

THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY.

VOL. I.

DECEMBER, 1921.

No. 12.

A Lesson in Pastoral Theology from a Tragical Leaf of American History.

REV. FREDERICK KOENIG, St. Louis, Mo.

On Wednesday, July 11, 1804, at 7 A. M., Alexander Hamilton was shot and mortally wounded in a duel with his political foe, Aaron Burr, Vice-President of the United States, at Weehawken, on the New Jersey shore, opposite New York City. He was at once carried to New York and lingered in great agony until the next day, when death came at two o'clock in the afternoon. He left a distressed wife and seven children, the youngest a babe in arms, the oldest a son, sixteen years of age, while a still older son had fallen in mortal combat only two years before. Hamilton died in his forty-eighth year, in the fulness of his great powers, and was buried in the churchyard of old Trinity on Broadway, on the side towards Rector St., opposite the site occupied in 1664 and later by old St. Matthew's, now united with our Synod.

Hamilton until then seems not to have been a professing Christian and member of a church. The loss, in so ignominious a way, of this great man, Revolutionary hero, trusted companion and aide of the unforgotten Washington, illustrious statesman and generally respected citizen, caused a revulsion of feeling throughout the country which has not subsided to this day and which makes it well-nigh impossible for the historian to judge calmly the subsequent turbulent career of his antagonist "damned to everlasting fame." All this is not only extremely interesting, but that part pertaining to Hamilton must be held in mind if we wish to measure aright the difficulties confronting any one that was to be called in for spiritual consolation by the dying man. It seems that Bishop Moore was first sent for, but left the house without complying at that time with Hamilton's wish to receive Communion; that Dr. Mason was then sent for, who, as he says, told him he could not

Little Journeys in the Higher Anticriticism.

PROF. TH. GRAEBNER, St. Louis, Mo.

I. The Myth Hypothesis.

(Concluded.)

The Luther Myth.

Years ago Prof. Von der Hagen wrote an article: "Did Luther Live?" which caused a sensation at the time and which is just now making the rounds of the religious press. The article in question was written in 1838 and was occasioned by the *Leben Jesu* of David Friedrich Strauss, which was the sensation of the day. Strauss had "demonstrated" the presence of much legendary material in the gospels. Von der Hagen's article is a persiflage of the *Leben Jesu*. He proves the mythical origin of practically all our information about the Reformer's work and person.

"Owing to the high state of enlightenment in our day," says Von der Hagen, "many a fairy-tale and legend once regarded as history is now seen in its true light. A case in point is the Luther myth. Persons who have an interest in its origin and dissemination

take for their starting-point the well-known prophecy of Huss: 'To-day you are roasting a goose,' etc. The day of Luther's reputed birth, St. Martin's Day, is reminiscent of the goose (Huss). The traditional place of his birth is Eisleben, a name which palpably was invented to symbolize the transition from death to life. Luther is said to have been the son of a miner. The symbolism, again, is very plain: through Luther's work the buried and sunken treasures of the true faith have been brought to light again, according to the legend. The familiar story of the stroke of lightning, which had so great an influence on Luther's career, was undoubtedly suggested by the story of Paul's conversion. He is said to have posted his theses at Wittenberg. This trait is again mythological and was no doubt added to the story on account of the familiar prophecy which had been uttered at the inauguration of the University at Wittenberg: 'From a white mountain (Wittenberg) all the world will receive wisdom!' The connection with Huss and with Prague — situated at White Mountain! — is very clear.

"Luther's opposition to Tetzl and his campaign against indulgences is pure legend, as may be seen from the fact that the money chest of Tetzl is now shown in several places at the same time. Again, is it not worthy of note that the so-called Luther has had much to do with places that are of legendary interest? Wittenberg is the home of the Faust legend. At Augsburg his life is saved by the weaver Langenmantel, — who is simply the devil with his magic cloak, as he appears in the story of Faust. At Worms Luther gains a great victory, a trait reminiscent of Siegfried, who fought in a tournament at the Rosengarten (even at the present day a district near Worms is called Rosengarten). Armed men removed him to the Wartburg, a fortress long famous in legend. Here the devil visits Luther exactly as he is said to have called on Wolfram von Eschenbach. He lives at the Wartburg under the alias Junker Georg, a name suggested by the knightly killer of dragons and liberator of virgins. This, again, suggests the story that Luther liberated from convent bonds a noble virgin, the nun Katharine. The name Katharine, however, shows that symbolism is again at work, Katharine being indicative of the connection between the new doctrine and that of the Catharists, a medieval sect. Significantly enough, Luther is said to have died in Eisleben, the name expressive of life and death.

"Luther's grave is still shown, but the visitor will note that it is covered *with slabs of stone!* Safe to say, no one will ever open it, since the entire fraud would then be recognized!"

The Lincoln Myth.

"Two thousand years from now some Renan of American history will investigate the Lincoln myth, and his argument will be along these lines," said the Rev. Newell Dwight Hillis in the *Bible Student and Teacher*, in 1912:—

"Beyond all doubt, there must have been at some early time a collision between the black and the white race. Patriotism needs heroes. Youth feeds upon the godlike qualities in great leaders. Needing a giant, therefore, the far-off American fathers created a martyr. They named him Abraham Lincoln and made him tall of body and mind.

"But in building up the myth they were very clumsy. If they had named him John Lincoln, they might have deceived us—but Abraham, that is too much. Abram means the freeman and the emancipator, and inasmuch as they proposed to make him free slaves, they named him Abram. This in itself is very suspicious. Not content with casting about until they found the title Abram, they kept on until they took the name Ham, which was the name of the colored race, the children of Ham, and then they tacked that word Ham onto Abram. This not only stirs suspicion, but gives absolute certainty of the mythical origin.

"In building this myth about an emancipator, they made Abraham Lincoln's Vice-President to be Hannibal Hamlin. Inasmuch as this administration was to emancipate the slaves, who were the sons of Ham, they ventured to tack this Ham onto the Vice-President's name, calling him Hamlin. Probably they did the same thing with his given name Hannibal. It may be that the printers of two thousand years ago changed an 'm' to an 'n,' for without doubt the inventors of the myth named the Vice-President Hammibal Hamlin, which has been corrupted to Hannibal.

"Count the letters in the name of Abraham Lincoln, and there are fourteen, and the letters of Hammibal Hamlin, and there are fourteen, giving us the exact twenty-eight States that 'they represented,' showing how the creators of the myth worked it out mathematically."

The Roosevelt Myth.

Bishop John L. Nuelsen of the Methodist Episcopal Church is the author of the following clever bit of satire on the Higher Criticism, which appeared first in the *Christian Endeavor World* in 1908:—

"Suppose Lord Macaulay's famous New Zealander, whom he pictures as standing upon a broken arch of London bridge, in the

midst of a vast solitude, to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's, should come over to America and dig in the sand-hills covering the Congressional Library in Washington.

"He finds a great pile of literature which originated in the first few years of the twentieth century.

"In the very learned book which our New Zealand scholar publishes he refers to the fact that at the beginning of the twentieth century the head of the great American nation was supposed to be a strong and influential man by the name of Theodore Roosevelt. His name has gone down in history, but our scholar proves that Theodore Roosevelt was no historical person at all. He never lived; he is merely the personification of tendencies and mythological traits then dominant in the American nation.

"For instance, this legendary hero is commonly pictured with a big stick. Now this is plainly a mythological trait, borrowed from the Greeks or Romans, and represents really the thunderbolt of Jupiter.

"He is pictured as wearing a broad-brimmed hat and large eye-glasses. This mythological feature is borrowed from old Norse mythology, and represents Woden endeavoring to pierce through the heavy clouds of fog covering his head.

"A great many pictures show the legendary hero smiling and displaying his teeth. This is a very interesting feature, showing the African influence in the American civilization.

"Many contradictory legends are told about this man. He was a great hunter; he was a rough-rider; but he was also a scholar and author of a number of learned books. He lived in the mountains, on the prairie, and in a large city. He was a leader in war, but also a peacemaker. It is said that he was appealed to by antagonizing factions, even by warring nations, to arbitrate. It is self-evident that we have here simply the personification of prominent character traits of the American people at various stages of their historical development. They loved to hunt, to ride, to war; reaching a higher stage of civilization, they turned to studying, writing books, making peace; and all these contradictory traits were, in course of time, used to draw the pictures of this legendary national hero.

"Some mythological features have not yet been fully cleared up; for instance, that he is often represented in the shape of a bear or accompanied by bears. For a while these 'Teddy Bears' were in nearly every house, and it seems as if they were worshiped, at least by children. There is no doubt that some remote astral conception lies at the root of this rather puzzling feature.

“But two reasons are conclusive to establish the legendary thesis:—

“1. The American nation, at the beginning of the twentieth century, had hardly emerged from the crudity of fetishism and witchcraft. Many traces of fortune-telling, charming, sorcery, and other forms of superstition can be found by studying the daily papers. Even this hero Roosevelt was given to some such superstition. Whenever he wished to bring any one under his spell and charm him, he took him by the hand and pronounced a certain magical word. As far as I can discover, it spells something like ‘deglighted.’

“2. The other conclusive proof is the name. Theodore is taken from the language of people representing the southern part of Europe and means ‘Gift of God’; Roosevelt is taken from the language of a people representing the northern part of Europe, and means ‘Field of Roses.’ The idea is evident: This person personifies the union of the two European races which laid the foundation of early American civilization — the Romanic and the Teutonic races; and the Americans imagined that a man who united in himself all those wonderful traits of character must necessarily be a miraculous ‘Gift of God’; and furthermore, they thought that if a man personifying their ideals really had full sway, their country would be changed to a ‘Field of Roses.’”

Though Christian faith does not need the support of any such *reductio ad absurdum* of the mythological method, Christian scholarship welcomes it. Moreover, while on their very face more or less farcical, it must be said that the closer one studies the argumentation of those who resolve Scripture story in a tissue of myth and folk-lore, the more one is inclined to say that the answer it deserves is at most the demonstration that the same methods applied to historical characters would prove Napoleon, Bismarck, Goethe, Lincoln, Roosevelt so many myths. Niebuhr’s critical method indeed worked revolutionary changes in the prevailing ideas with respect to the early history of Rome. A large portion of what is recorded by Livy as historical truth was shown by him to be little better than a series of mythical and exaggerated legends with a slender basis of fact. Grote, following in his footsteps, eliminated a considerable element of fable and legend from the history of Greece. But while the critical method has explained the myths and legends of superstition and credulity in the false religions that

cloud the morning of the historic period, it has "proved itself most positive and constructive when applied to the miraculous and supernatural which are alone adequate to explain the rise and development of the Mosaic and Christian economies." (Noah Porter.) Niebuhr himself, after some sharp experiences of misgivings lest the miraculous in the Old and New Testament should, under the critical test, go the same way as the mythological in the Roman and Greek history, attained the conviction that, as a result of most careful and critical investigation, the literal truth of Old and New Testament story stands unshaken. And Arnold says in his *Lectures on the Study of Modern History*:—

"The miracles of the gospels and those of later history do not stand on the same ground of external evidence. I cannot think that the unbelieving spirit of the Roman world, in the first century, was equally favorable to the origination and admission of stories of miracles with the credulous tendencies of the Middle Ages. But the difference goes deeper than this to all those who can appreciate the other evidences of Christianity, and who therefore feel that what we call miracles were but the natural accompaniments of the Christian revelation — accompaniments, the absence of which would have been more wonderful than their presence. This, as I may almost call it, *a priori* probability in favor of the miracles of the gospel cannot be said to exist in favor of those of later history." And he adds the acute remark: "Strauss writes about history and myths, without appearing to have studied the question, but having heard that some pretended stories are mythical, he borrows this notion as an engine to help him out of Christianity. But the idea of men writing mythical histories *between the time of Livy and Tacitus*, and *St. Paul* mistaking such for realities!"

Nor can it be asserted that the *ad absurdum* argument of Whately, Nuelsen, and others quoted, so far departs from the domain of probabilities that it loses its force. The arbitrary nature of the constructions which Cheyne and the Pan-Babylonians place upon Scripture story so violates every canon of sound criticism that it really, in the words of Juvenal, becomes difficult *not* to write a satire. Or what shall we say when Dr. Haupt sets out to prove that Jesus was not a Jew? Haupt refers to the gospel-record that Peter's speech "betrayed him." This proves, to him, that Peter was not a Jew, but an Aryan. Peter came from Galilee, and Jesus was likewise born in Galilee, hence, again, Jesus is not a Jew. In Micah 5, 2 the word "Bethlehem" is "a later insertion." Besides,

in the Talmud Jesus is called a Nazarene, and Julian exclaimed, "Galilean, thou hast conquered." Most probably Jesus was a descendant of Spitam, the ancestor of Zoroaster! (*The Open Court*, April, 1909.)

As for coincidences, and the argument drawn therefrom, what of the coincidences between the Nibelungen characters and historical personages of the early Middle Age? What of the following, taken from the *American Encyclopedia*:—

"Henry Ustick Onderdonk was born in 1779 in New York, and was graduated from Columbia in 1805. In 1836 he was consecrated Bishop of Pennsylvania. In 1844 he was tried on charges of intemperance and removed from his office. He was followed by Alonzo Potter, who became Bishop of Pennsylvania in 1845.

"Benjamin Treadwell Onderdonk, brother of the above, was born in 1791 in New York. He was graduated from Columbia in 1809. In 1830 he was consecrated Bishop of New York. In 1844 he was tried on charges of immorality and was deposed from his bishopric. On his death Horatio Potter, a brother of the above-named Alonzo Potter, became Bishop."

Imagine a history of these bishops having been written and being scrutinized three thousand years from now with the same spirit which animates Higher Criticism. How easy it would be to see that here we have a confusion of facts, as it is claimed we have with regard to the deceit practised by Abraham and by Isaac with reference to their wives! And yet this singular collocation of coincidences stands as a historic fact to-day.
