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I.

GROWTH OF PRESBYTERIAN SABBATH- SCHOOL POLITY.

IN this paper it is not intended to discuss particular methods or even general principles of Sabbath-school work. The object is to set forth the course taken by the "Presbyterian Church of the United States of America," through her General Assembly and otherwise, with a view to the development, government, improvement and extension of Sabbath-schools. So far, this paper will, it is hoped, serve a useful historic purpose. But there is another purpose in view. Our people do not, as a rule, fully understand the important sphere occupied by the organized Sabbath-school work of the Church, as distinct from the work of the individual Sabbath-school. I wish to make this clear—to bring out the purpose of the Church on this particular point, to show the magnitude of the work and its complex and manifold features, correcting erroneous impressions, and demonstrating the necessity of maintaining the work in full efficiency.

The "Form of Government" of our Church does not mention Sabbath-schools. The reason is plain. When that document was originally drawn up there were—in our present-day use of the term—no Sabbath-schools. With the advent of these schools questions arose, from time to time, as to their sphere, status and government. These questions were answered, as they arose in the General Assembly, by formal acts and deliverances of that body. Therefore, to find out the view and intention of the Church in regard to Sabbath-schools we must study these acts and deliverances. The subject is much wider and more interesting than at first sight it may appear.

We do not believe that anything has been adduced by the present author or his predecessors in the field which would render the critical dissection of the text as it stands in Isaiah and Kings necessary. The view that all the events described took place in succession has not been shown to be impossible. So far as we can judge the Assyrian inscriptions do not overthrow it, unless a character of absolute infallibility be reserved for them to the prejudice of the Biblical account. Some of the author's arguments rest on the preconception that Isaiah could not have played the rôle of wonder-worker and soothsayer, which the two longer versions ascribe to him. But this is a mere postulate of the modern interpretation of his character, and of that of early prophecy in general. On the other hand, it should be noticed that in one important point at least Meinhold takes issue with Duhm, Hackmann, Cheyne and other representatives of "advanced Isaiah criticism." He holds to the belief that the prophet predicted the deliverance of Jerusalem in the year 701, and that the sections containing this prophecy of salvation in Isaiah xxviii-xxxi are genuine.

Princeton.

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ENTWICKLUNGSGESCHICHTE DES REICHES GOTTES unter dem Alten und Neuen Bunde an der Hand einer Analyse der Quellen von H. J. BESTMANN, Pastor in Mölln. I. Das Alte Testament. Berlin, 1896: Verlag von Wiegandt und Grieben; Lemcke & Buechner, New York. Pp. 421.

This book is a bold attempt to construe the development of Old Testament religion as a spiritual movement on the basis of the expression which the successive stages of this movement have found in the literature. The author finds the fatal mistake of modern criticism in its predominantly literary character, and consequently proceeds to substitute for this the exclusive test of the correlation of religious ideas and sentiments. In point of fact, however, the difference between him and the critics is rather negative than positive: it consists entirely in his resolute refusal to make use of any literary data. So far as the positive side of the matter is concerned, we do not see how critics of the school of Kuenen and Wellhausen can be justly charged with neglect of the ideal element pertaining to the history of religion. The fault with the critics is not that they rely too much on literary data and too little on the data of the history of religion, but that from the very beginning, and ever increasingly as time goes on, they allow themselves to be guided in their literary criticism by view-points drawn from their historico-philosophical interpretation of the religion of Israel. Even the documents yielded by the literary analysis of the Pentateuch cannot be dated without falling back upon the particular scheme of evolution the critics have espoused.

Bestmann's own criticism is from beginning to end determined by the one canon that the religious movement is in its earliest stage individual, and that its further development consists in the expansion of this personal element to the spheres of social life and the organized community. This is traced successively in the Psalms, the wisdom literature, the prophetic writings, the law codes, the historical books. It will be seen that this differs from the critical hypothesis in that it places the pronounced religious individualism which, *e. g.*, many of the Psalms exhibit, at the beginning instead of at the end. In regard to the Hexateuch, Bestmann agrees with the modern school in distinguishing four strata of (literary) development, but follows Dillmann in placing P. before D. Deuteronomy dates from before the early prophets, the holiness law from the time of Jeroboam I, the priestly laws from before the days of the kingdom.

Notwithstanding the many stimulating and interesting observations

in which the book abounds, we cannot say that its method of reasoning is very convincing. The trend of thought lacks in clearness and scientific precision. As apart from this, exception may be taken to the fundamental principle underlying the whole discussion. The tendency of religion to expand from individual to social and national forms may be a factor to be reckoned with, but it is only one among many, and to suspend on it alone a comprehensive scheme, not only of the growth of Old Testament religion, but of the origin of the Old Testament books themselves, appears to us a precarious procedure. What right have we *à priori* to assume that the collection of documents gathered into the Old Testament canon is either intended to be, or suited to be, a record of subjective religious development, and that from such a specific view-point? While professing to occupy supernaturalistic ground, the author, we fear, has not sufficiently guarded against the misconception, as if revelation came through the medium of religion, instead of the reverse. It is connected with this that on one point especially we must disagree with his representation. Bestmann thinks that the old view about the Mosaic origin of the entire written law presents an insuperable difficulty, because it renders it impossible to explain the low plane on which, in the later period, we find the popular religion. This is true, of course, if the principle holds that all revelation is subjectively conditioned in such a sense that it cannot rise above the level of spiritual development actually attained at a given time. From the standpoint of a more objective and consistent theory of revelation, however, such a lapse as the Post-mosaic period presents to our view is not only explainable, but in a certain sense must be held to have been inevitable. Precisely because the legitimate religion of Israel was not the natural product of the people's life, it could for long periods remain unassimilated and in partial abeyance.

Princeton.

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THE KINGDOM (Basileia). An Exegetical Study. By GEORGE DANA BOARDMAN, D.D. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 8vo, pp. viii, 348.

This book from the pen of Dr. Boardman furnishes us with fresh evidence of the faithfulness with which a busy pastor has pursued his "study-work." Following a number of other writings already given to the press, it comes with the assurance of valuable aid to the student of the Bible. As the author himself tells us in the Preface, there is little of critical work in this volume. It is rather an attempt to furnish us with a true irenic presentation of the Bible-teaching upon the Kingdom—"avoiding on the one hand the Scylla of Rationalism, and on the other the Charybdis of Traditionalism."

Yet the book claims to be distinctively an exegetical work. Question may arise in some minds how far this has been carried out. At times it would seem to be more what one might term homiletical than exegetical, and we venture to suggest that its greatest value is along this line. We find Dr. Boardman nowhere entering into the textual questions which play so large a part in truly scientific exegesis, nor are we ever confronted with the original text itself. Passages are often given to us in paraphrase rather than in their exactness, as we might desire. All paraphrasing carries with it the idea of subjectivity. We learn, in spite of this defect, that Dr. Boardman is both accurate and just in his general interpretation of the Master's teaching. The spirit of his judgment is always calm, and we are never urged to accept extreme positions. Particularly helpful will be found his treatment of the "Beatitudes" in their relation to the existing social con-