fidelis chorus, Cum sit omnis homo foenum*. Nicht so gut beglaubigt sind *Ut iucundas cervus undas* und *Eheu, eheu, mundi vitas*.

Über die Serie der sieben Gedichte an die Glieder des gemarterten Heilandes sind die Forscher sich noch nicht einig. Es sind dies *Salve, mundi salutare* (an die Füße), *Salve, Iesu, Rex sanctorum* (an die Knie), *Salve, Iesu, Pastor bone* (an die Hände), *Salve, Iesu, summe bonus* (an die Seite), *Salve, salus mea, Deus* (an die Brust), *Salve, Regis cor aveto* (an das Herz) und *Salve, caput oruentatum* (an das Angesicht des leidenden Heilandes). Die ersten vier dieser Gedichte stammen wahrscheinlich von Bernhard selber. Mone schreibt (*Hymni Latini*, I, 167): „Die vorstehenden vier Lieder haben gleichen Umfang. . . . Das Gedicht hat auch in andern Handschriften viele Veränderungen erfahren, worüber in den Ausgaben der Werke Bernhards nichts gesagt wird. Die Nachforschung über den Verfasser wird dadurch erschwert; es ist nur wahrscheinlich, daß die Lieder von einem französischen Dichter herrühren, weil auch der Reim reconde: profunde auf diesen Ursprung hintweist.“

Noch zweifelhafter ist die Verfasserschaft der letzten drei Gedichte, von denen sowohl Mone wie Daniel urteilt, daß sie einer späteren Zeit angehören. Julian bemerkt dazu: „If their conclusions be correct, then the finest part of all, the *Salve, caput oruentatum*, must be by some one other than St. Bernhard.“ Dorisch (Das deutsche evangelische Kirchenlied, S. 20) scheint alle sieben Passionsfalben dem Schüler Bernhards, Arnulf von Löwen (1200—1250), zuzuschreiben. Da die Letzte der sieben Salben nicht vor dem 15. Jahrhundert bekannt geworden ist, mag sogar die neuere Theorie, daß die Verfasserschaft einer frommen Nonne zugeschrieben werden darf, noch eine Stütze finden. P. E. S.