

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

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I.

DR. MCGIFFERT ON APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY.*

WE confess to no little disappointment with this new book of Dr. McGiffert's. The author had previously given us an edition of the *Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius* for which we were justly grateful. The scholarship, acumen, and good sense displayed in that valuable work gave hope of a handling of the phenomena of the apostolic age which would mark a true advance in our knowledge. In his more recent *Inaugural Address* Prof. McGiffert showed that he had come under the influence of the newer Harnackian ideas to an extent which awakened some apprehensions. But we were certainly not prepared for so radical and revolutionary a production as this new volume of "The International Theological Library" proves to be. Dr. McGiffert says in his Preface that his aim throughout "has been positive, not negative, constructive, not destructive." We fully believe it; but his work is destructive all the same—destructive of most received notions on the subjects he is treating of—and his construction is of a sort which will cause many not over-conservative people to shake their heads. Had the work come from the study of one of the German theologians Dr. McGiffert loves so much to quote, there would have been little occasion to marvel at its contents. But the views it propounds are surprising as coming from a sober professor

* *A History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age*, by Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Ph.D., D.D., Washburn Professor of Church History in the Union Theological Seminary, New York. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897, \$2.50 net; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.

“Church Papers.” No. 1: *The Validity of Non-Prelatical Ordination*. By the Rev. George Park Fisher, D.D., LL.D. 8vo, pp. 27.—No. 2: *The Anglican View of the Church*. By the Rev. J. Oswald Dykes, M.A., D.D. 8vo, pp. 15. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, etc., 1897). These are the two earliest issues of a most promising series of tracts which the Presbyterian Board of Publication is projecting in exposition and defense of the principles of the Presbyterian Church. It is a movement in the right direction. What is a denominational Board of Publication for, if not to set before the world in the strongest and richest way—in statement, in exposition, in defense—the religion of Christ as understood and preached by the denomination it represents? It can scarcely be denied that the Presbyterian Board of Publication has done less of this work of late than it should have done; and brief tracts like these, it must be admitted, will scarcely perform its full duty in this direction. If the Presbyterian Church has any right to exist, and stands in its individual organization for anything beyond mere license of separation, it owes it to itself, to the world, to the Church at large and to the Head of the Church whom it professes to serve by its testimony, clearly to make known and fully to vindicate the principles for which it stands and which it believes to be the truth of Christ. And its Board of Publication is the proper channel through which it should speak to the world as well as indoctrinate its own people. We shall continually hope that the Board will after awhile become a powerful instrument for the propagation of the great truths which we profess in our creed, by means of thorough and extended treatises such as will command attention wherever theology is studied. It is something meanwhile for it to enter the field with scholarly and well argued tractates like these, in which there is a weightiness of matter and force of presentation out of proportion to the small size of the documents. The one is a calm statement of the facts as to the history of prelacy and the original form of ordination, from the learned hand of Prof. Fisher; and the other a very lucid exposition of the implications of the Anglican view of the Church and of the verdict the New Testament and history express upon them, from the skillful hand of Dr. Dykes. They are admirable papers to open such a series: and we hope well of a series of “Church Papers” which begins so fairly.—*Scripture Texts with Expositions and Sentence Prayers from Calvin’s Commentaries on the Minor Prophets*. Compiled by the Rev. Charles E. Edwards. 16mo, pp. 120. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, etc., 1897.) Here are fifty-two texts from the Minor Prophets, each accompanied by a practical exposition from Calvin, filling one small page; and then, from the same hand—or, we would better say, from the same heart—a prayer cast in a single sentence, which begins with reciting a fact of life on the basis of which a petition is framed. From the number of selections it is presumed that the volume is intended as a Sabbath-day companion for devout souls during the course of the year. It is admirably adapted for such a purpose. As the compiler notes, it is fitted also to bring a too much neglected side of Calvin’s rich genius to the attention of the reader. For Calvin was “not only the theologian of the Reformation, the prince of commentators upon Holy Scripture, and the father of its scientific exegesis,” but preëminently a man of God. The prayers which are here offered to the use of a wide public were extemporaneous utterances of devotion which have been preserved by the care of his pupils. Calvin was accustomed to open his lectures with the brief petition: “May the Lord grant that we may engage in contemplating the mysteries of His heavenly wisdom with really increasing devotion, to His glory and to our edification.” But at the close of each lecture it was his wont to breathe out a short prayer, as Buddæus says, “formed at the time, or given him by the Spirit of God, and accommodated to the

subject of the lecture." The fifty-two examples of these closing prayers here collected have all been gathered from the lectures on the Minor Prophets. May the little book carry to many minds and hearts the spirit of devotion with which it is freighted!—*Another Comforter*. A Study of the Mission of the Holy Ghost. By the Rev. A. D. McClure, Pastor of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, N. C. 12mo, pp. 127. (New York, Chicago, Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, [1897].) A devout and edifying series of studies on the person and work of the Holy Spirit which cannot but be useful to every one who will read it with a prayerful and tractable heart. Readers of the seventeenth chapter, on "The Gifts of the Spirit," may question whether the distinction between the miraculous charismata and the continued gifts of the Spirit is sufficiently emphasized. But no one will go through the booklet without having his heart warmed and his faith increased.—*The Presbyterian Christian Endeavor Manual for 1898*. By William T. Ellis. 32mo, pp. 80. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1898.) As this is the third annual issue of this manual, its general character is already well known, and we need only chronicle its reissue and hint that an effort has been made to render it even more helpful than its predecessors. If the young people of our churches are to be organized into inter-denominational (now that we are not permitted to say "undenominational") societies, instead of into the denominational ones which would seem more proper and helpful to the churches' life and growth, it is certainly well that they should use a manual in which is to be found some "distinctively Presbyterian material." That it does not contain also some distinctively un-Presbyterian material we cannot say: there is one such item embedded in the very "pledge." The sprightliness, faithfulness, and good sense with which this little manual is written might well serve as an example to those who have to direct church work.—*The Presbyterian Handbook for 1898*. Containing Facts Respecting the History, Statistics, Theological Seminaries, Missionary and Benevolent Boards, etc., of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., together with Daily Bible Readings, S. S. Lessons and Prayer Meeting Topics for 1898. 32mo, pp. 66. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, etc., [1898].) Compiled by the competent hand of Dr. W. H. Roberts, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, this vest-pocket booklet gives concise and trustworthy information of value to all Presbyterians. The scope of the matter included is fairly described in the title page. It is simply remarkable what a mass of useful information has been compressed within these few narrow pages.—*The Westminster Question Book*. International Lessons, 1898. Vol. xxiv. A Manual for Teachers and Older Scholars. 32mo. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, etc., [1898].) The Westminster Question Book continues to furnish in its *multum in parvo* a complete manual of the Sabbath-school lessons throughout the year—containing as it does the full lesson passages, the golden texts, daily home readings, brief explanations, questions, applications, Catechism question and answer for each Sabbath, maps, etc. It would seem just what would be wanted by teachers and the older scholars, giving help in the most compact form for every lesson of the year.—*Illustrated Notes*. A Guide to the Study of the International Sunday-school Lessons, with Original and Selected Comments, Methods of Teaching, Applications, Notes on Eastern Life, Library References, Maps, Talks, Pictures and Diagrams. 1898. By Jesse Lyman Hurlbert and Robert Remington Doherty. 8vo, pp. 309. (New York: Eaton & Mains; Cincinnati: Curts & Jennings [1897].) As the timely issue of this volume indicates, the Methodist Book Concern is continuing for the current year its excellent annual volume of Sabbath-school helps. It is a very creditable piece of work, done with care and by competent hands.