

to trace in detail. Paul's business was only to insist on the fact of this degeneration, to prove it from the universal consciousness of men, to insist on the one and only possible remedy, and to point out that this remedy was open and ready and certain for the whole world.

Now, as we have said, there was one exception to this universal hopelessness in the pagan world ; and this exception was born out of the most desperate straits to which the Mediterranean world had yet been reduced, viz., the Civil Wars of Italy, and the apparently imminent ruin of the one great remaining power of order in the Mediterranean. The terrible suffering entailed by those wars and disorder proved, just as the Pauline view declared, the birth-pangs of a new hope. It was in this situation that the Fourth Eclogue sprang into being, the announcement by a great poet of the hope which was coming into being in the minds of many at this crisis. The poem had its origin in an almost accidental occasion of literary history, at which we must for a moment glance.

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(To be continued.)

NOTES ON RECENT NEW TESTAMENT STUDY.

IN a recent monograph on the apostolic decree of Acts xv. (*Das Aposteldecree nach seiner ausserkanonischen Text-gestalt*), issued in the *Texte und Untersuchungen* (Leipzig, 1905), Gotthold Resch pleads for the revolutionary hypothesis that the original form of Acts xv. 28 f., substantially preserved in the Western text, ran thus : ἔδοξεν γὰρ τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι καὶ ἡμῖν μηδὲν πλέον ἐπιτίθεσθαι ὑμῖν βάρους πλὴν τούτων τῶν ἐπίαναγκες ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων καὶ αἵματος καὶ πορνείας καὶ ὅσα μὴ θέλετε ἑαυτοῖς γίνεσθαι ἐτέρῳ μὴ ποιεῖν ἀφ' ὧν διατηροῦντες ἑαυτοὺς εὐ πράξατε φερόμενοι ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι ἔρρωσθε. In defence of this view (pp. 68 f.), he has to meet the objection that the Western text seems merely to be a later attempt, made during the second

century, to smooth away the difficulties of the ceremonial features in the canonical text by introducing the golden rule. His answer is that the Western text, with its moral emphasis, was by no means an obvious commonplace at the time of the apostolic council. The Jews were in danger, as we see from Matthew xv. 3, 6, of exaggerating the ceremonial precepts of the Law to the detriment of the ethical. Hence the assertion of the golden rule as a *sine quâ non* was far from being a platitude; it was, on the contrary, both timely and epoch-making.

A further peculiarity of this view is its omission of *πνικτόν*, or strangled meat, from the prohibitions of the decree (pp. 23 f.). Resch holds that the Western text here is undoubtedly superior to the canonical, since the term is unknown to the Old Testament and the Talmud. No basis for the prohibition of "things strangled" can be found in Genesis ix. 4, which refers to the "membrum animalis viventis," or in Leviticus xvii. 13, 14, which alludes to a prohibition of blood, whereas *πνικτόν* is flesh. Till the fourth century A.D., Jewish tradition, Resch avers (citing a Jewish expert, Dr. Wiener, to this effect), never understood the passage from Leviticus as prohibiting the eating of *πνικτόν* as flesh; it was the Christians of that time who first outdid the Jews in legal strictness by extending the conception of *πνικτόν* to include the flesh. Nor in Leviticus xvii. 15, 16 can the canonical sense of *πνικτόν* be traced (cf. Deut. xiv. 21). The identification of the term in Acts xv. with *θηρσιμαῖον καὶ θηριάλωτον* is pronounced an exegetical makeshift, as indeed Zeller saw many years ago. In short, "Jewish theology was ignorant of the term *πνικτόν*" in the canonical sense; as a matter of fact, *πνικτόν* was never included among the forbidden foods, and consequently it is extremely unlikely that it would be reckoned among them in the first century.

In a note contributed to Preuschen's *Zeitschrift* (1906,

254-256), Dr. Nestle discusses the same problem of the meaning of *πνικτόν*, noting, as Resch does, its absence from certain passages of the Clementine literature, and appealing for more information from experts upon the exact significance and use of the term. He too admits that the inclusion of the golden rule in the decree does not necessarily convert it into a general moral catechism, but may have had a bearing on the mutual relations of the Jewish and the Gentile Christians.

Dr. Alphons Steinmann, the Roman Catholic scholar, however, objects strongly to this view in his recent monograph on *Die Abfassungszeit des Galaterbriefes* (1906, pp. 70 f.). With Seeberg, he considers that Resch has failed to disprove the origin of *πνικτόν* in pre-Christian Judaism. The prohibition of it as a food would follow naturally, in his opinion, from Leviticus xvii., so that there is no reason to conjecture that the original ethical catechism of Acts xv. was changed into a list of prohibited foods by the subsequent introduction of *πνικτόν*. Similarly Rudolf Knopf, in his recent edition of Acts (in *die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, ii. p. 65), refuses to admit the originality of the Western form of the decree. Like several other critics, he considers the canonical form to be genuine, yet denies that it could have been promulgated at this period. It is not unhistorical, however; the author of Acts has simply ante-dated it. Probably it was drawn up and forwarded to Antioch after Paul had left that city; its occasion was certainly subsequent to Galatians ii. 11 f., which explains Paul's failure to mention it, and also accounts for the fact that his ignorance of its terms is assumed in Acts xxi. 25.

To return to Resch. In order to make out his case, he has to show that the three prohibitions of *εἰδωλόθυτα*, *πορνεία*, and *αἷμα* refer to serious moral offences. He does this in the following manner. *Εἰδωλόθυτα* (pp. 21 f.) denotes either a sacrifice to idols or the remainder of flesh

that had been thus sacrificed. In the latter sense, it meant food sold in the markets apart from any connexion with sacrificial worship. The two meanings are illustrated by 1 Corinthians x. 14-22, and 23-33 respectively. Now the canonical text of Acts xv. implies, by the insertion of *πνικτόν*, the second sense of the term *εἰδωλόθυτα*, although even Leviticus xvii., which is taken as the basis for such prohibitions, knows nothing whatever of a commandment to abstain from eating food of this nature at a private meal, whilst Paul distinctly asserts that such a practice is an *ἀδιάφορον*, instead of being *ἐπάναγκες*. Similarly in the Apocalypse (ii. 14, 20) to eat *εἰδωλόθυτα* means not to partake privately of food which had been offered for sale in the market as the remainder of sacrificial material, but to offer sacrifices to idols (pp. 35-37). In the light of contemporary usage, therefore, *εἰδωλόθυτα* in Acts xv. cannot denote anything but idolatry. The second item, *πορνεία*, is only strange when combined with prohibitions of food. In its original meaning of "fornication," it was extremely apt, in view of the pagan excesses to which Gentile Christians had hitherto been accustomed (pp. 73, 74). Similarly with the prohibition of murder (*αἷμα*), which subsumes all the sins against the fifth commandment mentioned by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (p. 75). The substitution of *αἷμα* for *φόνος* is probably due to the influence of Leviticus xix. 16 f. And the golden rule which follows, in the Western text of the decree, expands and applies this prohibition of all unbrotherly conduct. The three sins thus banned are the three deadly sins of the early Church, as Tertullian, in the twelfth chapter of his treatise *de pudicitia*, expressly asserts. Corssen has made this a reason for doubting the originality of the Western text of the decree. The canonical form, he argues, was curtailed by Montanist influence, in order to convert it into a catechism against these three deadly sins. But (pp. 144 f.), as Resch points

out, the Montanists had not three but seven deadly sins, and it is highly improbable that even within Catholic circles such an abbreviation would have been possible. On the contrary, he believes that the rise of the canonical and secondary form of the decree can be accounted for, historically, by the influence of Clement of Alexandria and Origen, who are responsible for introducing *πνικτόν* into the scope of the decree and thereby altering its character. Their reason (pp. 151 f.) was the desire to safeguard their Christian contemporaries against idolatry, since, in the superstition of the day, the blood of beasts which had not been slain and drained of their blood, was a *τροφή* of daemons. To partake of it was to be defiled by them. Hence, "an attempt was made to find in the decree the sanction of that practice of abstinence from all sacrificial food, whether slain or strangled, which had grown up, independently of the decree, both in the East and in the West. Nor can it be denied that the very language of the decree gave some occasion for this interpretation. The term *ἀπέχεσθαι* itself might suggest the idea of abstinence from food . . . and *εἰδωλόθυτα* was still more liable to be misread." Had some equivalent expression like *εἰδωλολατρεία* been used for it, as *φεύγειν* for *ἀπέχεσθαι* (cf. 1 Cor. x. 14), or *φόνος* for *αἷμα*, such a reconstruction of the decree would have been impossible as arose about the year 190 A.D. in Alexandria and passed into the canonical text of the New Testament.

The origin of the whole letter (Acts xv. 23-29) is discussed afresh by Harnack in his monograph on *Lukas der Arzt* (1906, pp. 153 f.), who agrees with Weiss, as against Zahn, that it is composed by Luke. The style and vocabulary are examined, and the result is held to be that these verses do not represent some source, but that they were written, like the speeches in the Book of Acts, by Luke himself.

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ERRATUM.—On page 313, 3 lines from bottom, for *ὁμογενής* read *μονογενής*.