

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

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I.

THE MEANING AND VALUE OF THE DOCTRINE OF DECREES.

THE proposal to revise the Westminster Standards has brought the doctrine of the Divine decrees into the foreground. The controversy turns upon this pivot. Other features come in incidentally, but this is capital and controlling. This is the stone of stumbling and rock of offense. If election and reprobation were not in the Confession and Catechism, probably the fifteen Presbyteries would not have overtured the Assembly. It is for this reason that we purpose to discuss the *Meaning and Value of the Doctrine of Decrees*, so plainly inculcated in the Scriptures, and from them introduced into the Westminster symbol. We are certain that the Biblical truth of the sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners, and of His just liberty to determine how many He will save from their sin, and how many He will leave to their self-will in sin, is greatly misunderstood by many who profess the Presbyterian faith, and who sometimes describe it in much the same terms with the anti-Calvinist, and inveigh against it with something of the same bitterness. The conservative and the radical reviser meet together at this point, and while the former asserts that he has no intention to make any changes respecting the doctrine of decrees that in his opinion will essentially impair the integrity of the Calvinistic system, he nevertheless practically coöperates with the radical in bringing about a revolution in the sentiment and creed of the Presbyterian Church concerning one of the most distinctive articles of its belief. Because revision, be it conservative or radical, contends that there is more or less that is *un-Scriptural* in the tenets of election and reprobation as they are formulated in the Standards, and that

fourteenth is "The Synod of Dort." This book of 500 pages is divided into five chapters, which include twenty-five sections. An admirable appendix of forty pages is added. Of these, thirty pages are devoted to an interesting "Summary of the Reformed World." The remainder furnishes an "Index of Dates," and an "Index of Names and Places." Dr. Good has done commendable service in the inviting department of *special Church History*. It is desirable that such special works be multiplied.

Auburn.

R. B. WELCH.

THE PRESBYTERY OF THE LOG COLLEGE; OR, THE CRADLE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA. By REV. THOMAS MURPHY, D.D., Pastor of the Frankford Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, Pa. Royal octavo, pp. 526. Presbyterian Board of Publication [1889].

Dr. Murphy is happy in having such a theme, and we cannot resist the impression that the theme is happy in having such a man as Dr. Murphy to present it. We have read this book with wonder. It treats of local events; but they are events of a far-reaching importance, and the author has dug them out of the darkness of half-forgotten history, and set them forth and combined them so skillfully, as to give them not only a deep interest but a profound significance. This remarkable group of facts has been rescued from oblivion with patient toil and industry, and studied with the inner sight of a profound seer. We cannot but regard it as a happy example of the way in which we may read into old history a new meaning and interest. Dr. Murphy commenced with the simple purpose of recording the surface facts in the history of a single Presbytery; but as he brought these facts together he saw that they had germinal connections and causal relations and results which were new and surprising. The hand of Divine Providence had evidently been working to arrange this juxtaposition of events, and he became deeply interested to read the meaning. Hence he says: "I discovered, or at least believed I had discovered, a providential plan running through the whole history; that God was here preparing an American Presbyterian Church for the country; and that this Presbytery was the cradle of its earliest movements." It is interesting to observe that the author was not carried away by this idea into an enthusiastic or imaginary interpretation of events. The whole work is characterized by a well-balanced judiciousness, and the conclusions which he forms are so well supported by facts as to gain the willing assent of the reader.

The author's plan is simple. He begins by describing the people whom Divine Providence gathered into this locality—Scotch-Irish, Hollanders, Germans, Swiss, Welsh, all Calvinistic in their education and more or less Presbyterian in their affinities. The locality in which these people were gathered became, in the progress of time, the centre of many of the leading events upon which our national history turned, and in the midst of which the Presbyterian Church was born and cradled. Among these people, so prepared by Providence, and simultaneously with these stirring events, the Log College was started, in the humblest and most obscure way, in the family of a man whom God had prepared, in a most interesting manner, for that particular work. The book describes the progress of this humble school; the large number of remarkable men who were there trained, not only to preach the Gospel, but to be founders of other educational institutions—the Nottingham Academy, also classical schools at Faggs Manor and Pequaa, and ultimately Jefferson and Princeton Colleges. The good influences thus commenced developed into a harvest of blessed results under the revival power which attended the visit of Whitfield to this

region. The earnest and powerful ministry of William Tennent, the founder of the Log College, and his sons, had prepared the way, and when Whitfield came, the revival spread through the churches with great power.

We cannot follow the interesting record of events. There is one chapter which will attract attention. It is entitled, "Was Log College the Germ of Princeton College?" Dr. Murphy does not claim that there was any direct connection, or that Log College was in any respect transferred to Princeton; but he shows that there was a very close indirect connection and that the one was, in an important sense, the germ of the other. His points in substance are, that the closing of one institution was coincident, in point of time, with the opening of the other; that the friends of the Log College took a most influential part in the founding of Princeton College; that the essential idea of both institutions was primarily the same, viz., the preparation of young men for the Gospel ministry. Dr. Stearns, in his history of the First Church, Newark, states, "The Log College was the germ of the College of New Jersey," and Whitfield speaks of the Neshaminy School as "having grown into a large college now erecting in the Jerseys."

The whole volume is one of exceeding interest and importance as connected with the founding of our Presbyterian Zion, and should be found in every Presbyterian household. Dr. Murphy lays the whole Church under a tribute of gratitude for his skillful and patient work; and the Presbyterian Board deserves great commendation for the handsome and tasteful volume which they have issued.

Princeton.

W. M. PAXTON.

III.—SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY.

LEESBOEK OVER DE GEREFORMEERDE GELOOFSLEER. DOOR H. E. GRAVEMEIJER. Parts i-xx. Te Sneek: Wiarda, 1881-1889. (Some parts in a second edition.)

The revival of practical religion in Holland has been accompanied, especially during later years, by a revived interest in Reformed Theology. Though the Calvinistic doctrines had never entirely lost their hold upon that part of the people to whom religion was a reality, still they were not recognized in their historical significance. With a beautiful naïveté, the theological tenets of which religious experience attested the truth, were accepted and maintained as positive facts. But this phase has now passed and the time arrived when theology, only kept alive by the inward power of the truth, awakes to the full consciousness of its antecedents and its future calling. That the influence of the old Calvinism is here reasserting itself admits of no doubt. There is a historical continuity between the movement of the present day and the past. This very recognition of the intellectual factor is distinctive of Calvinism. It is characteristic of this historical tendency also, that it has manifested itself in a renewed study of the old systems of Reformed theology, a sort of theological renaissance. The thread of development is taken up where it broke off. A thorough review of the work which the fathers did constitutes the basis of what the men of to-day are striving for.

In this sense Gravemeijer's book is largely historical. It contains a lucid statement of the outlines of the Reformed system, without going into details to any great extent. That the work is rather voluminous (the twenty parts that have appeared up to date cover 2395 pages) is not owing so much to an