

THE PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY.

NO. 19.—JANUARY, 1892.

I. THE CHRISTO-CENTRIC PRINCIPLE OF THEOLOGY.¹

THE work to which special reference is here made is the product of an able and distinguished scholar, who is a theological professor in the Reformed (German) Church. He is the author of an article in the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopædia* which clearly foreshadowed the distinctive principle of the work before us, and the moulding influence of that principle, as a constructive one, upon the whole system of theology. This assists us, in view of the fact that only the first volume of the "Institutes" has as yet been issued, in estimating the comprehensive sweep and the modifying effect of Dr. Gerhart's fundamental assumption, in relation to his theology as a whole.

It is not intended in these remarks to attempt an articulate examination of the doctrines maintained in the author's theological system, but to devote particular attention to its constructive principle. The whole system is based upon what is denominated the

¹INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. By Emanuel V. Gerhart, D. D., LL. D., Professor of Systematic and Practical Theology in the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church, Lancaster, Pa. With an Introduction by Philip Schaff, D. D., LL. D., Professor of Church History in Union Theological Seminary, New York. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 51 East Tenth street, near Broadway. 1891. 8vo., pp. 754.

of his argument, that it is "saving faith" of which he is here speaking. He proceeds to say, that to those who feel constrained to reject the Scripture narratives as untrustworthy, "there is something perplexing in the persistency of the faith of the great majority of Christian believers;" and this perplexity is greatly enhanced by the consideration, that "among those who remain Christian, there are men whose intellectual vigor, patience, and keenness are equal to their own; men who are their equals in general intellectual culture, and who know as much as they know about the currents of modern thought; candid men; men who are incorruptible in their loyalty to truth; men who have a due sense of the immense importance, in relation to the higher life of the human race, of the questions at issue." (P. 9.)

In answer to the question thus raised: "*How is it that the faith in Christ of such men is unshaken?*" he says, in the recapitulation of his argument:

"My first answer to the question was this: That whatever may have been the original grounds of their faith, their faith has been verified in their own personal experience. They trusted in Christ for the remission of sins, and they have been liberated from the sense of guilt; for deliverance from sin and the chains of evil habits have been broken or loosened, and the fires of evil passion have been quenched or subdued. They trusted in Christ for a firmer strength to resist temptation and to live righteously, and the strength has come. They have received from him—they are sure of it—a new life, a life akin to the life of God. . . . Whatever uncertainties there may be about the historical worth of the four narratives which profess to tell the story of Christ's earthly ministry, their faith in him is firm, because they know by their own experience that the Living Christ is the Lord and Saviour of men.

"My second answer to the question was this: That there are Christian men who would say that the representation of the Lord Jesus Christ in the four Gospels appeals, and appeals immediately, to all those elements and powers of life that give answer to the manifestations of the presence of God. They believe in Christ because they see God in him. They do not ask for proofs that he wrought miracles: He himself is the great Miracle. . . . For these two reasons, critical and historical controversies do not destroy faith."

The remaining lectures discuss in detail the historical evidence for the Gospels. Beginning with Eusebius in the fourth century, and working back, the lecturer adduces in order the testimony of Clement, Tertullian, Irenæus, Tatian, Justin Martyr, Marcion, Papias, and Polycarp. By cumulative evidence he shows that the Gospels known and received by the church in the days of Eusebius were the very same which were known by the fathers of the second century, some of whom, like Polycarp, were the disciples and associates of the apostles and others who had known the Lord, and who, consequently, could scarcely be deceived as to the trustworthiness of these narratives.

While intended for a popular audience, these lectures evince no little thought and research, and are most admirably adapted to the wants of thinking men who lack both time and opportunity to make original investigation.

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T. R. ENGLISH.

GLADDEN'S WHO WROTE THE BIBLE.

WHO WROTE THE BIBLE? A Book for the People. By Washington Gladden. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1891. Pp. 381. Price \$1.25.

It is always a pleasure to bestow merited praise. Whatever, then, may be thought of the author of this little book, the publishers of it are worthy of all

commendation. There may be a difference of opinion as to the meritoriousness of the aim of the book, but there can hardly be two opinions as to the merit of its mechanical execution. The paper is good, the letter-press clear, the binding neat, and sufficiently strong. Again, whatever may be thought of the spirit of the book, its style is admirable. There may be two opinions as to the weight of the argument, but none can charge the style with being heavy. The English is pure and simple. The sentences are terse and lucid. If we cannot always agree with Mr. Gladden, we can, at least, always understand him, and that in itself is no small comfort.

What we have further to say can best be summarized under the following heads:

1. The title of the book is, in part at least, misleading. Instead of "Who wrote the Bible?" it might more appropriately have been, "Who did not write the Bible." For it is really an effort to prove that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, nor Isaiah the book that bears his name, and so on. Or, "Who did not write the Bible?" For, what with original sources, redactors and re-redactors there may be, according to Mr. Gladden, a well-nigh innumerable company who had a hand in the writing of the Bible. Or, with still greater propriety, it might have been entitled, "A spirited and spiteful attack upon the doctrines of verbal and plenary inspiration." The doctrine of inspiration in either of these forms seems to fire the soul of Mr. Gladden with intense indignation.

2. The second part of the title of the book, *A Book for the People*, unlike the first, is entirely appropriate. Not only so, it is full of significance. Fifty years ago, the doings of the so-called "Higher Critics" had attracted but little attention even among the scholars of this country and England. Ten years ago, the discussion of these questions was confined entirely to scholars. The appearance of this book is, as it were, a notice served upon the church that from this time forward, until a settlement of some sort is arrived at, they will be discussed in every Young Men's Christian Association Bible-class, in every Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, in every College coterie, at every hearth-stone. If there is peril in these views, then we should wake up to a thorough appreciation of the fact that the peril is even now upon us. Ignorance, indifference, or carnal security in reference to these matters will henceforth be without excuse. The views of the "Higher Critics" are being rapidly popularized, and propagated among all the more intelligent people of our churches. This, it may be, is more true of the churches of the North than of those in our own immediate bounds, but we will make a sad, possibly a fatal, mistake, if we flatter ourselves that we will not have to face these issues.

3. We note, with a certain sense of relief, that the "*odium theologicum*," and the spirit of dogmatism is not confined to us poor orthodox "Advanced thinkers" and "Liberals" sometimes take us sharply to task because we fail to maintain an imperturbable calmness and courtesy when contending *pro aris et focis*. Mr. Gladden has not always profited by these teachings of those with whom he aspires in this book to be ranked; for we find him indulging in such language as the following; "This is a fair sample of the *lazy traditionalism* which Christian opinion has been constrained to follow"; and again, "For the errors are here; they speak for themselves; nothing but a *mole-eyed dogmatism* can evade them;" once more, "Are not they *idolaters* who make it treason to disbelieve a single word of the Bible," &c. (italics all ours). Now we are not of the number who seem to fancy

that there can be war without wounds, nor do we think that the times are just yet ripe for the settlement of all differences in the intellectual and moral spheres, any more than in the political by referring them to a "Board of Arbitration." On the contrary, we believe that "there is a time to kill," and privately cherish a belief not only in the manliness, but also in the common sense of the maxim attributed to Luther. "When you are an anvil bear, but when you are a hammer strike." We have referred to these outbursts of spleen upon the part of Mr. Gladden merely to show that, if there be any odium attaching to the *odium theologicum*, it should not be wholly confined to the orthodox.

4. We would not for a moment question the breadth of Mr. Gladden's reading, or the accuracy of his scholarship. It is evident, however, that he has a faulty memory. He says, for instance, "The books of Samuel are generally ascribed to Samuel as their author." We would respectfully ask since when? Thomas Scott, whose commentary Mr. Gladden has doubtless read, sought something like a century ago to disabuse the popular mind of this mistake. If any respectable writer ever asserted it, we would be glad to be informed of his name.

5. Mr. Gladden's book is interesting as an illustration of the nature and power of what may very properly be called the Mew Traditionalism. Whereas the old traditionalism appealed to the fathers, or the *consensus ecclesiarum*, embodied in some creed or creeds, the latter appeals to "modern scholarship." They are both alike in all essential particulars. They alike demand unquestioning submission to naked authority. And alike they threaten the stubborn recusant with pains and penalties, the former threatening to brand him a "heretic," the latter to brand him a "fool." Truly, it is a sad choice. We confess to a hearty and wholesome dread of deserving either epithet. But neither can be deserved so long as loyal allegiance is yielded to the facts of Scripture. And as we are persuaded that there are many who do not allow the dread of having the former epithet applied to them to deter them from looking into and passing upon the "Traditions of the Elders" for themselves, so we are persuaded that they will not permit the dread of having the latter epithet rashly hurled at them, prevent them from challenging and examining for themselves the claims of "modern scholarship." For if "synods and councils may err, and have erred," so may "modern scholarship," despite its more than ecclesiastical arrogance. We weary of the constant harping upon "the assured results of modern criticism." It is a species of bullying for which our only feeling is one of contempt. Truly, the modern critic, whatever may be true of his results, himself is not lacking in assurance. We would have much more confidence in the trustworthiness of these results, if those who seek to thrust them upon us would themselves show enough confidence in them simply to state them, and the evidence upon which they are supposed to rest, and then leave them to commend themselves to honest and intelligent minds by their own intrinsic force. The lad who drew a picture and then wrote under it in large capitals "THIS IS A COW" may thereby have expressed his own assurance of the triumphant success of his efforts as an artist, but he certainly did not adopt a course calculated to begot a like confidence in others.

5. We would advise our ministerial readers to get this little book, and read it for themselves. If these views are to be disseminated among our people, then the sooner we post ourselves in regard to them the better.

W. M. MCPHEETERS.