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I.

RECENT ETHICAL THEORY.

THE attitude of recent science and of recent speculations in the field of science, with respect to their bearing on ethical theory, has come to be regarded with lively and, to some extent, anxious interest by those conversant with these subjects. The reason for this, which is twofold, may readily be seen.

In the first place, it is felt that now as heretofore a true ethical theory is of primary importance; and this chiefly on two grounds: First, because the right conduct of life is the highest interest alike of society and of the individual, and it is not presumable that an adequate code of ethical maxims can ever spring from a false ethical theory; and second, because a true ethical theory is the finished product, and hence the test and criterion of right thinking in the inferior branches of knowledge. The normal movement of thought is from the physical to the metaphysical, and in metaphysics from the psychological to the ethical. Thus the ethical becomes in one sense the touchstone of all that precedes it. No reasoning can be accounted adequate that will not bear the strain of an ethical application. Whatever makes for wrong doing instead of right doing carries with it its own refutation. The taint of moral defect betrays a previous taint of false logic and false philosophy.

In the next place, it is not to be questioned that much of recent speculation in the field of science wears a hostile look toward all the old accepted tenets of ethical philosophy. The attitude, though less pronounced here than in some other directions, is yet not less certain and decided. The new philosophy, whether true or false, may

may the preacher make use of such illustrations as are here found, so far as they purport to be matters of fact? In regard to comparative illustration there can hardly be difference of opinion. When a speaker says, "I will suppose, for the sake of making my subject clear," he has then before him an unlimited field of choice. But if he begins, "about the middle of the last century there lived in Timbuctoo," he will then be understood as giving a narrative of facts. But the public narrator takes upon him a grave responsibility, in that he pledges his character for veracity on the accuracy of his language. It would seem, then, improper for the minister to give anecdotes in his sermons for the truth of which he cannot vouch. The one who publishes like stories is open to the same accusation. Whether it is possible for the collector of some thousands of them personally to examine their credibility we do not discuss.

It is, unfortunately, too easy also to make a story teach a false lesson. Many anecdotes of "retribution," or of sudden death to the profane, foster a superstition quite contrary to the teaching of the Bible. Some such are found in this collection—for example, Vol. VIII., p. 184, where we are told of a gentleman who was accidentally struck by a ball when riding by some cricket players. The wound resulted in his death, and it afterwards came out that the gentleman had before killed a man, and this man's son was at the bat and struck the fatal ball. See! say all the barbarians of Melita, a murderer whom Vengeance suffers not to live!

It ought to be added that these books are reasonable in price, *i.e.*, there is a large amount of printing for the money paid; also that we have discovered no typographical errors.

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COMMENTAR UEBER DAS EVANGELIUM DES JOHNNIS, von DR. CARL FRIEDRICH KARL. 8vo, pp. 604. Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1881. New York: B. Westermann & Co.

To his commentaries on the Synoptics (see notice of Mark and Luke in PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW, vol. I., p. 576) Dr. Keil now adds one on John. In general character and purpose, it is, of course, similar to the previous volumes of the series. Here, too, we find truth sought rather than novelty; here, too, simplicity, clearness, objectivity of view, exegetical faithfulness are more apparent than the brilliancy of imagination and perverse eisegetical acuteness, which distinguish so many so-called expositions of modern times. It is true enough (we might add, "therefore,") that from beginning to end it sings the same "well-known old song" that Holtzmann complains of; but it sings it well, and some of us like the true old melodies better than new music laboriously beaten out of lutes from which the higher strings have been perversely torn away. It has been a positive pleasure to us to read this simple, lucid, straightforward, honest, careful commentary, even though we have failed to find anything particularly new in it, and do not think it equal to or apt to supplant either Dr. Godet's or Dr. Westcott's. It cannot be denied, however, that there are short-comings visible in it; and especially in the inadequate use made of the later literature of the subject. We do not, indeed, find it (with Holtzmann) remarkable that Spaeth's hypothesis that the beloved disciple was Nathaniel has been passed over in silence, or that his own works have been so cavalierly neglected; but it is a pity—and the book has suffered therefrom—that such works as Dr. Westcott's John, Dr. Lightfoot's Essay on the silence of Eusebius (Keil seems to know only Tischendorf's few remarks on this subject), Zahn's *Acta Joannis*, and the late investigations on Tatian's Diatessaron should not have been known. Even Dr. Hort's "Two Dissertations," and Dr. Abbot's "The Authorship of the Fourth Gospel" (*sic*), seem to be known only at second-hand. On the other hand, however, good work has been done in all those points where the Gospel has contact with the O. T.

In general the following is the view Dr. Keil takes of the Gospel. It is by John, and was written late in the century at Ephesus. Its design is briefly given at xx: 21,

but in very general terms, such as do not distinguish it from the Synoptics. This distinction must be sought rather in the time of writing and destination. They were kerygmatic, and had as their chief end to further Jewish (Mat.) or heathen (Mk. and Lk.) reception of apostolic preaching; John's was written late in the century, and to a people not just receiving the Gospel, but torn with heresy. Its object was, therefore, rather to *establish* than *commend*. It had not as either conjoint or subordinate end to supplement the Synoptics; the supplementary phenomena are only incidental results of the one design. Nor did it intend to confute heresy; the confutation is accidental, arising from the fact that all error has its root in the same spirit that led the Jews to reject their Messiah. The contents of the Gospel are determined by its design. The general theme is: The Revelation of the Glory of Jesus Christ as the only begotten of the Father. The first eighteen verses of chapter I. form an introduction, and chapter xxi. a conclusion (verses 24 and 25 being by another hand). Then the book falls into two portions: I. History of the public attestation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God before the people (i.: 19-xii.: 50); and II. History of the accomplishment of his self-revelation through suffering, death and resurrection (xiii.-xx). The first of these divisions falls into five parts, divided at ii.: 12, iv.: 54, vi.: 71, and x.: 42; and the second into two, divided at the end of the xvii. chapter.

Particulars of exegesis cannot be entered upon; perhaps the following specimens will be found enough to characterize the work. i., 1-18: the Philonian origin of the Logos idea is (rightly) denied;—the notion was prepared by the O. T. and made the common property of the Jewish race by the Targums. John obtained it from the O. T. Its meaning is "God in revelation of himself," and it expresses not an abstraction, but a person; but not Jesus Christ, but the personal divine Spirit, who existed before Jesus Christ and became incarnate in him. i.: 18: the reading, "God only begotten," is (wrongly) rejected. i.: 28: Bethany, after Delitzsch, is found in a **בֵּתְנֵה** south of Ramoth Gilead; which can hardly be right, as the narrative almost demands a spot in or very near Galilee, perhaps north of the lake. i.: 29: The Lamb of God refers not at all to the paschal lamb, but to Is. liii.; yet we must bring in the idea of sin-offering to fully explain the allusion as well in Isaiah as in John. This seems indubitably right. i.: 39: The hour is probably, from the context, to be counted from midnight, and xix.: 14 renders this certain. i.: 47: the correct interpretation is given, viz., that Nazareth is referred to, not as despised, or wicked, or small, or unknown, but as the place whence the Messiah should come. i.: 51: uninterrupted intercourse between God and Christ is meant, the angels being ministering spirits which transmit the divine aid for miraculous works. i.: 31: "I knew Him not as Son of God, but came forth baptizing in order to point out the Messiah, and in prosecuting this work I saw the promised sign descend on Him, and hence knew Him to be the one." ii.: 1: the third day is (wrongly) counted from i.: 43, so that it is the seventh after i.: 19: instead of (rightly) from i.: 35, so as to make it fifth after i.: 19. iii.: 3: "Born again." iv.: 5: Sycher=Aschar. v.: 1: the article is doubtfully omitted, and then the feast left undecided between Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles—Purim being out of the question. v.: 27: the omission of the article held (wrongly) not significant. vi.: does not treat of Lord's Supper, and yet is valuable to the full understanding of it. vii.: 8: *οὐ πω* (wrongly, since *οὐκ* is western), rejected, and Bengel's interpretation followed: "I go not up *ut i vos suadetis ut specter*." vii.: 38: from Is. lviii.: 11; and Luthardt followed in interpretation. xiii.: 1: Passover feast and on 14th Nisan. xv., xvi., xvii, spoken while still in the room. xviii.: 24: The sending (*οὐκ*) is after verse 23; hence Annas and Kaiaphas occupied the same house, with same court-yard. xix.: 25: three women. xix.: 34: not physiologically explicable—a miracle of symbolic character. xx.: 12: undoubtedly the same as Mk. xxviii.: 1, 5. xxi. is genuine and aboriginal, although verses 24 and 25 are from another (aboriginal) hand.

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