

The Date of Polycarp's Martyrdom in the Jewish Calendar.

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POSTHUMOUS honours are falling thick on the illustrious author of the *Vie du Rhéteur Ælius Aristide*. It is not given to many original investigators to be the subject of the unstinted praise of scholars of the rank of Professor Harnack, Bishop Lightfoot, and the brilliant band enumerated by the latter in *Apost. Fathers*, pt. ii. vol. i. p. 650. The ranks of the admirers of M. Waddington have now received a notable addition in Dr. Ramsay of Aberdeen (THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, February 1904).

Basing his researches on the earliest records of the Eastern Church, Waddington arrived at the conclusion that Polycarp suffered on the seventh day before the Kalends of March, the second day of Xanthicus, Saturday, 23rd February, 155 A.D.

Dr. Ramsay, who does not refer to the elaborate study of Bishop Lightfoot, shows some leanings to 166 A.D., the date favoured by Eusebius, and introduces a new element of difficulty arising from the uncertainty of the years of the proconsulship of Quadratus in Asia. I venture to think that this external factor is not enough to make us withhold our final assent to Waddington, and that it would be an excess of caution to wait indefinitely for the yet undiscovered inscriptions which are credited with power to speak the last word.

I may be allowed to throw Waddington's date into terms of two calendars: (1) the 'Epheso-Asiatic' Calendar, under which Polycarp died at Smyrna; (2) the Jewish Calendar, a term of which is undoubtedly embodied in the Acts of his martyrdom.

1. Though the point cannot be developed here, it is certain that the calendar known to the countrymen and contemporaries of Polycarp was, in spite of Lightfoot's attempt to eliminate its lunar character and to assimilate it with the solar methods of Rome, a calendar closely modelled on the Babylonian system. In this it resembled every Eastern calendar known to history, be they called 'Asiatic' or 'Epheso-Asiatic,' or 'Macedonian' or 'Syro-Macedonian,' or 'Jewish' or 'Rabbinical.'

One feature common to them all has been un-

accountably forgotten by modern students. Every month in Babylonian and derivative reckonings, including the thirteen calendars discovered by Masson in Florence, and known by the name of *ἡμερολόγιον μηνῶν διαφόρων πόλεων*, is allotted *two* 'first days,' the former of which is the *last* day of the preceding month. Through neglect of this elementary principle, Lightfoot assigns 31 days to the 'Asiatic' month *Dius*, whereas 30 days was the extreme limit ever reached in an Eastern calendar.

I shall now try to exhibit the date determined by Waddington, in terms of a week culled from my reconstruction of the

EPHESO-ASIATIC CALENDAR FOR 155 A.D.

Dystrus (the 5th Month). (February)—

<i>Dystrus</i> 23=Sat.	Feb. 16
„ 24=Sun.	„ 17
„ 25=Mon.	„ 18
„ 26=Tu.	„ 19
„ 27=Wed.	„ 20

Xanthicus (the 6th Month). (Feb.-Mar.)—

Dystrus 28=Th. Feb. 21; serving as *1st first day* to *Xanthicus*.

Xanthicus 1=Fri. Feb. 22; serving as *2nd first day* to *Xanthicus*.

Xanthicus 2=Sat. Feb. 23; date of martyrdom.

2. Turning now to another all-important datum drawn from the earliest accounts of the death of Polycarp, but overlooked by Dr. Ramsay, we find that the martyr was burnt on 'a great Sabbath.' Here we are brought face to face with a technical term that belongs exclusively to the Jewish Calendar. Its meaning I have tried to illustrate and establish in my *Anglo-Jewish Calendar for Every Day in the Gospels*. In Greek and Latin this hitherto obscure term is best rendered by *σάββατον πρωτόπρωτον* (cf. Lk 6¹), and *Sabbatum primo-primum*. As I have endeavoured to show in the above work, this particular Sabbath recurred pretty frequently, and embraced in itself the double sanctity of the weekly Sabbath and the New Moon Day. Hence it was called 'great' or 'high,' or, to use a phrase of the Latin Liturgy, 'a double of the first

class.' In this connexion Lightfoot hazards a conjecture which has not a shadow of foundation in early Hebrew literature or liturgy, and states that 'a great Sabbath' means 'the Sabbath after Easter.'

I have reconstructed the Jewish Calendar for 3915 A.M. or 155 A.D., but in order to anticipate the obvious suspicion that my figures are 'cooked' to make them square with Waddington, I may be allowed to state that at the outset of the calculations, in which I have been helped by Dr. Halm of the Royal Observatory, Edinburgh, I had not the least notion how my hypothesis touching 'a great Sabbath' would work out in relation to the received date of the martyrdom.

I now append an excerpt form :

THE JEWISH CALENDAR FOR 155 A.D. (a Jewish Leap Year).

Adar (the 12th sacred Month). (February)—

Adar 24=Sat. Feb. 16.

„ 25=Sun. „ 17.

Adar 26=Mon. „ 18.

„ 27=Tu. „ 19.

„ 28=Wed. „ 20.

„ 29=Th. „ 21.

Veadar (Intercalary). (February)—

Adar 30=Fri. Feb. 22; serving as 1st first day to Veadar.

Veadar 1=Sat. Feb. 23; „ „ 2nd first day „ „

This last is at once the weekly Sabbath and the beginning of a new month, or a New Moon Day in the Jewish Calendar. On such a day Polycarp died. It also tallies exactly with Xanthicus 2nd in the first table. (On Veadar=Xanthicus, see Fotheringham, *Journal of Philology*, vol. xxix. p. 110). All the conditions of the problem seem to be fulfilled in the equation—

Xanthicus 2nd=Veadar 1st='a great Sabbath'=Saturday, Feb. 23, 155 A.D.

No such verification is possible for 166 A.D. Therefore Waddington's year 155 A.D. and not the other is the date of the death of S. Polycarp, martyr.

Contributions and Comments.

The Phrase, 'The Virgin-Birth of Our Lord.'

A PHRASE has lately appeared in current English theological literature, which seems to be accepted (it is employed, at least) by men of all parties, by High and Low Churchmen, by Broad Churchmen, and especially by the followers of the higher criticism, to whatever Church or denomination they belong. It may be well, therefore, before the term gets definitely established in English theology, to examine it somewhat closely, and to ask what it means, especially as used by the advocates of the higher criticism.

Taking the term 'Virgin-birth' by itself, it may perhaps be understood to mean that our Lord was born of a pure virgin, unsullied by act of man; but the more precise signification would seem to be that before, during, and after parturition the blessed Mary remained a virgin. Physiologically, I suppose, this would be called extra-uterine pregnancy and parturition, if there be such a thing. This belief is held as the only orthodox belief in the Greek and Roman Churches. But it is not

held by the majority of those who are now using the term 'Virgin-birth'; nor is it incumbent on all English Churchmen, still less on other Churches or bodies, English or foreign. A man may fervently believe in the literal truth of the Gospels, may accept all the statements of the whole of the New Testament, and yet deny that any such assertion as this latter belief is to be found there.

The majority of those who use the term now, especially the higher critics, do not employ the term in this sense at all; they use it to imply the miraculous conception of our Lord by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, that which is termed in more technically theological language the Incarnation; it is in this sense they use the term 'Virgin-birth.' Are birth and conception the same thing? Did our Lord's Incarnation commence at His birth? 'When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb' (cf. Lk 1^{44, 45}). The Apostles' Creed makes two distinct statements: 'Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.' By the writers above alluded to the term 'Virgin-birth' is used to cover both these