
A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

looking on that work and teaching with very different eyes to ours; or, in the words of Gregory, quoted by our English Hooker: "Sordet in conspectu judicis, quod fulget in conspectu operantis." H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.

ART. II.—THE LEGEND OF ST. URSULA AND THE ELEVEN THOUSAND VIRGINS.

OUR readers have been able to trace in the history of the Veronica Handkerchief the successive stages through which the mythical legends of the Mediæval Church have passed from their first rude inception to their perfect, though perhaps not final, development. Through a series of changes of persons and places and names, we have seen the gradual formation of a very interesting and romantic personality, and out of a mythical Berenice have witnessed the creation of a still more mythical Veronica. As we get farther on into mediæval mythology we find the ingenuity and adaptiveness of the legendary authors becomes less visible and is replaced by a boldness of invention which is almost startling. A conspicuous instance of this change presents itself in the Legend of St. Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins, whose very doubtful relics are familiar to all who are acquainted with the churches of Cologne, in whose walls this very miscellaneous collection is so carefully preserved. In this case a mythical saint has been created, who is acknowledged by the learned of the Roman Church never to have had a corporal existence, and a Pope has been extemporized for the occasion who has no recognised place in the Petrine chain, while a British-Armorican romance has been interwoven with a legend of German martyrology to complete the triumph of mediæval credulity. But the introduction into the scene of the imaginary Pope Cyriacus, who, according to the fashion of the age, was sainted, brought a new element of a legal character into this series of impossibilities. For to complete the story, and enable the imaginary pope to accompany the eleven thousand virgins on their expedition, it was necessary that he should resign the Papacy and surrender his authority to a successor. This renunciation, religiously believed in for several centuries, was alleged as an important precedent in the controversy which was raised on the election of Pope Boniface VIII., whether a pope had the power to resign his authority and hand it down to another. A remarkable treatise on this subject was composed by the famous canonist, Ægidius de Columna, in which he refers to this instance of the pseudo-Cyriacus, which forms one of the corner-stones of the Ursuline legend. The imaginary

Pope thus obtained an illicit introduction into the body of the decretals, from which he was not removed until the end of the sixteenth century on the revision of the Canon Law by Pope Gregory XIII.

In order to explore successfully this wonderful maze of impossibilities, we will place ourselves under the guidance of a learned Neapolitan divine and canonist, the Abate Carlo Blaschi, whose examination of the forged decretal epistles and investigation of their object and origin led him into several of the by-ways of history, and notably into that upon which we are entering. In an appendix to his work "De Collectione Canonum Isidori Mercatoris" (Neap., 1760) he discourses "De Pseudo-Cyriaco Papa Comite S. Ursulæ ac MXI. Millium Virginum et cum eis Martyrium passo" (p. 213).

He begins by alleging that "the fable of Pope Joan gave occasion to the fiction of another equally fabulous Pope, Cyriacus, who renounced the Papacy, and, with St. Ursula and the eleven thousand virgins who accompanied her, was driven on shore at Cologne and there obtained the crown of martyrdom." He leads us back to the most ancient of the martyrologists of the Western Church, Usuardus, to see whether we can find any mention of the famous Ursula, who has given her name to a numerous order of devotees, who religiously believe in her existence and history. But Usuardus is ominously silent. The only saints he recognises on the anniversary of St. Ursula are "St. Martha and St. Saula, with many other martyrs." Some have supposed that Saula is a mere corruption of Ursula, but he more reasonably conjectures that the name Ursula comes from the combination and blending together of the two saints—that Marth-saula, corrupted into Arth-saula or Arsaula, settled down at last into Ursula. We thus arrive at a single personality and find her at the head of many other martyrs. The fact that the Church of Cologne gave no separate commemoration to St. Martha and St. Saula on the day of their anniversary tends to show that their memorial merged in that of Ursula and to corroborate our author's theory. Having secured the central figure of the story, we have now to inquire how this incredible number of followers came to be grouped around it. A certain monk, of Prüm, by name Wandebert, a contempory of Usuardus, describes a massacre of a thousand saintly virgins on the banks of the Rhine, a number which Otho of Frisingen (1140) brings up to the orthodox standard affirming that "Attila during his incursions crowned with martyrdom eleven thousand virgins at Cologne." Our own chronicler, or, rather, romancist, Geoffry of Monmouth decked out the narrative in a manner worthy of his inventive powers. According to him, the British Emperor, Maximus, appointed

his General Conan King of Armorica, who demanded from the King of Cornwall his daughter Ursula, together with eleven thousand virgins, who were to be assigned as wives to his new military settlers. They, falling into the power of the Huns on the borders of the Rhine, were slain by them out of hatred to their faith and modesty, in which Ursula confirmed her companions. The interpolation of the Chronicle of Sigebert of Gemblours[1]—for the passage is an evident interpolation—gives the following enlargement of the story:

"More famous than every other war, was that which the glorious army of the eleven thousand holy virgins engaged in, led by the holy virgin Ursula. She was the only daughter of Nothus, a most noble British prince, and was, while under age, demanded in marriage by the son of a most cruel tyrant. Seeing her father, who feared God, in a state of great anxiety between the alternative of forcing his daughter, who was devoted to God, to marry, and of offending the tyrant if he refused to give her up, she was divinely inspired to give him, as he hesitated, this advice: that he should assent to the tyrant, proposing to him this condition—that he and the tyrant should choose ten virgins, each young and of beautiful form and noble race, and that to each and all of these ten thousand virgins should be added; that eleven vessels should be provided for them, and a truce of three years granted them for carrying on their virgin life, her design in this proposal being, either from the difficulty of the condition to turn the tyrant away from his design, or to give her the opportunity of dedicating all her companions to God. On this understanding, the virgins, the vessels, and the necessary expenses being provided, for three years they carried on the prelude of the war to the wonder of all, until in one day, through the force of the wind, they were driven to a port of France called Ticla, and thence to Cologne. There they were admonished by an angel to direct themselves towards Rome, and came by ship to Basle and thence on foot to Rome. Returning by both places in the same manner to Cologne, they were attacked by the Huns, and, suffering martyrdom from them, triumphed in a new and marvellous manner, and made Cologne more glorious through their blood and burial there."

The description of Sigebert exhibits the myth in the second stage of its development. We have now St. Ursula, her eleven thousand companions, her arrival at Cologne, the pilgrimage to Rome by land and water, and, if we may venture to call it so, the return ticket which brought the excursion-party to so sad an end. We hear nothing, however, of the fate of the

[1] Fl. 1110.

eleven ships which seem to have miraculously disappeared, though they come again into use on the return journey. Thus far the story is *totus teres atque rotundus*. But one important figure is still wanting—the imaginary Pope Cyriacus. This final development was left to the imagination of one Robert, a monk of Auxerre, who in his chronicle, composed about 1220, gives us these interesting particulars, grounded on the revelation given to the Venerable Mother Elizabeth, of the nunnery of Schönaug, in the diocese of Trèves:

"Of the blessed community and martyrdom of the eleven thousand virgins, we ought not to think otherwise than was revealed to the venerable nun Elizabeth, to whom, in our time, viz., in the year 1156, this Divine instruction was vouchsafed. Nor did she merely tell us at what time these virgins suffered, but even who was the father of Ursula, what her kindred, of how many of the religious, both lay and ecclesiastical, the college of virgins was composed, and who were they who suffered with the virgins and how they endured martyrdom. She says that a certain Pope of the city of Rome named Cyriacus, the nineteenth in succession after Peter, suffered with them. He was the successor of Pontianus, and ruled over the Church for one year and ten months, and in his place ordained a holy man who was called Anteros, and, departing from his see with the eleven thousand virgins, relinquished the Papacy. For, as he was a native of Britain, he is said to have had many kinswomen in the number of these holy women. And because he left the Holy See against the wish of the clergy, the same body erased his name from the catalogue of the Roman pontiffs. But he acted with security, because it was divinely revealed to him that he should receive the palm of martyrdom with these same virgins. This holy college of virgins suffered, according to the preceding narration, about the year 237."

We here have the full development of the myth, and are introduced for the first time by means of a special revelation to an imaginary Pope, who, to every painter of the Ursuline legend, must become almost a central figure in the wonderful group.

But the introduction of a renouncing Pope, though very useful to the painter, is a most inopportune revelation to the canonist and the divine. For the universal reception of the completed legend occasioned the opening of the question whether it is possible for a pope to resign, and furnished a precedent to the resistance which was threatened to the election of Pope Boniface VIII. under similar circumstances. It was this which occasioned the elaborate treatise of Ægidius Colonna, which was first printed at Rome in 1554. It is a remarkable

proof of the influence of the Ursula legend at a period of great scholastic and legal learning, that a Roman of the great house of Colonna could for a moment assume the possible existence of a Pope Cyriacus. Yet he deals with it as though it were a fact, and brings it in as a third instance in proof of the legitimacy of a papal resignation. "We may bring forward," he writes, "even a third example in Cyriacus, of whom it is written, that he was crowned with martyrdom in company with Ursula and the eleven thousand virgins. For it is written of him that it was revealed to him one night that he should receive the palm of martyrdom with these virgins. Then, gathering together the clergy and the Cardinals, contrary to the will of the citizens, and above all, of the Cardinals, he renounced the dignity and office of the Papacy before them all."[1] It would seem that the vitality of an error is in the exact proportion to the excess of its absurdity. "It is wonderful," continues the Abate Blaschi, how long and how widespread was this fable, as though it were a historical narration, so that Natatis Alexander writes on it: 'No fable has been related by more authors as a true history than this has been.' The ancient divines employed it, among other arguments, to prove that a pope could delegate his power to a nuncio."[2]

But our author has given us in the course of his argument on the decretal epistles some important suggestions on the motives which led to the formation of the Ursuline legend. It is now very generally admitted that one of the primary objects of the pseudo-Isidore was to elevate the order of Metropolitans, and to give it somewhat of its ancient status. There are indications, moreover, of a special desire to elevate the metropolitical see of Mayntz, which had to contend for influence with the richer and more temporally important archbishopric of Cologne. To the rivalry of these great electoral sees in their treasuries of relics our author traces the first germ of the Ursuline legend.

"The occasion," he writes, "for the formation of this fable was probably given in the year 805, when Riculfus, Archbishop of Mayntz, placed in the Church of St. Alban in that city, then newly built, the relics of St. Alban, St. Aureus and St. Justina, and their companions, besides many other martyrs, enshrining them in more decent and worthy receptacles. And besides (which appears certain), lest Cologne should have any cause for envying Mayntz the possession of the English Pope Joan, it was pleased to invent another fable like that, nay, even a far more illustrious one—that of Pope Cyriac, also a Briton,

[1] "De Renunt. Papae," c. 24, pp. 2, 32.
[2] "De Collect. Cann. Isidor," p. 217.

martyred together with St. Ursula and her companions at Cologne, and there buried. And indeed, in order to prove the supposititious discovery of the body of the pseudo-Cyriac, and of the other companions of St. Ursula, in the year 1155 St. Elizabeth, a nun of Schönaug, in the diocese of Trèves, had as supposititious a revelation."[1]

This revelation, which, we are told, had a second edition, with additions, in the year 1183, brings us to the practical results of the entire legend, and to the marvellous collection of miscellaneous and heterogeneous bones which the walls of the Church of St. Gereon and others in Cologne present to the eye of the astonished visitor. It would appear from the almost miraculous growth of this legend during the three first centuries of its history that the higher the bid is made in the market of credulity, the more certain it is to secure a purchaser; for the series of impossibilities which follow one another in this extraordinary story are probably without a parallel, and certainly are unsurpassed, in mediæval legendary records. The merging of two obscure saints into one, in order to create the grand personality of St. Ursula; the creation of a pope who has no existence but in the legend, in order to give an additional glory to this noble army of martyrs; the invention of his tomb and its inscription, and of the bones of the whole "college" of virgins—this combination of wonders must leave but one greater wonder to surpass them: the fact that the exposure of the fraud was comparatively so recent, and that even yet it has its devoted adherents.

In the early part of the sixteenth century, a Franciscan nun, by name Angela di Merici, established a religious order under the patronage of St. Ursula, which is represented by the Ursuline nuns of our own day, and whose object is the instruction of the young, in which useful occupation they have been very successful. That their pupils are instructed in the history of their imaginary patroness and her companions, we may reasonably suppose; nor can we entertain any fear that the "sancta simplicitas" which accepts the legend with a childlike docility can be in any way injurious to their uninquiring minds. The poetical heroine may still live to point a moral, as well as to adorn a tale, and to suggest the truth that, by a little skill and ingenuity, we may provide against many of the dangers which threaten us, and make conditions with the enemy which may render it impossible for him to do us serious injury.

In reviewing the stages of the Ursuline legend, we cannot but see how largely the rivalry of the great sees and monasteries contributed to the work of legendary invention. The

[1] "Blaschi di Coll. Cann. Isidori," p. 116.

possession of relics was a constant invitation to the inmates of monasteries, both male and female, to illustrate and identify them by means of visions and revelations, a notable instance of which we have seen in this history. The burial-places of saints and martyrs were often thus discovered, or, more accurately speaking, *invented*. It was thus that the regular clergy were able to minister to the needs of their secular brethren, who were the exhibitors of the treasures of the relic-chamber.

The immense literature which is devoted to the illustration, identification and cultus of relics and sacred places in Italy, France, and other countries, proves that the reign of legend and vision has still a very wide province. There are still the St. Elizabeths to dream dreams and see visions, and still the chroniclers eager to accept them, and the exhibitors ready to make merchandise of them. Thankful we may well be that "we have a more sure word of prophecy," which "came not by the will of man, but by holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

ROBERT C. JENKINS.

ART. III.—THE SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH, THE TORAH OF THE TEN TRIBES.

I.

IN entering on this subject it is necessary to guard against a mistake which is not very uncommon—the confusing two entirely different things which are both generally called by the same name, "the Samaritan Pentateuch."

By the Samaritan Pentateuch is sometimes meant the translation of the Pentateuch into the Samaritan language, the date of which is uncertain, the Samaritans themselves assigning it to about a century before the Christian era, and European scholars to one or two centuries after it. The Samaritan language is an Aramæan dialect, the use of which is now confined to the small remnant of Samaritans still existing at Nablous. In the present inquiry we are very little concerned with this Samaritan translation, except to distinguish it from what is also called the Samaritan Pentateuch —the Hebrew Pentateuch written in Samaritan letters—which may be more correctly designated the Samaritan Codex.

The Samaritan Codex is found in manuscripts, of which all the ancient copies are in the possession of the Samaritans at Nablous. They were known to the Fathers of the third and fourth centuries, and by some of them highly valued and reckoned more genuine than those in the ordinary Hebrew