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THE MINISTRY AND THE HIGHER CRITICISM.

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THE higher criticism of the Old Testament Scriptures has been made a fresh issue in Presbyterian and Congregational churches by the recent inaugural address of Dr. Briggs upon assuming charge of the new department of Biblical Theology in Union Theological Seminary. The address has been met with a storm of criticism and condemnation, in which only the New York *Evangelist*, among papers of repute for orthodoxy, has had much good to say for Professor Briggs. Most of this criticism has been crude and hasty, prepared under the necessity of treating the subject in the editorial of the coming week, and is really worthless; and yet the views which Dr. Briggs holds, and which have found partial expression in the address, are sufficiently startling to one not accustomed by considerable study to a conception of the matters concerned quite apart from the traditional one. The tendency in the theological world is immediately to pronounce them impossible, because they seem to attack and seriously to imperil the very foundations of our belief in the Scriptures.

And, indeed, the higher criticism does directly attack the foundations of the usual argument for the divine authority of the Scriptures. That argument, as it has been conducted among us for now more than one hundred years, has been almost exclusively rational. It has begun with the need of man for a revelation, and the benevolence of God inclining him to supply every essential need of his creatures, as creating an antecedent probability that there will be a revelation. Then the genuineness of the various writings has been proved, including the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Then their authenticity. And then, upon the argument thus built up, their divine authority. Now, knock out the layer of argument comprised under the head of genuineness, as the higher criticism attempts

to do with respect to the so-called writings of Moses, at least, and the whole superimposed argumentative structure falls to the ground. No wonder, then, that orthodox ministers should be eager to oppose a style of treatment of this momentous theme which seems forever to destroy that which is dearer to them than even life—the divine authority of the Bible, the Church, and religion. The case seems prejudged, and on the very best grounds, before it is fairly brought into court.

Now, it is evident that in this frame of mind an earnest man, who values his convictions, is unable to consider the question presented by the higher criticism, if such a question there really be, with an unprejudiced, candid, and impartial mind. There is such a question evidently; for the earnestness of many men in promoting such studies must have some ground. Then, the appearance of Dr. Briggs, the product of one of our schools, and the pupil of Henry B. Smith, himself a man of warm evangelical spirit and of profound learning in widely separated departments of theology, as an advocate of the criticism, puts a new face upon the subject. It is no longer a Wellhausen, whose almost profane expressions at some points render it impossible to believe in his piety or qualifications for the task he has undertaken, who represents the science, and at the same time furnishes the best of reasons for doubting its soundness and value. The advocate is one of ourselves, who accepts the supernatural as fully as we do. Even if he accepts critical results which have at first sight the worst appearance to us, we must learn to put aside our repugnance to them, and examine them candidly; and yet just this, the candid and impartial, unbiassed investigation, is what it is difficult, exceedingly difficult to give.

I wish, now, in the present essay to show

LITERARY DEPARTMENT.

BOOK REVIEW.

INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. By EMANUEL V. GERHART, D.D., LL.D., Professor of Systematic and Practical Theology in the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church, Lancaster, Pa. With an Introduction by Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D., Professor of Church History in Union Theological Seminary, New York. Vol. I. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1891. 8vo, pp. xxvii., 754, \$3.00.

This thick volume is only the first half of a treatise, the distinguished ability of which will reflect honor upon the theological school from which it emanates, and will give it a place in the goodly company of that remarkable series of text-books in Dogmatics which the several branches of the Reformed Church in America have produced. It is the precipitate of many years of theological teaching, and bears throughout the marks of long continued, careful and conscientious labor. It is conspicuous for philosophical depth of thought. It shows evidences of familiarity with the critical as well as dogmatic scholarship of the day—though, no doubt, chiefly of one school. It is written in a style which, while plain, is in general both clear and attractive, and rises at times into something like a real though unforced eloquence. Above all, it is informed with reverence for the holy themes discussed, and a devoutness of spirit which convinces its readers that the author's soul has found nourishment in the doctrines he formulates, and that he thinks with the heart as well as the head. It would be premature to attempt at this time a characterization of the book as a whole, or a final estimate of its value. This first volume contains only the *Loci de Deo* and *de Creatione et Providentia*, with preliminary sections on the Source of Theological Knowledge, and the Principle of Christian Doctrine; and though much is already adumbrated in the course of the discussions on these themes which is to follow formally in the second volume, we must wait for the full presentation in order to judge justly of the work or the system. Meanwhile, we may remark in passing, that there are several points in this first volume in which the mode of presentation seems to make, from the pedagogical point of view, an advance upon the systems with which we are most familiar. We reckon among these the genetic development of the doctrine of God, by which the student is introduced first to the natural conception of God, then to Old Testament Theism, and then to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, and that first in its economical and then in its ontological aspect. There may possibly be reckoned among these also the prepositing of the discussion of the Trinity to that of the Divine Attributes (Dr. Gerhart prefers the term Properties or Qualities), which, though liable to certain scientific objections, has the pedagogic advantage of preventing some annoying confusions in the youthful mind as to the relation of the attributes to the persons of the Godhead. Here, too, may be reckoned the proportionally somewhat fuller discussions than usual of the created world, especially under the useful distinction of the world as Cosmos and the world as Eon, as also of the angelic world. And there are naturally many matters of detail which are presented so richly and strongly as to invite and almost to demand quotation, could we give this whole notice to pointing out such passages.

It will be more respectful to Dr. Gerhart, how-

ever, to discuss some of those matters where we find it difficult to follow his leading. And this becomes the more incumbent upon us from the circumstance that the two most important matters of this kind constitute the subjects of the two preliminary dissertations, which are not only peculiar to this volume, but are fundamental to the whole system.

Dr. Gerhart felicitates himself on being the first American author to publish a Christological or Christocentric Dogmatics. "Thus far," he writes (p. 8), "no system of theology, developed from the Christ-idea as its standpoint, of American or English authorship has greeted the Church." To him not only the distinguishing fact, but also the distinguishing virtue of his treatise is that it "is in sympathy with the Christological trend of the Christian sentiment and scholarship of the age" (p. 9). The circumstance that this is the first American dogmatics constructed from this standpoint renders it not unfitting that we should explain why we cannot follow him here, in the form of a brief exposition of what is meant by Christocentric theology. In the first place, it must be noted that this phrase is not meant to suggest that a new and better arrangement of the doctrines has been adopted. Christological theology is not the old theology looked at from a new and higher point of view, and presented in a new and better order and proportion. "The Christocentric method," says Dr. Schaff in the introduction prefixed to this volume, "is not inconsistent with the Trinitarian method, but coincides with it;" and as a matter of fact Dr. Gerhart's system follows the order of topics which has been fixed upon by theologians generally as the natural one. He too gives us successively the doctrines on God, on Creation and Providence, on Man, on Christ, on the Holy Spirit, on Personal Salvation, and on the Last Things—in which every one will recognize his old acquaintances Theology, Cosmology, Anthropology, Christology, Pneumatology, Soteriology, and Eschatology, and in their familiar order. Neither, again, does the adoption of "the Christological method" mean that all the doctrines of the system have been *adjusted to the great doctrines of redemption*. This has been done already in every concatenated system, which is a system just because each doctrine included in it has been adjusted to all the rest. Christological theology is not the old theology with redemption given new prominence and made pervasive in its influence over all the other doctrines. Nor yet does the adoption of this method mean the *exaltation of Christ* in His person and work, and the according to Him of new and completer honor as the central point of all religion and of all dogmatic thought. To every evangelical Christian Christ is the head and centre of Christianity; and the Christological idea is not an effort to claim for Him His right as Lord of all. Perhaps the phrase conveys in some vague way one or the other of the foregoing ideas to the majority of uninstructed readers; but no one of these is what is intended by it. What is intended by it is, briefly, not that Christ's person and work shall be made the central fact in all our theological thinking, but, as its advocates themselves express it, that the *Christ-idea* shall be made the principle of theological thought. And this means nothing more or less than that from the unique person of the God-man, in whom God and man are united in one life, the idea of the essential unity of God and man shall be derived, and then applied as a universal truth, valid in all the relations of God

and man. Dr. Gerhart quite clearly and repeatedly enunciates his conception. "God and man being a unity in Jesus Christ," he tells us (p. 153), "the idea concerning the Christ" (note: not the Christ, either in His person or His work, but "the idea concerning the Christ" or "the idea respecting the God-man," p. 188, or "the idea of Divine-human community," p. 271), "becomes the central idea in Christian dogmatics, the science of the Christian religion." "The fundamental law of Christian doctrine," we read again (p. 187), is "this idea concerning the Christ, in whom God and man are organically and ethically one." And again (p. 115) we are told that the conditions of a theology at once more scriptural and more Christian are only to be met "by the Christ-idea—the idea concerning the Divine-human personality of Jesus;" and this is explained to mean that the fundamental principle of theology is to be "the concrete union of the two essential factors," God and man. No one needs to be told whence this conception comes or whither it leads. And we regret to find that Dr. Gerhart, instead of building upon the firm basis of the Reformed theology, has taken his place alongside of those, unfortunately not a few, who are to-day occupying themselves (in the phrase of Dr. Kuyper) "in smuggling the contraband of the German *Vermittlungstheologie* into the Calvinistic camp."

The effect of thus substituting the "concrete unity of God and man" in the place of the glory of God Almighty as "the fundamental principle of theology" is, of course, the de-Calvinization of the Reformed theology. Under the attractive name of "Christologizing" theology, theology is simply humanitarianized. Dr. Gerhart thinks of the process, indeed, as finding a middle way between the two one-sided systems of Calvinism and Arminianism. While Calvinism does injustice to man, and Arminianism to God, the Christological idea, he thinks, does justice to both, since in it "both ideas become one organic unity," "complemental members of an organism in germ." But the middle way between truth and error is itself error. And the Christological theology does not succeed in holding the two fundamental ideas of God and man "in relation to one another consistently with their intrinsic demands." It gives us a synthesis not of the wholeness of God and the wholeness of man, but of something more than man and something less than God. The actual result is, naturally, that Dr. Gerhart holds with Arminianism in all the distinctive points, denying God's universal foreordination, curtailing His omnipotence, and even curiously explaining His omniscience, while everywhere he argues against His sovereign dealings with men (pp. 121, 151, etc.). It is not the *Vermittlungstheologie*, but Calvinism alone that embraces "God as God" or "the wholeness of the Divine being." The principle of Calvinism is not, therefore, "the metaphysical principle of predestination," and it does not "begin with the sovereign will of God," though it firmly contends that God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, and has decreed all things according to the counsel of His own will. It is the determination of Calvinism that God shall be God—that it shall embrace God in the wholeness of His nature, no part-God but all-God—that makes it tenacious of these doctrines. The doctrine of predestination is an essential element in the very idea of God, and justice is not done to this factor of theological thought without it. In the use of such painful phrases as "the false predominance of the Divine will" (p. 109), "the false exaltation of God

above man" (p. 115), the mediating theology confesses that it has bought its intermediate position at the cost of the integrity of the idea of God. Dr. Gerhart thinks ill of the knowledge of God attainable by the natural man; but even natural theology holds, in these aspects, to a completer God than the *Vermittlungstheologie* allows.

We have hinted that Dr. Gerhart has too low an estimate of the knowledge of God attainable by the natural reason. That God is an intuition of the natural man he correctly asserts (p. 218); but he adds that "intuition is inadequate; it does not answer to the objective reality" (p. 227). Apparently he would consider theism itself beyond the reach of natural thought, confining the pagan conceptions of deity to the circle of pantheism, deism, and dualism. But the needed complement of "reason" he does not find in "revelation," in the sense ordinarily attached to that word; the phrase "reason and revelation" as expressive of the twofold source of knowledge, he considers, rather, to be a product of late Protestant and vicious thought (p. 18 sq.). The Bible is, indeed, the source of biblical theology, but not, in the truest sense, of dogmatic theology; for it, it supplied, no doubt, a starting point, conditioning the product, and it continues to supply a "critical standard;" but it does not "supply all the needs of theological science." The true source of Divine knowledge is "a unity in a twofold form;" objectively it is the self-manifestation of God as (it is the "as" of norm) presented in the Scriptures; subjectively, it is the same revealed truth living in the Christian consciousness of the Church (p. 7). "The original source of the Christian knowledge of God is the Lord Jesus Christ" (p. 33): the Bible can be considered only a medium of this knowledge, and that only so far forth as "it is mystically connected with the Christ of God" (p. 33); whereas, on the other hand, the transcendent Christ becomes an immanent vital principle in His people by a mystical union with them begotten by the Holy Spirit, and developing into a Christian consciousness which is itself a source of knowledge of God. Thus, then, is postulated what is practically equivalent to a perennial revelation, the organ of which is faith, and the agent the Holy Ghost; and thus Dr. Gerhart is able to speak of the Trinity being an intuition of the regenerate soul as truly as God is of the natural soul (p. 366).

Now, there can be no sort of objection to saying that our Lord Jesus Christ is the one primordial and unchangeable source of Divine knowledge. Revelation, taken in the broad sense, is the only medium of knowledge of God; and all revelation of God is through the Logos. And taking knowledge as a concrete fact, Christ gives us knowledge of God not merely by external manifestations or "verbal teaching," but "by mystical union" with the believer, enabling him to understand and receive the verbal teaching. This is but the Reformed doctrine of the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*, and means nothing more than that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, and cannot know them because they are Spiritually discerned. So far, therefore, as Dr. Gerhart's teaching tends to enforce the fundamental doctrine that faith is necessary to knowledge (p. 29), and that "the first condition of knowing God is fellowship and sympathy with Him" (p. 210), we not only go heartily with him, but feel bound to return him our sincere thanks for the fulness and strength of his advocacy of so important and indeed vital a truth. But Dr. Gerhart's doctrine far transcends the Protestant

doctrine of the testimony of the Spirit, though he seeks support in it. That doctrine looks upon the Scriptures as the source of the matter to be believed, and the testimony of the Spirit as the condition of its reception and understanding. Dr. Gerhart speaks of the "consciousness of God going forth from the Divine communion of love" as a "source of theological knowledge" (p. 51); so that the "theologian himself becomes a fountain, a secondary fountain" from which knowledge of God and Divine things may be derived (p. 68). In other words, Dr. Gerhart transmutes the Reformed doctrine of the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti* into the well-known *Vermittelungstheologie* doctrine of the Christian consciousness. "Hence by union and communion in the Spirit with Christ glorified, the Christian may know God, His being, His attributes, and His relations to the world" (p. 205, cf. pp. 5, 16, 47, et *æpe*). According to the Reformed doctrine, we have a *testimony* from the Spirit, not a *revelation*; knowledge is not represented as instilled into the Christian heart from beneath; the work of the Spirit terminates rather on the faculties of knowing, while the object known is brought before them not mystically, but naturally, chiefly through the Word.

Therefore Dr. Gerhart is wrong in speaking of the old Reformed doctrine as "affirming two sources of theological knowledge—namely, the written Word of God and the illumination of the Church by the Holy Ghost, the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*" (p. 12). This would be like our saying that we have two sources of knowledge of Dr. Gerhart's theology—his book and our spectacles through which we read it. The Reformed writers are perfectly explicit and clear—from Calvin down—as to the function of the witness of the Spirit, as simply the needed action of the Holy Spirit on debased man, to enable him to understand the things of God. So, for instance, Calvin, as quoted on p. 38, "For as God alone is a sufficient witness of Himself in His own Word, so also the Word will never gain credit in the hearts of men till it be confirmed by the internal testimony of the Spirit." The Word is perfect in itself; it is man that is imperfect and needy of help. Let us venture an illustration. I am to make a study of the musical genius of Beethoven. His manuscript scores are placed before me. These are the sources of my knowledge of his musical genius. It may be said, indeed, that the scores are not, strictly speaking, the *sources*, that Beethoven is the source and the scores only the media by which he communicates to me his musical conceptions. This is obviously true; but it is a wholly useless distinction for the matter in hand. Beethoven is my source only so far as he has expressed himself in the scores; they are, therefore, my sources of knowledge of his musical genius. But now I open the scores and read. I know the notes; I have a scientific acquaintance with the principles of musical composition; I am so far furnished for criticising Beethoven as a musician. But I have no musical soul. There is nothing within me to correspond to the *music* which the scores represent. I have the whole of the objective sources, but I have no subjective appreciation of their message. But this certainly is not due to any defect in the scores. The defect is in me. And it would not be remedied by any mystical connection of Beethoven with the scores; I need, were that possible, a mystical connection of Beethoven with my soul, inspiring it—not with a knowledge of his music, but with musical sense. Similarly Dr. Gerhart seems to us wholly wrong in

denying to the Scriptures the title of sole objective source of knowledge of God, and as well in seeking to postulate a mystical connection of the glorified Christ by His spirit with them in order to give them validity and power (p. 40 sq.). Here he deserts in principle the Reformed doctrine of the Scriptures and goes over to the Lutheran. For the very core of the distinction between the doctrines of the Word held by these two churches is that the Lutherans postulate a Divine union with the Scriptures, and the Reformed the action of the Spirit on the heart of the believer *extrinsecus accedens*.

We have left ourselves no room to speak of Dr. Gerhart's presentation of the doctrines of God and creation, nor of many minor matters we had marked for discussion.

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QUARTERLY AND MAGAZINE REVIEWS.

CONTENTS PAGES AND DIGESTS OF THEIR PRINCIPAL ARTICLES.

CALVINISM AND CONFESSIONAL REVISION. By Professor Dr. A. KUYPER, of Holland. Translated from the Dutch by Professor Geerhardus Vos, Ph.D., of Grand Rapids, Mich. *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, New York, July, 1891.

This article opens with an expression of the interest excited among Dutch Calvinists by the discussion of confessional revision in America, and proceeds to state the standpoint of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands with regard to a revision of their creed. For this purpose the writer presents four questions: (1) Has a specific tendency, which, like Calvinism, leads to a separate church organization, a right to exist in the Church of Christ? (2) What specific tendency does Calvinism represent in the Christian Church? (3) In what manner has this tendency found its expression in the ecclesiastical symbols? (4) To what conditions is the revision of these symbols in the case of a progressive development of Calvinism to be bound?

1. Professor Kuyper claims that to the first question there is no other than an affirmative answer. Calvinism does represent a specific tendency of thought in the Christian Church, which, being able to create its own church organization, has an indisputable right of existence. In considering this question, he looks at the general development of the idea of unity in the Church, which involves at the beginning similarity, heterogeneity, and disproportionateness in its parts. Harmony can only arise from contrast, and contrast requires diversity of nature. So this idea of the Christian Church leaves room for specific tendencies of thought. Our grasp is so limited and the capacity of our consciousness so universal, that one man must supplement another, and by the very necessity of doing this no individual can avoid being one-sided in his range of thought. Christianity is too rich, too many-sided, too universal to pour its divine fulness into a single channel of human life, and hence has forced its waters into a number of channels. Thus Calvinism owes its origin exclusively to a specific conception of Christianity, arising in a period of history when the fate of Christianity shaped the destinies of States and nations. It developed its own organization, set its stamp on political and social life as