

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

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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.

factor or person may make itself or himself manifest in and through the natural order of the world. To hold that much of what appears miraculous in the Scriptures is a manifestation of the supernatural in natural forms is not to surrender the belief in the supernatural or desupernaturalize Christianity. Dr. Purves' attitude toward the sources does not require him or those who think like him to bind themselves to his theory of the way in which the supernatural emerges in the world. Had Dr. Purves observed this distinction he could have given himself a larger freedom in the use of scientific and critical principles and methods and spared himself some pains devoted to the harmonization of differences in the accounts which at the most affect, not the reality of the supernatural, but the manner of its appearance.

Upon the whole, however, we must express our gratification both with the standpoint and method of the author, commend the work heartily to the constituency for which it was designed, and reiterate the regret that its aim and scope did not permit him to meet works like Weizsäcker's and McGiffert's point by point.

Chicago.

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DIE JESAJAERSÄHLUNGEN JESAJA 36-39. Eine historisch-kritische Untersuchung von Lic. J. MEINHOLD, a. o. Professor der Theologie in Bonn. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Rupprecht, 1898, pp. 104.

The historico-critical investigation of these chapters in the Book of Isaiah and of the corresponding sections in 2 Kings is of great importance for determining the course of Isaiah's prophetic activity and the content of his message during the Sennacherib campaign of the year 701 B. C. Hence the author offers his study as an introduction to a series of studies which are to deal with the life and work of that great prophet. The conclusions reached are briefly the following: What is related in chapters xxxviii and xxxix concerning the sickness of Hezekiah and the embassy of Merodach-Baladan dates (with the exception of the Psalm) from the exilic period, and is consequently unreliable from a historical point of view. As regards the preceding account of the Sennacherib campaign Meinhold adopts the view at present in vogue among the critics, which finds in the Isaiah text two versions, in the text of Kings three versions, of the same event from different hands. Of the two versions in Isaiah the one in chapter xxxvi. 2-xxxvii. 9^a, 37, 38, contains at least some reminiscences of the actual course of events, although even it is full of unhistorical representations. The other account, consisting of chapter xxxvii. 9^b-38, is much farther removed from the true basis of facts. Both are exilic. (Chapter xxxvii. 22-29, represents a still later addition from the close of the exile.) And both must give way to the third version, which has been preserved only in the parallel text of Kings, chapter xviii. 13^b-16, and has not found its way into the Book of Isaiah. The author refuses to treat the three sections in 2 Kings as describing successive developments of the campaign. It is true, he admits, that the better of the two Isaiah versions contains some data founded on fact and relating to the stage of the campaign subsequent to Hezekiah's payment of tribute. The Deuteronomist redactor intended to have his readers interpret the whole on the principle of chronological sequence, but the original writer of Isaiah xxxvi. 2-xxxvii. 9^a, 37, 38, did not intend to give a supplement to 2 Kings, xviii. 13^b-16. He offers his version as a complete narrative, and knows nothing of Hezekiah's tribute and subjection.

Meinhold rejects the hypothesis of Winkler, which proposes to distribute the two accounts in Isaiah over two campaigns of Sennacherib; the one in 701, the other much later in 681.

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.

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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