

MISCELLANEOUS.

JUDGE WAITE ON THE EARLY HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY.

Judge Waite, of Chicago, President of the Secular Union, and well known as a radical thinker, is the author of a thick-volumed and learned book entitled: *History of the Christian Religion to the Year Two Hundred*. The work has lately reached its fifth edition, and deserves the special attention of scholars in so far as it not only gives the results of the author's investigation, but adduces all the main evidences which he has collected and upon the basis of which he formulates his opinions. We cannot be expected to enter into details or criticise his views, for it is natural that as to the documentary evidence of church history covering so vast a period as two centuries there should be difference of opinion, and many of the mooted points are even beyond the possibility of a final settlement. For instance, Judge Waite speaks in the beginning of his book of the Gospel of Paul, to which the Apostle himself alludes in his Epistles (ii. 16-25; 2 Thessalonians ii. 14), and believes that Paul had actually written a gospel; while in our opinion Paul refers simply to the burden of his message, the doctrine of salvation through the death of the crucified Saviour.

Judge Waite divides the first two centuries of the Christian era into six periods: First, the apostolic age, 30-80, the time of Jesus, Paul, Peter, the Jameses, and other apostles; Secondly, the apostolic fathers, 80-120,—Clement of Rome, Ignatius Polycarp, including such men as Apollonius of Tyana and Simon Magus (we would have placed Simon Magus in the apostolic age as being a contemporary of Peter). Judge Waite thinks that this second period is the age of miracles, claiming that the older documents are comparatively free from the belief in the supernatural. The third period is the age of the Apocryphal gospels, the Protevangelion, the Gospel of Infancy, Acts of Pilate, etc., 120-130. The fourth period comprises the time of Marcion, Justin Martyr, and other authors of less importance, from 130-170. Judge Waite insists that so far in all this mass of Christian literature, there is not to be found a single mention of any of the canonical gospels; not one of all the writers down to the fourth period in any work which has been preserved has mentioned Luke, Mark, John, or Matthew as the author of a gospel. He claims that there is not sufficient evidence that Tatian's *Diatessaron* was a harmony of the four gospels. Eusebius's testimony as to the gospels is so skilfully thrown together as to create the impression that they existed during the time of which he was writing. But in every instance the assertion is by implication merely, and his intent to deceive, our author claims, is manifest.

The fifth period (170-185) is the time in which the four gospels received a defi-

nite shape. It is the time in which the Christian doctrine became settled and the church established as a powerful institution.

The sixth period, from 185-200, is characterised by the formation of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Here we have such authors as Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian.

With the establishment of the Church a deterioration in its character is noticeable. Says our author :

"As from a few bones the scientist can reconstruct the entire anatomy, so from these fragments can the historian arrive at the frame-work of the orthodox religion of the second century. But the complete and living form of Christianity is wanting.

"With the exception of the epistle of Clement of Rome, written near the close of the first century, and a few scattering writings afterward, there is but little in the fathers of that day to remind one of the teachings of Jesus, or the fervid utterances of the apostle to the Gentiles. The fathers of the second century were, with united energies, engaged in the work of suppressing heresy. Justin Martyr was writing against the Jews, Tertullian against Marcion, and Irenæus against all the heretics. This raid against those who differed from the established faith, left but little time to cultivate the more kindly Christian graces, and finally culminated in the establishment of a power which should be competent for the suppression of heresy by force. The teachings of Paul concerning heresy and his bitter denunciation of heretics contributed largely to this result.

"Another thing that strikes the attention in a comprehensive review of the period is the ignorance and superstition, even of the most enlightened and best educated of the fathers. Their bigotry has been noticed,—their ignorance and superstition were no less.

"With rare exceptions, they were men who utterly despised that learning of the heathen which consisted in attempting to ascertain the laws of the material universe. Construing in the narrowest and strictest sense the maxim, that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, they confined themselves almost exclusively to an exposition of the Jewish scriptures, and of the sayings of Christ, construed in the light of those scriptures; drawing oftentimes, in the application of the prophecies, the most fanciful and whimsical analogies."

The subject is so vast that even this thick volume, consisting of over 500 pages, merely touches upon a number of problems, without exhausting them. Whatever the value be of the results, the book has one advantage which even the author's adversaries ought to concede: the author proceeds like a judge by introducing evidence. His training in the juridical profession redounds to the advantage of the reader, who is thus confronted with a great part of the evidences themselves. The book bristles with quotations from the Church fathers, from Latin and Greek authors, and condensed statements of such books as the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, etc., etc. Accordingly, those who do not agree with the author find here the material collected which they can utilise for their own investigations. There can be no doubt that the material has been collected with great diligence and circumspection, and if we consider that the bulk of it was done many years ago, at the time when the first edition appeared, we may be astonished that the collection is so well done. The author has upon the whole taken into consideration the results of modern research, which have been more rapid in this field than perhaps in any other line of historical inquiry. There are some exceptions, however; e. g., we are astonished that Judge Waite nowhere mentions the discovery of the frag-

ments of the Gospel According to St. Peter, which are very important in determining our opinion concerning that lost document.

While Judge Waite tries to be as impartial as a historian as he was in his capacity as United States Judge of Utah, we see plainly that the tendency of his book is to reveal the worthlessness of the ancient Christian writers, their lack of education as well as their dishonesty.

Judge Waite says: "Their credulity was unbounded. They had a sublime disregard for truth; not so much from perversity, as from carelessness, and indifference to its sacred character. Their unscrupulousness when seeking for arguments to enforce their positions, is notorious; as well as the prevalence among them of what are known as pious frauds. Jones, himself a zealous Christian writer, says that Justin Martyr, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Lactantius made use of testimonies out of forgeries and spurious books, to prove the very foundation of the Christian Revelation; and it is believed, on good grounds, that Irenæus was no better. This father, while engaged in the introduction of gospels which show that the ministry of Christ lasted from one to three years, not longer than three and a half, himself declares that it lasted about twenty years, and that he had the tradition from the elders of Asia who had obtained it from John and the other apostles.

"In conclusion, as the result of this investigation, it may be repeated that no evidence is found of the existence, in the first century, of either of the following doctrines: the immaculate conception—the miracles of Christ—his material resurrection. No one of these doctrines is to be found in the epistles of the New Testament, nor have we been able to find them in any other writings of the first century.

"As to the four gospels, in coming to the conclusion that they were not written in the first century, we have but recorded the conviction of the more advanced scholars of the present day, irrespective of their religious views in other respects.

"All that is of any value—all that is in harmony with the immutable laws of the universe—all that is in accord with the eternal principles of right and justice, still remains. All else is fast passing away, and is destined to pass away forever."

P. C.

THE HON. CHARLES CARROLL BONNEY.

Though a lawyer by profession, the well-known President of the Word's Fair Auxiliary Congresses of 1893, the Hon. C. C. Bonney, is a poet of more than average ability. It was a happy event that when the last vacancy in the Chief Justiceship of the U. S. Supreme Court was filled, Judge Fuller was preferred to Mr. Bonney, the names of both being presented in the last choice; for Mr. Bonney was thus spared for other work, not less important than even the paramount influence which is wielded by the members of the highest court in the country, viz., the realisation of his life's dream—of a great scheme of World's Congresses, culminating in the marvellous achievement of a successful Religious Parliament. Mr. Bonney partakes of the nature of a prophet, and a prophet is naturally possessed of a poetic vein. We publish in the present number of *The Open Court* a poem by Mr. Bonney which characterises the high strain of his Muse and gives expression to the noble sentiments which ensoul his patriotism. Some of the lines, especially those in the end, summarising the whole, breathe the true Miltonian spirit. It is to be expected that in some of the passages in the middle of the poem the reader is apt to flag; but even they are not without significance, for they convey the author's