

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

No. 10—April, 1892.

I.

RECENT DOGMATIC THOUGHT IN THE NETHERLANDS.*

THE Dutch theology of the nineteenth century has been discussed more than once by both foreign and native writers. The following is a list of the more important treatises on the subject: CHR. SEPP, *Proeve eener pragmatische geschiedenis der Theologie in Nederland van 1787 tot 1858*, 3d ed., Leiden, 1859; D. CHANTEPIE DE LA SAUSSAYE, *La crise religieuse en Hollande*, Leyde, 1860; Dr. G. J. VOS, *Groen van Prinsterer en zijn tijd 1800–1857*, Dordrecht, 1886; *Idem.*, *Groen van Prinsterer en zijn tijd, 1857–1876*, Dordrecht, 1891; Dr. J. H. GUNNING, J.Hz., *Het Protestantsche Nederland onzer dagen*, Groningen, 1889; Dr. J. A. GERTH VAN WYCK, art. "Holland," in Herzog und Plitt, *Realenc. für Prot. Theol. u. Kirche*, vi, s. 254–266; JOHANNES GLOËL, *Hollands Kirchliches Leben*, Würtemberg (1885); Dr. ADOLPH ZAHN, *Abriss einer Geschichte der Evangelischen Kirche auf dem Europ. Festlande im 19ten Jahrhundert*, 2te Aufl., Stuttgart, 1888, etc. As secondary sources of information all these and other works may render excellent service, but the works of the representative theologians themselves will alone give an insight into the principles and nature of the successive tendencies.

Dutch theology during the present century has been subject to various influences. Its character has been molded in turn not only by Calvinism, which has always continued to live among the

* [Our readers are indebted for the translation of Dr. Bavinck's paper to Prof. G. Vos, Ph.D., of Grand Rapids, Mich.—EDITORS.]

truths which, though not revealed, are so intimately connected with revealed truths that the deposit of faith and morals cannot be guarded, explained or defended without an infallible discernment of such unrevealed truths;" and that this includes the power, "with infallible certainty, to prescribe and condemn doctrines, *logical, scientific, physical, or political of any kind.*" It is also observable that the doctrine of "invincible ignorance," so frequently set forth for the comfort of their Protestant friends by liberal Catholics, is explicitly denied by these Catechisms to give a basis of salvation (p. 81). Miss Cusack rightly lays much stress on the idolatrous worship of Mary, and her quotations from the *Scapular Book* and from the *Glories of Mary* ought to suffice to open the eyes of all to the blasphemous idolatry which has grown up in the Romish Church in this matter. She wisely suggests as to controversial methods: "I think the best way to enlighten a Romanist is to call his attention to the changes made by his Church in doctrine, even in this present century" (p. 86). In fact, no Church has so shifted her basis of teaching and defense. The succession of great English cardinals will illustrate it. Cardinal Wiseman based everything on tradition; that failing, Cardinal Newman based all on development; that failing, Cardinal Manning based all on infallibility—making the appeal to history both a heresy and a treason.—The following are a number of opening addresses which have come to our table: *De Verbondsleer in de Gereformeerde Theologie*. Rede gehouden bij het overdragen van het Rectoraat aan de Theol. School te Grand Rapids, Mich., den 2den September, 1891. Door G Vos, Ph.D. 8vo, pp. 68. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: J. B. Hulst, 1891.) Prof. Park, of Andover, is reported to have been accustomed to ask his pupils, "When were the Covenants made?" and to have expected the reply, "In Holland, in the seventeenth century." Prof. E. H. Johnson, of Crozer Theological Seminary, writes still to-day (in his *Outline in Systematic Theology*) that the formal scheme of the Covenants was developed into a system by Cocceius, and that "no such Covenants are mentioned in the Bible." Prof. Vos' admirable address would enlighten those scholars. He does not deal directly with the Scriptural question. But he shows that the Covenant idea is grounded in the fundamental principles of Reformed theology and is their natural and necessary outcome, and, therefore, that it has been a prominent feature of it from the beginning. Even when we speak of a Covenant system, it is an error to point to Cocceius as its author; Cloppenburg and Gellius Snecanus both taught a formal Covenant theology in the Netherlands before Cocceius, not to go outside his own countrymen. The Covenant idea was made prominent from the first, especially in the line of descent from Zurich, where Zwingli emphasized it as against the Anabaptists as early as 1526. After him came Leo Judae (1534) and Bullinger (1549), passing the doctrine on to Olevianus and Ursinus. From that time it never is lost sight of; its chief elements appear in Musculus, Polanus and Wollebius, in Switzerland; in Szegedin in Hungary; in Pierius, Sohnnius, Eglin and Martinus in Germany; in Junius, Gomarus, the two Trelcatiuses and Nerdemus in Holland; while it is fully developed in Britain by Rollock and Howie, by Cartwright, Preston, Perkins, Ames, Ball, Usher, to be made for the first time the formative principle of a Confession in the *Westminster Confession*. The history of the Covenant principle in theology is traced by Prof. Vos with much fullness, and its essential elements are defended at length and with convincing force. He treats in turn of the Covenant of Works, the Covenant of Redemption, and the Covenant of Grace, and proves that each gives the clearest and best form of expression to the Reformed doctrines involved. At the end he collects the several Reformed opinions as to the subjects of baptism and the time when the Covenant promises are fulfilled in the children of the Covenant. The whole address is

strong, learned and conclusive. We wish it could be had also in English.—*Dr. Briggs' Biblical Theology Traced to Its Organic Principle.* By Robert Watts, D.D. Reprinted from *The Presbyterian Quarterly*. 8vo, pp. 30. (Richmond, Va.: Whittet & Shepperson, 1892.) Dr. Watts was led by the widespread interest taken in Dr. Briggs' *Inaugural Address* on both sides of the sea, and especially by its republication with a commendatory preface for a British audience by Prof. A. B. Bruce, to make it the subject of his opening address at the Presbyterian College at Belfast this past autumn. His examination of it has all the point and vigor which usually characterize Dr. Watts' criticisms. He formulates his conclusion concerning its theology in these words: "It is un-Biblical, unscientific, uncritical, unethical and untheological, and rests upon a Pelagian fundamental as its ultimate organic principle" (p. 30). This looks sweeping. But the calm observer will justify it in every particular. The major portion of Dr. Watts' address is devoted to Dr. Briggs' anthropology, and especially to the implications of his assertion that original man "was innocent and sinless, but not possessed of that righteousness and moral excellence that comes only by discipline and heavenly training." This statement is, indeed, characteristically obscure, if not ambiguous; but in its context it can have but one meaning, that which Dr. Watts puts upon it, viz., that man was created innocent only and not positively holy and righteous. The Rationalism of making "ethical and religious philosophy" rather than Scripture the test of truth (and that in a professedly "Biblical theology"), and the Pelagianism of contending that "righteousness and moral excellence" can not be concreate but come only by discipline, are exposed by Dr. Watts with trenchant clearness.—*The Old Testament and Its Critics.* The Introductory Lecture delivered on Tuesday, November 3, 1891. By George C. M. Douglas, D.D., Principal of the Free Church College, Glasgow. 8vo, pp. 20. (Glasgow: John N. MacKinlay, 1892.) After thirty-five years' tenure of the chair of Hebrew and Old Testament Theology in the Free Church College at Glasgow, Dr. Douglas has intimated his purpose of retiring at the close of the current session, and has published his "address given at the opening of the present session, in order that the Church may know where I stand, and have stood, while occupying the posts to which I was appointed." The address itself is a most lucid and illuminating survey of the recent history of Old Testament criticism—a survey which is more than a survey, as it becomes an argument. The rise of the presently fashionable school is traced and its relation to the foregoing opinions pointed out, and then the recent rise of a new school is pointed to, which is more radical than the one now in vogue but bears essentially the same relation to it that it bore to its predecessors—equally inconsistent with it, and despised by it, as it was by its own forerunners, yet not without its attractions. "If I am to give myself over to any of these critical schools," writes Principal Douglas, "I think this thoroughgoing criticism of Vernes' would have attractions on the score of consistency and strength, which I never can feel for those speculations which are at present rampant" (p. 18). If the contentions of this new criticism are held to be incredible, it is easy to remark, (1) that the incredibility attaches to the older school as well, and (2) that "the extreme positions of Vernes and the others are defended by arguments the very same in style and nature as those of the followers of Kuenen and Wellhausen" (p. 20). Thus Dr. Douglas points out that the progress of Old Testament criticism is very much like that of the New during the first half of this century, when each new school executed justice on its predecessor. The presently reigning school is, indeed, in some respects, the analogue of the Tübingen criticism on the New Testament; it cannot abide, it must either return to soberer counsels or else wax even worse.—Séance de rentrée des cours de la Faculté de Théologie