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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.]

Certainly in Christ's death is given the highest motive to repentance, and the fullest revelation of the divine love. But to find herein the cause of its saving efficacy is to reverse the true order. The death of Christ is such a display of love and ground of repentance because it satisfies the eternal justice of God, and really atones for sin. The style of the book is clear.

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Bible Miracles and Modern Thought. By Prof. L. T. Townsend, D.D. 16mo, pp. 48. (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1891.) Prof. Townsend always writes strikingly. Here he argues that the Bible miracles are probable if possible, are certain if possible, and are possible. The whole case is thus made to turn on their possibility; and this is vindicated by raising the question of the cause of the apparition on earth of man, of consciousness, of life. As each of these was certainly a wonder, either wonders occur naturally in certain conditions, and hence miracles are possible; or else the supernatural does sometimes occur, and hence miracles are possible. The reasoning is very brightly put and certainly avails to prove the beginning of each new thing to be the analogue of miracles.—*Chaff and Wheat.* A Defense of Verbal Inspiration. By James H. Brookes. 16mo, pp. 46. (New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1891.) A vigorous assertion of verbal inspiration, intended for a popular audience. Scripture is quoted with too little discrimination and the language is sometimes overstrung. But Dr. Brookes' zeal is for the truth.—*The Natural History of Immortality.* By Joseph William Reynolds, M.A., Rector of St. Anne and Agnes with St. John Zachary, Gresham Street, London; Prebendary of St. Paul's Cathedral. 12mo, pp. xxvii, 389. (London and New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1891.) We are bound to confess that we have found this a dreary book. The author is evidently a good man, of wide reading and great industry. Many individual sentences have the ring of epigrams. His devotion to the cause of Christianity is obviously supreme, and his purpose in writing—"To rescue those doubters who say, 'We can't believe,' and to rebuke those unbelievers who say, 'We won't believe'"—is most commendable and evidently most sincere. But his zest for the supernatural is too great and his logical faculty too weak to enable him to present the cause of immortality with its due power.—*The Harmony of Ethics with Theology.* An Essay in Revision. Is there probation after death? Is there hope for the heathen? Can infants be saved? By the Rev. Henry E. Robins, D.D., LL.D., late President of Colby University (1873-82), Professor of Christian Ethics in the Rochester Theological Seminary. 16mo, pp. 100. (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1891.) Dr. Robins gives us here a brilliant essay, in which he tries to find a middle ground between Calvinistic and Arminian thought on the great problem of God's dealings with the lost race of man. He postulates a universal atonement, on the ground of which a universal sentence or judicial declaration of acquittal is passed upon the entire race (p. 25), "into the benefits of which men are introduced by natural birth" (p. 62), so "that salvation is their birthright under promise" (p. 51). To this acquittal there is added an equally universal gift of the Holy Ghost (p. 32), which will certainly secure the salvation of all unless fatally resisted. Men are able by their natural powers, in this gracious environment, to conform to all the conditions of this salvation, not indeed as if they could do so independently of the means of grace and the ministry of the Spirit, but only as being able so to do in these graciously provided conditions (p. 43). So far we have a consistently Arminian scheme, with the exception of the Lutherizing tendency to make the issue depend on resistance or non-resistance rather than on active coöperation. But we understand the author to go on to contend that

this general acquittal and universal grace do not actually secure the salvation of any; for "the sinner, by reason of his enmity against God, will never use his power to repent and believe unless influenced thereto by special grace" (p. 44; cf. p. 47); and that this special grace is distributed according to the will of God (p. 25), his election not finding "its logical ground in the moral action of the elect," but rather involving that "out of the number of those who with one consent make excuse and refuse the offers of mercy, God in His sovereignty, for reasons which He has not wholly revealed, chooses some to be the subjects of His special regenerating grace" (p. 67). This is a Calvinistic superstructure. This effort to marry the two schemes, we must adjudge as much of a failure as all other similar efforts have been. What is the gain of representing "the first step in the process of redemption" as a universal *acquittal*, when as a fact it does not acquit except on the performance of a condition? The old mode of representing it as an *offer* of acquittal *on the condition*, is better. What is the gain of representing the general work of the Spirit as *saving*, if it never saves? The old way of representing it as intended to produce the effect that it does produce, of rendering men without excuse, is better. What is the gain, in a word, of exaggerating the statement of the general aspect of the atonement, when we come to the same end with it? "The atonement was necessary not only to the ultimate salvation of individual souls, to which effect it is too often represented as restricted, but to the continuance of the race under the terms of a gracious probation" (p. 26). This is Dr. Robins' way of stating it. Is not the old way better, which prefers to say: "The atonement was necessary not only to the continuance of the race under the terms of a gracious probation, but to the ultimate salvation of all those whom the Father gave to the Son?" Dr. Robins represents his effort to be to shift the emphasis, to correct the perspective. We certainly prefer to put the emphasis on the more important aspect, and to keep in the foreground the *saving* work of our Lord.—*The Doctrine of a Future Life*. From a Scriptural, Philosophical and Scientific Point of View, including especially a Discussion of Immortality, the Intermediate State, the Resurrection, and Final Retribution. By James Strong, S.T.D., LL.D. 16mo, pp. 128. (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1891.) Dr. Strong gives us here a small but evidently long considered book. The two peculiarities of his doctrine of the future life, viz., his theory of the isolated condition of the soul in the intermediate state, and his theory of a difference between the resurrection and the glorified bodies, are certainly untenable. This, indeed, is virtually admitted by himself. For, although he affirms the former theory "with the utmost assurance" (p. 43) and with the utmost positiveness, representing the soul in the intermediate state as "absolutely alone so far, at least, as finite association extends," and able to "be aware only of what goes on within itself" (p. 43), so that "nothing properly new can occur in its experience," and "no act properly such can be put forth by it" (p. 44), "since the introversion is complete, the circle is hermetically sealed, and existence is pivoted upon self" (p. 44); yet he is forced to allow to the soul "communion with God and other unembodied spirits" (p. 49), "companionship with Jesus" (p. 57) and "congenial spirits" (p. 57), and "intercommunion" with "other unbodied spirits" (p. 58). And with reference to the latter theory he virtually admits that it is without Scriptural basis, by naïvely remarking of the chief passage relied on for it: "It is true the resurrection body is particularly mentioned in that passage, but the description is evidently that of the final or glorified condition which will be nearly simultaneous at the final judgment" (p. 80). There is a tendency elsewhere to overstatement, or, at least, unguarded statement. Thus the lack of Old Testament revelation of the resurrection