

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

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I.

THE BEGINNING AND GROWTH OF THE CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

OUR LORD and His apostles were accustomed to refer to the Jewish Scriptures as to a well-known, definite body of sacred writings that had been handed down from past ages. They assumed that there was agreement among the people of the Jews as to the particular books that constituted these Scriptures; and they actually quoted from the great majority of them as of unquestionable authority in matters of doctrine and duty. It could not occur to any reader of the New Testament that in the time of Christ the Canon of the Old Testament had not yet been determined, or that it was still an open question whether certain books should be received into it, or should be excluded from it. It is inconceivable, too, that Josephus could have written as he has done of the books which he describes as "justly believed to be divine" and held to be most sacred by all Jews,* if the rabbis of his time had felt themselves at liberty to add to, or to take away from the number of these sacred books. When Strack wrote his article on the Canon of the Old Testament,† he could affirm that there was then unanimity among critics of opposite schools in regarding the Canon of Josephus as embracing neither more nor less than the thirty-nine books of our present Hebrew Bible. He attached no importance, as bearing on the extent of the Canon, to the discussions which rabbis of the first century engaged in with respect to

* *Contra Apion*, i, 8.

† Herzog's *Real-Encyk.*, 2d ed., vii, p. 428.

(New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Co. [1895].) Dr. Weidner's comprehensive *Introduction to Dogmatic Theology* was characterized in this REVIEW on the occasion of the appearance of its first edition. The second edition now comes to us with a number of corrections and improvements. It must be a very useful book for students of Lutheran dogmatics; but it finds its chief interest to us as the prolegomena to Dr. Weidner's own forthcoming system. From the Reformed point of view there is much left to be desired in the workmanship of the book. The tracing of the history of Reformed thought and the adduction of its literature are inadequate and not always judicious. The list of books, in this department of thought, included in the "Select Literature of Dogmatics," given on pp. 262, *sq.*, comes little short of being absurd: but, of course, this is not a fair example of the workmanship of the book even on the side of Reformed theology, while in the sphere of Lutheran dogmatics it is exceedingly helpful.—*The Witness of the Spirit in Relation to the Authority and the Inspiration of Scripture.* By William MacLaren, D.D., Professor in Knox College, Toronto. 8vo, pp. 18. (Reprinted from *The Knox College Monthly*. Toronto: F. N. W. Brown, November, 1895.) Nothing could exceed the clearness or thoroughness with which Dr. MacLaren, in this calm and convincing lecture, investigates the doctrine of the Westminster Confession as to the witness of the Spirit to the Scriptures. He shows beyond controversy that the Confession does not rest the authority of Scripture on the witness of the Spirit alone, but on the three concurrent lines of evidence—the external, internal and divine; and that the witness of the Spirit, in the sense of the Confession, is the necessary result of the inward work of the Holy Ghost in opening the eyes of the spiritually blind. And he points out with great force and acumen that while the witness of the Spirit does not itself prove the Bible to be free from error, it should certainly operate greatly to increase confidence in the teaching of the Bible and lead us "to search the Scriptures for the testimony they give and the indications they supply of the nature and extent of their own inspiration." The result of this search, Dr. MacLaren points out, is not doubtful: and thus he would lead those who are inclined to cast the whole weight of the authentication of the Bible's authority on the inner witness of the Spirit to a more adequate conception of the nature and reach of the inspiration of Scripture. The witness of the Spirit validates the authority of the Bible: shall we not accept its own doctrine of inspiration on the authority thus validated?—*The Bible Doctrine of Man; or, The Anthropology and Psychology of Scripture.* By John Laidlaw, M.A., D.D., Professor of Theology, New College, Edinburgh; Author of *The Miracles of our Lord*, etc. New Edition, Revised and Rearranged. 8vo, pp. viii, 363. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895.) In this new edition of his admirable Cunningham Lectures, Dr. Laidlaw has consulted the convenience of his readers, and has discarded the lecture form with copious notes, in favor of a more convenient division into chapters. The book is one of very special judiciousness, and treats a difficult subject with eminent wisdom and felicity. It is greatly to be hoped that the improved shape in which it is now regiven to the public will secure for it a wider use. We know of no recent work on the subject of Biblical psychology and anthropology which will compare with this in sensible and illuminating exposition. It is extremely refreshing in these days to meet with a writer who can discuss the problems of man's origin and nature with adequate knowledge of modern investigation and yet (as Lowell puts it):

"With faith enough to bridge the chasm
 'Twixt Genesis and protoplasm."

And it is still more refreshing to find one who can bring to the investigation

of the problems of Biblical psychology good sense as well as acumen, a fine restraint along with a thorough exegetical equipment. We do not entirely accord with Dr. Laidlaw in his determination of the fundamental point of the meaning of the word "spirit" as applied to man, and its relations to "soul." We think that while he has made an immense advance on those who bring their own philosophical distinctions to the determination of the Biblical usage, he relies too exclusively on dogmatico-historical considerations, and would have come to a slightly different result had he allowed sufficient weight to the philological groundwork of the usages of the words. But we have reread the work in this new edition with a constant sense of satisfaction, and we close it with a feeling of deep gratitude to the author. It is the best book on its subject and deserves a wide circulation.—*Dissertations on Subjects Connected with the Incarnation*. By Charles Gore, M.A., Canon of Westminster, of the Community of the Resurrection, Radley. 8vo, pp. xvi, 323. (London: John Murray; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895.) In this goodly and beautifully manufactured volume, Canon Gore, though with some changes in the subjects treated, fulfills the promise he made to the readers of his Bampton Lectures on *The Incarnation*, to follow that volume with a series of dissertations on related subjects. Three interesting essays are here given us, full of the author's wide learning and persuasive modes of presentation. The first, which has been rendered in a measure necessary by recent discussion, treats of "The Virgin Birth of our Lord," in a manner which brings all the elements of the problem fairly before the reader but does not impress him as especially thoroughgoing or profound. The last essay traces in a very satisfactory manner the growth of the doctrine of Transubstantiation in the mediæval Church, and seeks to connect its vogue and final triumph with the prevalence of Nihilistic views as to the person of Christ. In the course of this discussion Canon Gore commits himself with some enthusiasm to a doubtful principle drawn from Leontius of Byzantium, whom he calls, justly, the "best theologian of the sixth century." In distinguishing between the natural, unnatural and supernatural, Leontius finds the characteristic of the supernatural in this: that "it does not destroy the natural, but educes and stimulates it both to do its own work and to acquire the power for what is above it." This is a fairly good definition of the supernatural in the sphere of the *potentia ordinata*: but Canon Gore seizes it as "a great principle which runs through all theology" and seeks to use it in the form that "the supernatural does not annihilate or supersede the natural," as a test of truth in every sphere of theological thought. It does not seem to us necessary, however, to adopt a principle which will deny all miracles properly so called, in order to discredit the false miracle of transubstantiation. The supernatural is not always simply the natural by God's power working beyond itself: it is sometimes God working immediately and not through second causes, and it therefore sometimes does supersede the natural. The question at issue with transubstantiation is not that of the general supernatural, and it is a serious evil to allow it to be confused with that. The central essay in the volume is, however, by far the most important and it is treated both more copiously and more thoroughly than the others. Its topic is "The Consciousness of Our Lord in His Mortal Life:" and it canvasses in turn the Biblical data, the history of Christian opinion on the subject, and the propriety and rationality of the conclusion reached. A vast body of material is passed under review; and the collection of opinions on the subject is especially well done and supplies a concise *conspectus* which is very welcome. Despite, however, the diligence and thoughtfulness with which it has been wrought out, the paper is essentially unsatisfactory. And this before all else because it is not properly