

THE Union Seminary Magazine.

Vol. XII.

OCTOBER—NOVEMBER, 1900.

No. 1.

I. Literary.

THE NEW THEOLOGY.

BY PROFESSOR G. B. STRICKLER, D. D., LL. D.

PART I.

THIS modern phase of religious thought has succeeded in introducing itself to the Christian public, and in attracting to itself the general and interested attention of the Christian world. It has secured a measure of acceptance which imperils the prevalence of sound doctrine and threatens the future purity and efficiency of the church. Contemporary religious literature seems to indicate that it is much more popular in many quarters than the theology of the evangelical creeds. A brief outline sketch of it may not, therefore, be unseasonable or unacceptable.

The name of this theology—the *new* theology—seems, to a large extent, to be a misnomer. There is very little in it, if anything at all, which can correctly be called new. Almost every doctrine it inculcates is one with which theological discussion has long been familiar, and this is just what should be expected. The main heads of theology have for so many centuries been the themes of the study of multitudes of as able and learned men as the world has ever produced, that it may now very safely be said that human ingenuity has exhausted itself in its attempts to give them essentially new forms, or to invest them with essentially new significance. It is altogether probable that no one hereafter will ever be able to broach a radically new doctrine, or

to invent a radically new objection to old doctrines. "The thing that hath been is that which shall be"; and that which shall be will be that which "hath been already of old time, which was before us."

While this form of thought is called a theology, it is not, therefore, to be concluded that it is a carefully wrought out system, like Arminianism or Calvinism. It is yet in an embryonic and very crude state. The doctrines advanced by it are not logically consistent. It would be impossible to reduce them to a system. Nor have they ever been promulgated by any particular religious organization. Nor, again, are their advocates found in any particular denomination, but in almost all denominations and in every part of the Christian world. Nor, once more, do they all agree in what they teach. Some depart a greater, others a less distance from the old paths.

Because this theology has never been given a definite systematic form, and because its elements are irreducible to any consistent shape, it, of course, has no fundamental and regulative principles.

Some of its doctrines, however, seem to find their source in the theory of divine immanence, or the indwelling of God in nature and in man. Just what precisely is meant by this phrase we are not informed. One of the ablest and most recent advocates of the theory says, "God does not create a universe which goes of itself without his presence or control; but the universe is full of his life, and is the constant expression of his mind and will." "Herschell said that the force of gravitation seems like that of a universal will. We may go further and say that it not only seems like will, but that it is will." "What we call nature's laws are nothing but God's generic volitions; his regular, and, as it were, automatic activities; no less free because they are regular, and no less regular because they are free." This theory in the hands of this writer takes the form of Monism: "There is but one substance—God"; "there are no second causes in nature"; expressions that seem to smack strongly of Pantheism; although we are assured that such monism is consistent with the transcendence of God and the personality and freedom of man. Some indication of what is meant by divine immanency is thus given; but it is far from being sufficient to give clear views of what is intended. As to the advantageous results of their doc-

trine, however, their claims are clear. The old theology, they say, puts God at a great distance from the world; theirs brings him near to it. The old theology puts him far away in some remote part of the universe out of the reach of men; theirs not only brings him down to the earth in closest contact with men, but puts him into their minds and hearts. This, they assert, is a new doctrine, full of new encouragement and new hope to the race. If, however, they mean by it that God in any way identifies himself with man so as to be consubstantial with him, it is a doctrine as old as Pantheism, from which it cannot be successfully distinguished. But if it means no more than that God is everywhere present, on earth as well as in heaven, and that in a special sense he dwells in the minds and hearts of his own people, it does not seem to differ from the old doctrine of divine omnipresence, and does not seem to afford any more religious encouragement and spiritual comfort. The old doctrine teaches that God dwells in his people; that he works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure; that his spirit bears witness with their spirits that they are his; that he lives in them, diffusing his presence and grace throughout all the faculties of their souls, sometimes imparting a peace that passeth all understanding and a joy unspeakable and full of glory. How divine immanence can bring him any nearer than that, or how it can bring him into more intimate and precious relations to his people and secure for them greater blessings, does not appear.

But while they do not explain what they mean by this doctrine, some of them so completely identify God with nature that the line of demarcation between the natural and the supernatural is obliterated. Like Mr. Drummond, they confound natural laws with spiritual. Some deny the supernatural altogether; others qualify it to such an extent that all miraculous elements are eliminated. Such is a glimpse of their doctrine of immanence as it is related to the material world.

As to man, some of the new theologians hold that God so dwells in him that he is constantly making revelations of himself to him. Through his reason, his environment and his experience, he has constantly been making more clearly known to him his character and will, and thus the race has always gradually, but certainly, been growing in divine knowledge. The Jews had more of it than any people who preceded them. The

first Christian centuries had more than they had, and we have more than the first Christian centuries; more, in some respects, than the apostles had! The Bible, we are told by one of the most distinguished advocates of this theology, is "not infallible in its historical views and statements"; "in its narrative of miracles, or even of the life and resurrection of Christ"; "nor is its logic in its argumentative passages free from reproach." "Even in the New Testament we can not deny that there exist mistaken impressions in matters of an ethical and religious kind." Our increased and more correct knowledge exempts us from impressions so erroneous! Thus this immanence results in a progressive revelation that is giving to men an ever increasing religious light. The sun is shining more and more unto the perfect day.

Of course, those who hold these views have no difficulty in accepting the theories of the radical Higher Critics in regard to the old Testament, nor do they find any obstacle in the way of accepting similar theories in regard to the new.

As logically involved in these positions, many of them regard all past religions as standing on the same footing. They are all the result of the immanent God, gradually and slowly revealing himself. The Pagan religions, therefore, were as truly from him as the Christian religion is. They are very different, indeed, in excellence; but not in source and in kind. Hence these theologians take much interest in the study of Comparative Religions, pointing out how, from the simplest and most rudimentary elements of religious knowledge, progress has been made up to those full, accurate and ennobling conceptions of truth and of God with which Christian nations are now so much blessed.

But this theory not only determines their doctrine of revelation. It gives peculiar form to other doctrines of the Christian system. It presents the doctrine of the incarnation, not in a new form, indeed, but in one unfamiliar to the mass of Christian readers. Adam, it is said, contained in himself generic human nature; and, therefore, when he fell the whole race fell. Christ also contained in himself human nature in the same sense, giving the race a new starting point in circumstances so much more favorable that while the first experiment resulted in disastrous failure, this shall terminate in glorious success. They seem to take

without qualification Paul's declaration, "As in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Those who hold this doctrine reject the atonement. They say that men are saved by the purifying power of the Saviour's indwelling presence. That presence takes away sin; and by taking away sin, takes away guilt; and by taking away guilt, takes away all need of atonement. They also reject the doctrine of total depravity. How can those in whom God is continually immanent be totally depraved? They are found, also, expressing doubts about the eternity of future punishment. Can those in whom the Saviour ever abides finally and forever perish? Must there not be some way by which the infinite good in them shall overcome the finite evil? Hence the doctrines of universalism, restorationism and second probationism at which many of them frequently hint, and which some of them, as Canon Farrar, openly avow and earnestly advocate.

One source, then, of some of the doctrines of the New Theology is found in the theory of divine immanence—a theory that claims to bring God and man nearer together than the doctrine of the divine omnipresence does, and, therefore, a theory that it is difficult to distinguish from Pantheism.

But while this is one source, there seems to be another found in the theory of evolution. Some of the new theologians not only get man by a process of evolution, but they get his religion also. It began in an original germ, and continued to develop until the Jewish religion was reached; and then it went on until the Christian was reached; and that has ever since been moving forward toward something higher and better. Of course, those who get their doctrine from this source agree with those who get theirs from the other source, in accepting the conclusions of the radical higher critics about the origin and nature of the Scriptures, Religion, being a development, must have been in an imperfect form in documents so old as those constituting the old Testament. It is easy to see, too, how those deriving their religious creed from such a quarter would differ from the old theology as to the nature of sin. It is only an inevitable incident of his development as he passes from a lower state up to a higher; and, therefore, is not to be regarded in so serious a light as it is by the old theology, nor does it deserve so serious a condemnation as it pronounces upon it; nor, again, is it to be

got rid of in the way it prescribes. No atonement is needed. Further and higher development is the only process by which it can be escaped; and hence what men should do, what Christians should do, is to accelerate that development by every means in their power. As the race is gradually rising higher and higher in the scale of excellence, it is only necessary that this process be continued sufficiently long to result in complete deliverance from all defects, physical, intellectual and moral; and as God has begun the process, we may be sure he will carry it on until it reaches its complete consummation. It is not necessary, therefore, to conclude that any part of the race will ultimately perish. Thus by this path also they arrive at the conclusion either that there will be no punishment in the future, or if there shall be, it will be only of temporary duration.

Such are two sources of some of the doctrines of this theology. In the next number some doctrines may be mentioned having a different origin.

THE Union Seminary Magazine.

Vol. XII.

DECEMBER, 1900—JANUARY, 1901.

No. 2.

I. Literary.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

BY REV. PEYTON H. HOGG, D. D.

I.

Where Egypt's sacred river creeps
Along its plenteous plains;
Where rise its monumental heaps
And colonnaded fanes;
Where History, Art and Science scored
In sculptured wall their record old,
And in a myriad tombs were stored
Treasures of knowledge yet untold;
Where Power has reached its loftiest state
And millions cringed before the great;
A people known to God
The path of sorrow trod,
And in hard bondage wrought, and mourned their bitter fate.

II.

The silent stars look down—
Look down and give no sign;
Dumb is the oracle of On,
Dumb is Osiris' shrine;
And Memnon's sunrise song
To them no answer brings;
In vain for them his notes prolong,
In vain for them he sings;

THE NEW THEOLOGY.

BY PROFESSOR G. B. STRICKLER, D. D., LL. D.

PART II.

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

THE New Theology very much insists on the universal Fatherhood of God. It teaches that God is the Father, not only of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and of all who believe on him, but the Father of the whole human race; the Father of the ungodly in the same sense that he is the Father of the godly. This doctrine is declared to be "virtually a new discovery of the last half century," and is set over against previous doctrinal systems as being so different as to constitute "a revolution in religious thought." It is "especially contrasted with the Calvinistic tenet of the sovereignty of God, according to which he is to be regarded primarily as Creator and Ruler, rather than as Father." As indicating the general view of this theology, Phillips Brooks is quoted as saying that "the inspiring idea of Christ's influence is the Fatherhood of God and the childhood of every man to him. Upon the race and upon the individual, Jesus is always bringing into more perfect revelation the certain truth that man, and every man, is the child of God. Man is the child of God by nature. He is ignorant and rebellious, the prodigal child of God; but his ignorance and rebellion never break the first relationship." Similar views are expressed by Fairbairn, Bruce, Farrar, Abbot and others.

As to the bearing of this doctrine on other doctrines of theology, it is held that "Fatherhood is the primary and determinative conception of God, and that through it other doctrines are to be read and interpreted." The government of God, instead of being legal and judicial, is to be regarded as paternal. Justice in God is simply a modification of benevolence; the penalties of law are not punishments, but chastisements, and are inflicted, not because sin deserves them, but simply to reform the offender and to preserve order. The doctrine that God purposes to save one part of the race, and to pass by the other part, is to be re-

jected, since a father could not thus so differently treat his children, who stand to him in the same relation, and have upon him the same claims. The "ghastly belief" that the heathen world, which has not heard the gospel, is perishing, is to be renounced, since a father could not suffer his children in such circumstances to incur such a fate. The doctrine of future retribution, "that the mercy of God is limited; that up to a certain date he is pitiful, after that inexorable, is to be abandoned, since it cannot live in the same world with the doctrine of the divine Fatherhood." Since under the Old Testament dispensation God's people had very imperfect conceptions of his Fatherhood, we should expect their Scriptures to contain in regard to his character and will, much that is erroneous, and such is now found to be the fact.

Such is the doctrine, and such are its revolutionary bearings on a number of other doctrines.

Now that there is a doctrine of divine Fatherhood taught in the Scriptures, and that that doctrine is one of great value and of immeasurable comfort to God's people, is recognized and asserted in all evangelical creeds. It is to this doctrine that Paul refers when, in his epistle to the Romans, he says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God." "The Spirit beareth witness with our Spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." It is to the same doctrine John refers when he exclaims, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." But it is believed that the doctrine of the Scriptures on this subject is very different, both in its nature and tendencies, from that advocated by the New Theology.

Let it be noticed a little more particularly what the doctrine is: God is the Father not only of believers, but of unbelievers; not only of those who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honor and immortality, but of those who are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness; not only of those who by faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens; and

had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, and of bonds and imprisonment, of whom the world was not worthy; but of those who have changed the glory of God into an image like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things; who have changed the truth of God into a lie; who are filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, and deceit. He is the Father of all in the same sense and to the same degree. What a family is this! Is there another anywhere so bad? It may well occur to any one that we ought not to connect God with such a family in the intimate relation of a Father unless the plain teachings of the Scriptures imperatively require it. A father is in large measure responsible for the character of his family. The word of God distinctly so teaches, and his honor is involved in the family's reputation and conduct. It would seem to be clear, therefore, that God's name should not be associated with the most wicked and loathsome of the human race in the paternal relation unless there is something in the Scriptures that makes it unavoidable. Is there anything of this kind?

It does not fall within the purpose of this article to furnish evidence of the Fatherhood of God in respect of Christ and of true believers. That is a doctrine so generally known and accepted that it does not here need special consideration. The sole question to be investigated is, is he the Father of all men in the same sense and for the same reason that he is the Father of those who love him and keep his commandments?

If any one should read the numerous and confident assertions that some New Theologians make, that Christ came into the world largely for the purpose of making known to men what they had not learned before; what they had not learned even from the Old Testament Scriptures, that God is the "All-Father," that he might thus bring to bear upon them a mightier influence to give him their love and to engage in his service; and if he should then search the New Testament Scriptures to find the evidence on which those assertions rest, he would be surprised, it is believed, to discover how meagre and inconclusive that evidence is. The gospel of John is the portion of the New Testament in which this evidence is supposed to be most abundant and satisfactory. Prof. Mead, a member of the American Revision Committee of the Old Testament, has recently stated, however, that while the

Saviour in that book speaks of God as his Father over one hundred times, he is so far from ever speaking of him as the Father of all men, that he in only one instance speaks of him as the Father of his own disciples. It is said, indeed, that the Sonship of Christ itself implies the sonship of men, since it was because he was a man, that he was called a Son. It cannot be shown, however, that he was ever called the Son of God simply because he was a man. Besides, it must be remembered that he was the Son of God in a peculiar sense; in the sense that he was the only begotten of the Father, and so in a sense in which no other being is or can be. His Sonship, then, being so entirely different from any possible sonship of men, does not, of course, prove theirs. It is true that he calls some men his brethren, but only some—not all; and those whom he thus addresses are those, and only those, who have received him as their Lord and Master. It is to be observed, also, that when, addressing men, he spoke of God as their Father, he never thus spoke to unbelievers, but always to those who at least professed to be his disciples. He was so far from regarding all men as the children of God; he was so far from making it his special mission in the world to make to them that announcement, as some New Theologians say, that sometimes he did exactly the contrary. On one occasion some Jews said to him, "We have one Father, even God;" but he answered, "If God were your Father, you would love me." As bearing on the subject in hand, the response is very instructive. One fact it makes plain enough is that he did not come into the world for the special purpose of telling men that they were all the children of God, for here he had a most excellent opportunity for doing that; but so far from embracing it for that purpose, he embraced it for the purpose of telling them that they were not his children! Another truth it teaches is that only those who love Christ are the children of God. "If God were your Father, you would love me." But if only those who love Christ are the children of God, then the vast majority of the human race are not his children, for to all the unregenerate he appears as "a root out of dry ground, having no form nor comeliness; neither is there any beauty in him that they should desire him." Still another fact that the Saviour here makes known is that no religious privileges and no ecclesiastical connections, in themselves considered, make men the sons of God. These men were Jews; in an external sense part of God's

chosen people; members of the Jewish church; natural descendants of Abraham; formally embraced in the covenant made with him, and enough interested in that covenant to plead it as the ground of filial relation to God. Yet they were not his children. But if there was no sonship in such a case as this, how can there be where all these things are lacking? In short, in view of this assertion of our Saviour, the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God seems incredible.

There are a number of other passages just as explicit. In the first chapter of John's gospel it is said, "As many as received him [Christ], to them gave he the right to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Here it is plainly taught that men are the sons of God, not by virtue of being born, but by virtue of being born again; that it is not something possessed by nature, but something conferred by grace. It is further taught that this exalted relationship to God is bestowed only on those who receive his Son and believe on his name. It is difficult to conceive how sentences could be constructed that would more certainly exclude the doctrine of the "All-Fatherhood" than these do.

The Apostle Paul, in Romans viii. 14-17, says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." From this passage we learn that only those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. We learn, further, that so far from knowing that we are sons of God because we are men, we can discover it only through the witness of his Spirit with our spirit. We learn, still further, that the state of sonship is not one into which natural birth introduces us, but one into which we are subsequently spiritually adopted; and we learn, further still, that, in a sense that need not here be explained, this sonship is true only of those who "suffer with Christ;" suffer somewhat as he suffered and for his sake. Such language on the part of the apostle seems to prove beyond a doubt that he did not believe that God

was the Father of all men as such. Several other similar passages might be quoted.

It may here very naturally occur to the reader to inquire how the New Theologians undertake to hold their ground against so strong adverse testimony. The means they adopt disclose the unscripturalness of their doctrine. Fairbairn, in his work, *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 293, after comparing the teachings of Christ as found in the gospels with the teachings of the writers of the epistles, says: "One thing is beginning to stand out with a perfectly new distinctness, viz., *the degree in which the mind of the Master transcends the minds of the disciples; not the way they develop his teachings, but how they fail to do it; the elements they miss or ignore, forget or do not see.*" That is, they get rid of such passages as those quoted above against their doctrine, by denying the plenary inspiration of their authors! Prof. A. B. Bruce, in his book, *St. Paul's Conception of Christianity*, p. 188, 191, resorts to the same fatal expedient. Pointing out what he imagines to be a divergence of view in Paul from his divine Master as to God's Fatherhood, he plainly intimates that it was due to a lack of complete insight and sympathy with him on the subject, and then adds that "it is no reproach to the apostles to think it possible that in their insight into the spiritual essence of God they came behind the only begotten Son." A little later in his book he is so much embarrassed by Paul's doctrine of adoption, by which he teaches that men are not by nature, but may become by grace, the sons of God, that he ventures to suggest "whether it would not be wise to allow the category of 'adoption' to fall into desuetude, and to express the truth about the relation of man to God in terms drawn from our Lord's own teaching." In how bad a plight is any doctrine when it can be held only by repudiating a large part of the book by the concurrent testimony of which alone any doctrine can be established! How worthless is the structure from under which half the foundation has been stripped away!

The New Testament doctrine of adoption, alluded to above, is another conclusive argument against the theory of universal Fatherhood. The apostles teach explicitly, and the Saviour by implication, that those who believe are adopted into God's family, and thus become his children, his heirs, and joint-heirs with his own Son. But if all men are already his children, what is this

adoption for? If they are already in the family, why are they nevertheless represented as being by adoption for the first time brought into it? What does adoption do for them? According to the theory, it does not make them his children. They are already his children. It does not bring them into his family. They are already in his family. What, then, does it do? Why does the Apostle John exclaim, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God"? What was he exclaiming about? Evidently John was expressing his wonder and gratitude that God had by adoption made him and those to whom he was writing his children. But why should he do that if both he and they were his children already by nature? It seems plain that the New Theologians must be embarrassed in answering such questions as these; and it would seem they must be especially embarrassed in view of the fact that the Scriptures thus attach so much importance to adoption, while they attach to it so little that one of the most distinguished of their number has actually suggested that it be wholly discarded as an erroneous notion of Paul growing out of a misapprehension of his Master's teaching!

The difficulty of explaining adoption in consistency with universal Fatherhood becomes still more manifest when we consider more particularly all that was involved in it. It was something, as a civil institution, provided for by the Roman law, with which men in the days of the apostles were perfectly familiar, and as the apostles give no particular account of it, as to the means by which it was brought about, or the purposes it was intended to serve, the only conclusion to which we can come as to its meaning is, that it was just what an intelligent Roman citizen, familiar with the law of his country, would suppose it to be. There is no rule for the interpretation of God's word more reliable than that its language must be understood in the sense in which those to whom it was addressed would necessarily understand it. What, then, would such a citizen of Rome understand by adoption? The Roman law on the subject is well known. One provision of it was that the person adopted must, before his adoption, belong to another family than that into which he was adopted. Another was that he must have no right in the family into which he was adopted, for that would have superseded the necessity of adoption; and still another was that all his obligations to the

family to which he originally belonged were annulled, that he might thus be free to meet the new obligations growing out of the new relations into which he had been introduced. Such were the provisions of the Roman law on the subject, so far as they need here be noticed. In the absence, then, of any particular explanation of adoption in the New Testament, showing that it was something different from this, an intelligent Roman could have come to no other conclusion than that it meant that one adopted into God's family belonged before to a different family; that he not only belonged to a different family, but that he had no right by creation, or in any other way, to a place in God's family; and that when received into God's family, his connection with the family to which he before belonged was sundered, and all his interest was in, and all his service belonged to, the family into which he had been brought; and since he could not possibly have come to any other conclusion, this must have been what was meant. The New Testament doctrine of adoption, then, seems clearly to refute the doctrine of the "All-Fatherhood" of God.

Many more arguments against it might easily be presented, but lack of space forbids. A few of the arguments in its favor may now be noticed.

It is said that it is taught in the Lord's prayer, "Our Father who art in heaven." The history of the prayer, however, shows that it was given to the disciples in response to their request that he would teach them how to pray. It is true, of course, that it is the privilege of everybody to offer the prayer, but that does not prove the universal Fatherhood, because nobody is authorized to offer it unless in calling God his Father he sincerely accepts him as such; but he who does that thereby reveals his own sonship in his family.

But perhaps, the most conclusive argument for the universal Fatherhood, in the view of the New Theologians, is found in the parable of the Prodigal Son. It is supposed that the father in the parable represents God, and that the prodigal represents all sinners. If that were true, of course their case would be made out; but a careful consideration of the context seems plainly to show that they are entirely mistaken. In the context we find that Christ had been charged with receiving sinners and eating with them. He admits the truth of the charge, and in three parables illustrates the interest he had in sinners that prompted him thus

to show them his favor. If a man have an hundred sheep, and lose one, does he not leave the ninety and nine, and go after that which is lost until he find it; and when he has found it, does he not call on his neighbors to rejoice with him because he has found that which was lost? Or, if a woman have ten pieces of silver, and lose one, does she not light a candle and sweep the house, and search diligently until she finds it, and when she has found it, does she not summons her neighbors to rejoice with her? Or, if a father have two sons, and one of them having received his portion of his father's goods, wanders away and wastes it in riotous living, and reduces himself to want and wretchedness, but afterwards returns confessing his folly and sin, does not that father receive him with joy as one alive from the dead? He thus compares his concern for lost sinners to that of a shepherd for a lost sheep; to that of a poor woman for a lost piece of money; and to that of a father for a lost son, and declares that because he has such a concern for them, he seeks to recover them out of their lost condition. Such is the meaning of these parables as it lies on their very face. The parable of the Prodigal Son does not even allude to God, much less does it call him Father. It refers to Christ, and illustrates his interest in lost sinners by the interest of a *human father in a lost son*. How, then, can it prove the universal Fatherhood of God?

A few other passages quoted by the New Theologians to sustain their contention may be briefly noticed. One is found in Malachi ii. 10: "Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother by profaning the covenant of our fathers?" Here it is assumed that God is said to be the Father of the Jews because he was their creator. May it not be true, however, that the prophet was appealing to them not to deal treacherously with one another on *two* grounds, one that God was their Father in virtue of "the covenant of their fathers," and the other that he was their common creator? Is not some passage more conclusive than this necessary to overcome the numerous passages in the New Testament which seem so plainly to assert that men become the children of God only by adoption?

Another passage is found in Acts xvii. 28, 29: "For in him we live and move and have our being, as certain also of your poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch, then, as we

are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver or stone, graven by art and man's device." It is here taken for granted by the advocates of universal Fatherhood that Paul is appealing to that doctrine as a conclusive argument against the worship of idols of silver and gold and stone by the Athenians whom he was addressing. But to whose conception of Fatherhood was he appealing, to his own or to theirs? If he had appealed to his own in so brief and indefinite a way, his hearers could not have understood his argument, and so would not have felt its force. He must, therefore, have been appealing to God's Fatherhood as the Athenians conceived it. What was their conception of it? There is evidence that some of the more intelligent of them, such as would constitute the assembly on Mars' Hill, believed that Zeus was the supreme author of all things, not in the sense that he was the absolute creator of all, for here their maxim was *ex nihilo nihil fit*, but in the sense only that he was the Former of all. But this is not the Fatherhood for which the New Theologians contend, and, therefore, it does not serve them as a satisfactory proof-text. The poet quoted evidently used metaphorical language in calling men the offspring of God, and Paul was too sound and fair a polemic to attempt to take advantage of his hearers in his argument with them by converting their poet's figure into a fact.

Such are about all of the passages on which the doctrine in question is definitely based. Now if it were a doctrine to which the Scriptures attach the transcendent importance which the New Theology attaches to it; if it is "the generic principle of theology;" the principle that should interpret all its facts and give form to all its doctrine; if it is so important that one of the chief objects the Saviour had in view in coming into the world was to announce it, is it not singular that not a single passage can be adduced in which it is indubitably taught, and that our Saviour so far from proclaiming it among men, unquestionably, when he had the best opportunity to do it, taught exactly the reverse?

It may be added that even if the universal Fatherhood of God were proved, New Theologians would have no warrant for drawing from it some of the most important conclusions on which they rely. One of their inferences from this doctrine is that the government of God must be regarded as paternal instead

of judicial. But what kind of events have taken place under his government? The fall of the whole human race; the destruction of the whole race, save eight persons, by the flood; wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes almost without number; the salvation of some, but up to this time the perdition of the vast majority; the casting down of the angels that sinned from their high estate, and their reservation in darkness unto the judgment of the great day; such events as these have occurred under his government. How can they be explained consistently with the notion that it is a paternal government; that it is simply the administration by a Father of the affairs of his family? Are such tremendous and overwhelming judgments as these merely kind, fatherly discipline? Is this that justice that is only a form of benevolence? And are these inflictions that have destroyed thousands and millions intended for their reformation?

Another of their inferences is that God will not punish men in the future state; or if he does punish them, will not punish them very long. "An infinitely loving Father can never utterly destroy his own children." But on the assumption that he is the universal Father, let us see what as a simple matter of fact he has already done. He has permitted all his children to go astray when he had full power to prevent it. How is that to be explained if he stands to men in no other relation except Fatherhood? He has not only permitted all men to go astray, when he could have prevented it, but he has permitted them to remain astray for centuries when at any time he could have brought them back from all their wanderings. How is this to be accounted for on the supposition that he bears no relation to the race except that of Fatherhood? But if these two facts can be successfully explained in perfect consistency with his Fatherhood, why may not future punishment also?

If it be supposed that the denial of the doctrine of the universal Father divests the gospel of much of its charm and sweetness, it is to be considered that all that is denied is that he is *already* the Father of the ungodly. It is not denied, but distinctly and joyfully proclaimed that he is willing at any moment by adoption to become the Father of all who desire him in that relation. What more can sinners ask?

Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.

THE Union Seminary Magazine.

Vol. XII

FEBRUARY—MARCH, 1901.

No. 3.

I. Literary.

THE NEW THEOLOGY.

BY PROFESSOR G. B. STRICKLER, D. D., LL. D.

PART III.

ONE of the constant cries of the New Theologians is, "Back to Christ"; "back to Christ." "Back," say they, "behind the views of the Old Theologians of the present day"; "back behind the dogmas and creeds of the churches"; "back behind the mediaeval church"; "back behind the fathers"; "back behind everybody and everything to Christ himself, the supreme authority in religion." They make the startling charge that the true Christ has been lost; that the church, as it has come down through the centuries, has left him behind; that the Christ now found in the creeds and theology of the present day is very different from the Christ whom the apostles knew and whom they describe in the gospels; very different in his character, teachings, works, and ultimate purposes in regard to the human race. Of course this cry, at first view, is very plausible, very pious; a cry to which, in itself considered, nobody can object; a cry expressive of what every Christian must approve—supreme devotion to Christ, and complete submission to his authority as the great Prophet of the church, and the only trustworthy source of religious knowledge. It presents the New Theologians in the attractive and conciliatory aspect of religious teachers who wish to discard all human opinions and speculations, and to go back behind them all afresh

to him who alone is the Truth, and learn once more what it was in all its purity as it fell originally from his lips.

But plausible and apparently pious as the cry is, it is almost always a covert and mischievous expedient for getting rid of certain great doctrines which the Reformed Church has always taught, and to which it has always attached supreme importance. A moment's reflection is enough to satisfy any one that the New Theologians can have no sufficient reason for insisting so much on going back to Christ for instruction unless they wish to make it appear that, in important respects, his teaching was different from that now contained in the leading creeds and in the prevalent theology. If the religious teaching inculcated at the present day by the Old Theology is, in substance, just what Christ taught, why so much insistence that we shall go back to him to get what we already have? Many of them, however, do not conceal their motive. They do not hesitate to say that there is a marked and very important difference, and that that is the reason why they wish to go back to the primary authority. They wish not only to get behind the creeds, but they wish to get rid of them and of several great doctrines which they teach. They wish to get rid of the doctrine that God is the absolute Sovereign of the world, administering its affairs and deciding the eternal destinies of men according to principles of righteousness and justice, and substitute in its place the doctrine that his supreme and controlling relation to men is that of Father, ruling over them solely under the promptings of paternal love, and hence inflicting punishments on them for no purposes except to induce reformation and to preserve order. They wish, also, to get rid of the doctrine that men are by nature simply the creatures of God, utterly alienated from him by their depravity, and so children of wrath, and substitute in its place the doctrine of their natural and indestructible sonship, and as sons the objects of a paternal love and compassion which will, sooner or later, overcome all their waywardness and reclaim them from all their wanderings, and bring them back to their Father's house and into the enjoyment forever of their Father's favor. They wish, further, to get rid of the doctrine of election, and to substitute in its place the doctrine that God has done for all men all that he could, and that the only reason why any perish is that they,

by their persistence in sin, defeat his benevolent designs. They wish, still further, to get rid of the doctrine of vicarious satisfaction, and substitute in its place the Socinian, or, at least, the governmental theory of the atonement; and, once more, they wish to get rid of the doctrine of eternal retribution, and substitute in its place at least the hope, if not the certainty, of the final triumph of good over evil, and so the ultimate salvation of all men. That they wish to get rid of such doctrines as these is clear from such expressions of their views as may be found in Farrar's "Eternal Hope," Fairbairn's "The Place of Christ in Modern Theology," Bruce's "St. Paul's Conception of Christianity," and Wednt's "Teaching of Jesus." Their cry, "back to Christ," then, has sometimes the concealed and sometimes the unconcealed polemic purpose of subverting the Old Theology as to all of these important doctrines, and of substituting very different doctrines in their place.

They flatter themselves that they can show that Christ did not teach these doctrines; but how unsatisfactory and inconclusive is their proof might easily be made clear. Many passages might be quoted from his own discourses showing that he plainly taught them all. As a mere suggestion of his teaching (all for which there is space), it may be said that he spoke of his people as those whom the Father had "given him," and therefore as those who should certainly come to him, and thus teaches the doctrine of divine election. He declares that no man can come unto him except the Father which hath sent him draw him, thus teaching the sinner's helplessness and absolute dependence on divine grace. He teaches that so far from all men being by nature the sons of God, those who do not love him are children of the devil. He declared the necessity of his death; that his blood was shed for his people; and that in all his work he was doing something for them that they could not do for themselves, thus inculcating its substitutionary character. As to the final destiny of the wicked, the most explicit and awful announcements on that subject fell from his lips, as, for instance, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. It is futile, then, to attempt to get rid of these doctrines by going "back to Christ."

It may be added here that when the New Theologians cry "back to Christ" they wish to get behind, not only the Old

Theology and the old creeds, but they wish especially to get behind the Apostle Paul. It is wonderful how much antipathy these errorists show for this illustrious servant of the Saviour. Some of them intimate, and others boldly assert, that he is not entirely trustworthy as a religious teacher; that he misapprehended his Master's instructions, and consequently, in some respects, gave them a form and a meaning which he never intended. They attempt to account for this by asserting that Paul received almost all his information about Christ and his teaching from secondary sources, having never enjoyed the privilege, with which the other apostles were favored, of receiving the truth directly from his lips. Of course this assertion calls in question, not only his inspiration, but, what ought to be carefully noted, his veracity also, for he expressly asserts that he got the gospel which he preached not through any secondary agency, but directly from the same primary source from which the other apostles got theirs. In his epistle to the Galatians, first chapter and the eleventh and twelfth verses, he declares in express reference to this very point, "I made known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it was not after man; for neither did I receive it from man; nor was I taught it; but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." He here distinctly asserts that his gospel came directly from Christ himself. It would seem to be almost impossible to conceive of language that would make the assertion clearer. Some, however, undertake to interpret it in such a way as to make the apostle mean that he got his gospel not by revelation *from* Jesus Christ, but by revelation *of* him. That is, they would have us believe that after Christ revealed himself to him when he was on his way to Damascus he pondered that fact and all that that fact necessarily implied, and then gathered up from all other sources accessible to him all he could learn about his life and death and teachings; and then out of all that material wrought out the conception of him which he presents in his epistles, and the system of truth and the scheme of salvation which he there inculcates; and, of course, arriving at his conclusions in that way, there was abundant opportunity for the intrusion of error. But the apostle, apparently with prophetic foresight that his authority as a religious teacher might some day be called in question on

this ground, is very careful to say that he obtained his gospel by no such process. "My gospel is not *after man*." "It is not a human production. It is not an evolution by me out of such facts as I have been able to collect." But that he might more effectually exclude the supposition of human aid in shaping his gospel, or of a human origin for its teachings, he adds, "Neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it." He did not get it from any human source; not even from the other apostles; "but it came to me through the revelation of Jesus Christ." When, then, New Theologians invite us to go behind Paul to Christ for the truth, intimating that Paul is not thoroughly trustworthy because of the sources of his knowledge, they are discrediting not only his inspiration, but his truthfulness. They are denying in regard to him what he himself expressly claims. There is no reason, then, why we should go behind this apostle, who was indeed the chief of the apostles. It is worth while to note, then, that the summons to do this does not express a peculiar loyalty to Christ and to his word, but that it is almost always a treacherous attempt to enlist Christ on their side in their effort to discredit the most useful and illustrious servant he has ever had under the new dispensation.

Before leaving this point it may be added that some New Theologians seek to cast a shadow of suspicion over Paul's teaching not only as to the doctrines mentioned above, but also as to his conception of righteousness, the significance of Christ's death, the doctrine of sonship, and the law of growth in the Christian life. In respect of these doctrines a marked contrast between the teachings of the Master and his disciple is asserted, and sometimes it is insisted that the contrast amounts to actual contradiction.

Another uniform characteristic of the New Theology is that it gives the supreme place in the divine nature to the attribute of love. It dominates all the other attributes, and determines the modes of their exercise and the objects and ends to which they are directed. This, of course, is not a new doctrine; yet it is proclaimed as if it were new. As great an ado is made over it as scientists make when they have detected some new fact in nature, or as astronomers when they discover some new world in the fields of space. It is charged that the Old Theologians,

while they have always recognized the existence of this attribute in the divine nature, have never perceived its true relations to the other attributes and its rightful and regal dominion over them; and that hence they have given to their theology that severe, harsh and repellent aspect which has always characterized it, against which the modern mind has at last rebelled, and from bondage to which it has finally broken away, and made its way out into a new domain of religious truth, where it has much more cheering views of God's goodness and mercy, and a much richer and more hopeful gospel to proclaim to the children of men.

This notion that love is the unifying and controlling attribute of God's nature originates in some cases, it may be, in a philosophic desire to guard the unity of the divine essence. It has seemed to some minds that if a number of different and co-ordinate attributes were ascribed to God, his nature would thus be made complex; a congeries of qualities inconsistent with that absolute simplicity everywhere asserted in the Scriptures. They have attempted, therefore, to reduce all the attributes to one, representing the different activities of God as different manifestations of that one supreme excellence of his nature. Schleiermacher, an ancestor of the New Theology, resolved them all into causality; Ritschl into love. Perhaps some New Theologians have embraced the latter view for similar reasons. It seems more probable, however, that the majority of them have been determined in their views on this subject by their views of the nature of morality. They hold the Hedonistic scheme. The chief good for man is happiness. That in God which most prompts him to confer this chief good on man is his chief excellence, and that chief excellence is thus found to be love.

It is more important, however, to notice the inferences which they draw from this doctrine.

One is, that God is determined by his very nature to secure the ultimate happiness of the human race. One writer says: "The problem before the mind of the Creator is the movement of the human race from potential into actual and perfected manhood"; and it is asserted "that having set this task before him, he is less than omnipotent, or less than good, if he does not perform it." It seems thus to be taught, not only that God will not in

the future make any displays of punitive justice in his dispensations toward men, but that his very nature forbids it. Certain it is that amongst this class of Theologians there is a strong leaning towards the denial of future retribution, and a number of them hold out the hope that at least all those who have not had a distinct offer of the gospel in this life will enjoy such an offer before their eternal destiny shall be finally fixed. Their doctrine thus tends to break down the penal sanctions of the moral law.

As involved in the above inference, some of the New Theologians hold the optimistic theory of the universe. Since God has infinite knowledge, wisdom and power, and since his chief object was to bestow happiness on men, he must have created the best possible universe for that purpose. Why should he have chosen a world less good to attain this end when he might have chosen a better? It is not shown, however, how it is that a world so full of suffering and misery as this is, is a better world for happiness than a world free from these evils would have been. If it be said that unhappiness, in the case of finite beings, is the necessary antecedent of perfect happiness; that they can fully appreciate such a blessing only in connection with an experimental contrast of the opposite evil, the perfect blessedness of the unfallen angels demonstrates the contrary. This whole theory, however, that happiness is the chief good is in conflict with both the Scriptures and the moral intuitions of man. According to both, the chief good is holiness; and, therefore, if in God any attribute is to be regarded as superior to others, it is the attribute of holiness that prompts him to secure this supreme excellence in his intelligent creatures.

Another inference made from the supremacy of love in God is that in consequence of sin and ingratitude in the objects of his love he suffers! The Rev. Newell Dwight Hillis, referring to his seminary course, has recently said, "We were taught that God could not suffer. Ceaselessly the Old Theology emphasized his impassivity. Well do I remember my old professor of theology's insistence that God dwells far above all suffering by reason of man's sins. Through his human body and his earthly experience Christ suffers and sympathizes with man's troubles. But, said the great teacher, God's perfections would be marred

by suffering. He dwells far above in the vast empyrean, lifted above all pain, eternally young, eternally strong, eternally beautiful. Yet of all the misconceptions ever taught concerning God what could be more contradictory of Christ's portrayal of God's love!" Dr. Henry Van Dyke, in his "Gospel for An Age of Doubt," says: "The dumb and sullen resentment which rises in noble minds at the thought of a universe in which there is so much helpless pain and hopeless grief fades away when we behold God sharing in our suffering. That is, we are disarmed of all right to complain by the fact that he who inflicts the suffering, or at least permits it, himself suffers along with us." Others make similar assertions. This, they claim, is a recent discovery in regard to God which they have made, and which, as they think, arms their theology with vastly more power for tender and effective appeal to sinners than the old possesses.

From this theory it seems that God's blessedness is in the keeping and at the option of his sinful creatures, so that they can add to it or subtract from it, confer it or withhold it, at their pleasure, however inconsiderately and heartlessly that pleasure may be exercised! He is as dependent on them for happiness as they are on him! If he is to be saved from suffering, they must be also! In this respect, then, he needs salvation as truly as they do!

Some pertinent questions may here be asked. How much does God suffer? How long is his suffering to continue? If sin causes him suffering because it is opposed to his nature, then, because it is infinitely opposed to it, it would seem that his suffering must be infinitely great. If he has "pain" on account of sin, must not the degree of it be commensurate with the magnitude of the cause? And since sin, according to the Scriptures, is to continue in lost men and lost angels forever, would it not seem his suffering must continue forever? If it be said that he will cease to suffer after men and angels are finally condemned, it may be asked why the cause that will have produced suffering up to that time will then cease to operate? Will sin then cease to be opposed to his nature? Will love then cease to be his supreme and controlling attribute?

This theory is contrary to all the creeds of the churches which uniformly assert that the divine nature cannot suffer, and it is

contradicted by all those passages of God's word which ascribe to him infinite, unchangeable and eternal blessedness.

Still another inference from this theory is that men are not after all as bad as the Old Theology persists in saying they are. If God loves them so much, they can not be as entirely unamiable as they have been represented. Hence the total depravity of the race is denied. Men are not blind; vision is only impaired. They are not dead; they are only sick. They do not need a resurrection from the dead; they only need an awakening out of sleep. Some go farther and say that since this God of infinite love is the natural Father of men, he naturally loves them; and since they are his natural children, they can naturally love him. Hence regeneration is unnecessary. All that is required is that they be suitably instructed, so that their wrong notions about God may be corrected, and their groundless prejudices against him may be removed.

It will be seen that the New Theology undertakes to solve the old theological problem of the relations between love and justice by resolving justice into love. It gets rid of the problem by abolishing one of its terms. Not so do the Scriptures. They do not admit any conflict between the two attributes; one insisting on the sinner's salvation; the other clamoring for his condemnation. Before the sinner's salvation, love, being itself holy and righteous, fully approves the holy and righteous sentence justice pronounces upon him. After his salvation, since it is accomplished in a way that satisfies and infinitely honors all the claims and rights of justice, it delights in and rejoices over the great event as truly as love does. In all God's dealings with men all his attributes harmoniously concur. "Mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other."

It is perhaps needless to say that the strong and unqualified declaration of the Scriptures that "God is love" does not justify the contention which the New Theologians have made. The Scriptures also say, in the same unqualified way, that "God is a consuming fire." If the fact that they say he is love proves his very essence to be love, as Ritchie says, then the fact that they also say he is a consuming fire proves his very essence to be wrath. Thus we should have a God compounded of two contradictories, and so should have no God at all, for the human mind

can not accept and worship a contradiction. But when the doctrine is presented in the modified form that love is not the whole essence, but only the supreme and controlling attribute of the divine nature, it is still untrue. What kind of love is it that God has? Is it wise or unwise? Righteous or unrighteous? Just or unjust? Must not his love, to be infinitely worthy of him, be controlled in all its exercises by wisdom, righteousness and justice? But if love is thus controlled by these attributes, how can it be supreme? If it is determined in its outflowings by them, how can it dominate them? This love is, indeed, infinitely great and rich and tender; but it is at the same time, else it could not be fully admired, a love that flows forth to man in a channel of righteousness and holiness, and, therefore, in saving power, only through the atoning work of Christ, in whom all the claims of justice are met. Let men stand in that channel, and, indeed, "God is love." Let them stand outside of that channel, however, and "he is a consuming fire."

Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.

THE Union Seminary Magazine.

Vol. XII.

APRIL—MAY, 1901.

No. 4.

I. Literary.

FINDING THE BOOK OF THE LAW.

BY ROBERT WHITTET, SR.

"When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he rent his clothes."—2 KINGS xxii. 11.

To know not we're amenable to law—
A law we wot not of, nor yet can tell
Aught of its precepts, nor how far they're well
Or ill; to feel no sense of solemn awe
Inspiring rev'rence for their maker, or to draw
Obedience, and then—as does light dispel
Night's darkness, and show the hidden pits that dwell
Unthought of in the way, and every flaw,
Revealing perils that entail defeat—
How startling 'tis, though past the danger point,
To see the risks we've run! and when once more
We feel that safety is assured, how sweet
To let the heart in gushing joy anoint
Itself in gratitude, and faith restore!

THE NEW THEOLOGY.

BY PROFESSOR G. B. STRICKLER, D. D., LL. D.

PART IV.

ANOTHER marked characteristic of the New Theology is that denies the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. It is believed that amongst all its advocates there is not a single exception to this statement. They all, to a greater or less degree, receive the conclusions of the radical Higher Criticism. They profess to find the Scriptures pervaded by elements of error, historical, scientific, chronological, ethical and religious. In a work that a New Theologian has just issued from the press it is asserted that that which makes the old orthodoxy, as a system of truth, a thing to be rejected and cast away is, not that it does not embrace the great and essential truths of religion, but that it has mixed them up with all sorts of errors, mythological, legendary, Jewish and pagan. As an illustration of what is meant, the author takes the fact of sin. "What is the doctrine of sin in the Old Theology? It starts with a myth that had floated down through primeval tradition and had been incorporated in the Hebrew Scriptures. This myth is treated as veritable history. It runs in this wise, as theologically interpreted, that a serpent tempted the first man and woman to break the commandment of God by eating the fruit of a tree. This act results in the total fall of our first parents into a moral depravity that became a necessitated second nature, which is communicated to the whole human race, so that all men are by nature totally depraved, and as moral beings commit evil, only evil, and that continually. Such is the tremendous theological result of the single act of two inexperienced children. This myth with all its absurdities" the author dismisses as unworthy of consideration. As another illustration of the way in which the Old Theology mixes up error with truth, he takes "the old theological dogma of hell. This dogma, which held so large a place in the Middle Ages, as is witnessed by the paintings on the walls of churches, and by the great poem of Dante,

had its birth in the religious, materialistic imaginations of barbarous and pre-Christian peoples. The realistic descriptions of the *Inferno* and of *Paradise Lost* are anticipated and rivalled by those of Plutarch, Plato and Josephus. The Jews obtained their doctrine apparently from the Persians." Here, however, it could not but occur to the author that, not only did the Jews hold the doctrine, but that Christ himself had taught it with great emphasis and solemnity. He admits the fact, but allows it no weight against his view. "Christ's references to the doctrine are few and apocalyptic, and simply reflect the Jewish faith of his day"!

Other writers, while not so open and coarse as this author in the expression of their low views of the Scriptures and of Christ, nevertheless practically hold the same opinions. Professor Ladd, of Yale, for instance, asserts that the first eleven chapters of Genesis containing the account of the creation of the world, of the fall of man and the consequences thereof, of the flood, of the covenant with Noah, of his descendants, and of the confusion of tongues, are "undoubtedly merely traditional."

If there were space, and it were necessary, of course, much more evidence might be presented showing to how great an extent the New Theology thus accepts the conclusions of negative criticism. It may be worth while, in this connection, to note how, while holding these views, they treat Christ's testimony to the divine origin of the Old Testament as that testimony is given in the gospels. It will be remembered that he there again and again speaks of the Old Testament as the word of God, and that he does it without any qualification. In no instance did he give any intimation that he regarded some parts of the book as reliable and other parts as unreliable; some parts as inspired and other parts as uninspired; but he always appealed to the book, no matter in what part the passage quoted was found, and no matter on what subject it bore, as an end of all controversy; as a perfectly reliable revelation of divine truth on that subject. No one can deny that this is true; and it is evident that it constitutes one of the most formidable difficulties in the way of those who claim to find so much error, not only in the Old Testament as a whole, but in the very parts from which Christ quoted as containing a certain and correct revelation of the divine will. It is painful to observe how dishonoring to Christ are the expedi-

ents to which they resort to get rid of this difficulty. Some say that in becoming incarnate he had emptied himself of some of his divine attributes—of his omniscience, for instance—and that, therefore, he knew very little about the Old Testament Scriptures, about their authors and the accuracy of their contents; no more, perhaps, than any other intelligent Jew; that it was the prevailing view at the time that the book was divine, and that, therefore, in endorsing it he did no more than give expression to that common opinion. That is, they would have us believe that, although he was “God manifest in the flesh,” the great prophet of the church under both dispensations, who declared himself to be “the truth,” the author of the truth, the teacher of the truth, and the object of the truth, he nevertheless did not know what the truth was, and could not infallibly point it out to those who looked to him as their teacher, and whose teacher he undertook to be! This view destroys not only the divine authority of the Old Testament, but it destroys the divine authority of Christ himself, and so strips from under religion the whole revealed basis on which it rests. Others say he knew the facts about the Old Testament; knew what the critics have now discovered; the errors in which it abounds; but that he did not, for various reasons, choose to disabuse the minds of the people of the more favorable view of it which they entertained. Those who say this, however, have never shown, and it is plain can never show how, if such were Christ’s views of the book, he could truthfully speak of it as he always did, and cite men to its pages for the truth as to God himself, and make on them, as he unquestionably always did, the impression that it was in all respects an infallible revelation from him. If he knew the book to be what they say it is, why did not perfect candor compel him to express himself in reference to it in the same guarded and qualified way in which they say it compels them? Are they charging Christ with a “reserve” in his teaching about the book that they cannot conscientiously imitate?

But it may now be noticed that while the New Theology finds so much of error in the Scriptures, the large majority of its advocates claim that there is nevertheless in the book a veritable revelation from God; and many of them assert that, as to its main features, it is recorded with substantial correctness. This raises the interesting and important question, how, amongst

such a mass of errors, the truth is to be recognized and separated from what is false? They answer, and seem to answer with considerable unanimity, that it is to be done through the agency of the Christian consciousness. Whatever commends itself to that consciousness is true; whatever does not is untrue. What they mean by this expression; what kind of a moral and spiritual eye this is that equips Christians so thoroughly to scrutinize the sacred page and so infallibly to discriminate between the chaff and the wheat, the dross and the gold, they have not apparently considered it necessary to explain. Nevertheless, they assert that there is such a consciousness, and that it is intended to do, and does, in respect of God's word what they claim; so that as to the real teachings of the book, certainly as to many important points, the court of final appeal is not reason, as Rationalists hold; nor the church, as Romanists contend; nor the Bible, as the great mass of Protestants assert; but the consciousness of Christians, illuminated by the Spirit.

This theory seems to have originated in the notion that all religion is fundamentally the product of feeling; and that religion, as a system, may be developed out of it. Of course, if feeling gives us all the contents of religion, everything that claims to be religion, or to be any part of it, must be compared with what it reveals, and if not found in harmony with its revelations, must be rejected. But it should be remembered that feeling is always the result of seeing; that we can have no subjective religious feeling until it has been excited within us by objective religious truth; and that, therefore, when it is said feeling is the source of truth, it is made the cause of its own cause.

It may also be said in regard to this theory that there is no evidence of its truth in the history of the church. According to it, it would seem that there ought always to have been in the history of the church a consensus of the general Christian consciousness that so much of the Bible was true and so much false, so much divine and so much human. Otherwise this consciousness would not be a uniform and reliable standard of truth; that is, would not be what seems to be claimed for it. But is there any evidence whatever in the past history of the church of any such consensus? No doubt all true Christians have a consciousness of the truth of certain elementary and essential doc-

trines—as of sin, guilt, regeneration and the like—but does the common consciousness go much beyond these? Is it so discerning that it can of itself pick out of the voluminous contents of the Bible any considerable portion of the truth there supposed to be mingled with a vast amount of error? Richard Baxter once said: “For my part I confess that I could never boast of any such testimony or light of the Spirit, nor of reason, which, without human testimony, would have made me believe that the book of Canticles is canonical and written by Solomon, and the book of wisdom apocryphal and written by Philo. Nor would I have known all, or any historical books, such as Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, etc., to have been written by divine inspiration but by tradition,” etc. Dr. Chalmers and Principal Cunningham endorse this statement, and it no doubt commends itself to every intelligent and thoughtful Christian as substantially true. As a simple matter of fact, then, this supposed standard by which truth is to be ascertained does not exist. Religious consciousness is not the source, but the product of truth. It may, and, to a considerable extent, does, recognize truth in its fundamental forms; but it is no such touchstone of truth as enables Christians all through the word of God to separate the true metal from the alloy.

This theory, however, is held in a form which is not embarrassed by the objection just made. It is said that the religious consciousness is a growth; that it has been developing from the beginning down to the present time; that under the earlier part of the old dispensation it was in simply an embryonic state, and that this accounts for the crude condition in which religion then was and for faith in such myths as the creation story; that later, as in the days of Moses, it had made much progress, and hence the more rational form which religion then assumed; but even then it was only partially developed, and, therefore, much is still found in connection with religion revealing the low views of its nature still entertained; and so, at the beginning of the new dispensation, while this consciousness then received a great enlargement and purification, still, even in the apostles, and in the apostles after the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, it was so far undeveloped that they, in some respects, wrote in the New Testament Scriptures what was not in harmony with the mind of Christ, as the Chris-

tian consciousness of the present day in its greater maturity can easily discern. The Scriptures, however, it need not be said, furnish no warrant for this notion, and it is only by denying their inspiration that it can find any ground on which to stand.

Before concluding this sketch of the more prominent and popular traits of the New Theology it may be worth while to notice what, in the view of its advocates, are its prospects for the future. This is indicated in a book recently issued: "We are at the end of old lines of development." "The old bottles with the false labels have become useless. The eyes of men are opened." "This is not 'an age of doubt' in the true religious meaning of the word. It is not an irreligious, nor a scoffing age. It is a serious, earnest, believing age in its whole spirit. It seeks religious light, and glows with the fire of religious love and freedom. But as to the old dogmatic traditionalism that has come down from the early Christian days with all its gathered inheritance of pagan, monkish, mediæval, and popish superstitions and beliefs, this age is intensely skeptical. Among the masses of the people it has been thrown aside as a cast-off garment. The skeptical spirit, in the sense of refusal to accept the dogmas of the old orthodoxy, was never more widespread or complete in the first days of the Christian era, or at the outbreak of the Lutheran reformation, than it is to-day. Ask men and women why they have ceased to attend church, and they will tell you that they have ceased to believe much that is preached, and that their religious needs are not ministered to. I wonder whether those who assume to sit in Moses' seat realize with any degree of adequacy the largeness and power of this skeptical revolt. It makes no noise in the streets, but it permeates the very atmosphere of social and religious life, like an unseen odor of flowers. All this simply means that we are nearing the end of the present theological era, and are on the verge of radical change. This is dimly seen by not a few." "It is not an old building, rebuttressed and reconstructed in its upper stories, that this age demands, but a new building from its very foundations." "The revolution that impends must be as radical and far-reaching as the movements and changes that will bring it to pass." In other passages the author asserts that a great revival of religion is soon to be expected along the new lines which the New Theology has projected.

Now, there can be little doubt that as to some portions of our country, and, perhaps, large portions, he has thus given a fairly accurate account of the present state of religious thought and feeling. He is in a position to know what he is talking about, and the confident tone in which he makes his unqualified assertions indicates that he is conscious of being guilty of no misrepresentation. But while his statement is true as to large sections in some directions, there is every reason for believing that it is not at all true as to the greater portion of our country. It is very important to remember, however, that the revolutionary spirit he describes is infectious, and that through the abundant literature, in most attractive and popular form, with which this theology is flooding the country, it is making its way everywhere, and that, therefore, unless it is anticipated and the adequate antidote is promptly provided, may very soon become much more general than it now is, and arouse an opposition to the old doctrines of grace that will require long protracted efforts to overcome. It behooves the watchman on the walls of Zion, therefore, to be on the alert.

The author asserts, it will be observed, that there has been a general revolt from the teachings of the Old Theology, by which he means from the teachings of Calvinism and from everything else at all akin to it. Indeed, the secret spring of this whole movement is to be found in a malignant opposition to this system of faith, and its constant and openly avowed purpose is to extirpate it from the world. It has found its opportunity fully provided for it in many communities, in the failure of the religious teachers of the people to inculcate the great gospel truths of Calvinism and to ground their churches in the knowledge of them, although they themselves professed to hold them. The New Theologians have taken advantage of this neglect, and of the consequent ignorance of the people, and by caricaturing and denouncing these doctrines have hurried multitudes into a renunciation of them. What has thus taken place in some quarters may, in similar circumstances, take place in others; and, if immediate precautions are not employed, may confidently be anticipated. If Calvinism is not preached, and its great doctrines are not constantly explained and vindicated, but the people are left to learn almost all they know about them from the enemies of those doctrines, nothing else can be expected but that they will

soon be renounced. This is the explanation of the revolt from them in some places by so many who once professed them.

The writer above quoted states that the churches in many places have been abandoned by many because they no longer believe what is taught in them, and because they no longer minister to their spiritual wants. But when has it ever occurred that the churches were thus deserted when the truths of Calvinism, which are nothing but the truths of the gospel, were intelligently and earnestly enforced? What doctrines have ever more conclusively demonstrated their power to interest the mind; to arouse the conscience; to move and hold the soul? And when did any people anywhere ever complain that these doctrines, rightly expounded, did not adequately minister to their spiritual necessities?

Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.