

THE MAGAZINE OF CHRISTIAN LITERATURE.

VOL. 6.

APRIL, 1892.

No. 1.

THE GROUNDS OF LUTHERAN DISSENSION IN THIS COUNTRY.

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To the question, Why are not all the Lutherans in this country united in one grand body, with generous concessions for individual differences of opinion, and with suitable provisions for the use of various languages? the plain answer is, *They do not all occupy the same relation to the Lutheran confessional writings of the sixteenth century*; that is (a) they do not all accept all the contents of the Lutheran Book of Concord, and (b) in cases where several bodies do accept and subscribe all the contents of the Book of Concord, they do not *interpret* every several article alike. In this is found the true ground of Lutheran dissension. It is *confessional and doctrinal diversity*.

That we may make this clear to the reader, we will state as fairly as we can the attitudes which different Lutheran bodies in this country hold to the Lutheran confessional writings—viz., the Augsburg Confession (1530); the Apology of the Confession (1531); the Smalcald Articles (1537); the two Catechisms of Luther (1529); the Form of Concord (1577); all of which, together with the three œcumenical creeds, were published as the BOOK OF CONCORD in the year 1580.

I. THE GENERAL SYNOD.—This body, which contains 1002 ministers, 1450 congregations, and 157,110 members, was organized in the year 1820. Because of the prevalent rationalistic spirit in one or two of the older and larger district synods uniting in the organization, it was not found practicable to place in the constitution even the *name* of any one of the above-mentioned Lutheran confessional writings. But when, three years after the organization, the Pennsylvania Synod withdrew, not for *doctrinal*, but *wholly for practical* reasons, the General Synod soon after took the Augsburg Confession as its doctrinal basis, and declared: "The fundamental doctrines of the Word of God are taught in a manner

substantially correct in the doctrinal articles of the Augsburg Confession."

This *qualified* subscription to the Augsburg Confession was doubtless all that could be attained at that time, yet really it marks an epoch in the *confessional* life and history of the Lutheran Church in America. But in the year 1864 the General Synod made its confessional basis more clear and distinct by accepting "the Augsburg Confession as a correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Divine Word, and of the faith of our Church founded upon that Word." And as further evidence of her firm adherence to the historic faith of the Lutheran Church, the professors in her theological seminary are required every five years to subscribe *ex animo* to the Augsburg Confession and to the Small Catechism, and to "promise solemnly not to teach anything, either directly or by insinuation, which shall appear to them to contradict or to be in any degree more or less remote" from these standards; and every candidate for the ministry is required to make personal subscription to the General Synod's doctrinal basis. But in giving what she believes to be an *unqualified* subscription to the Augsburg Confession, the General Synod does not cut herself off from recognition of and fellowship with other evangelical Christians; for her constitution makes it solemnly obligatory upon her to "be sedulously and incessantly regardful of the circumstances of the times, and of every casual rise and progress of unity of sentiment among Christians in general, in order that the blessed opportunities to promote concord and unity, and the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom may not pass by neglected and unavailing."

In thus *heartily and unqualifiedly* accepting the Augsburg Confession as her doctrinal basis, and in thus throwing the strongest guards round the teaching from her theological chairs and from her pulpits,

Bishop Spalding's interpretation of the prophecies is an exceedingly ingenious attempt to show how they *could possibly* have referred to Christ, though neither the prophets themselves nor anybody else had at the time the faintest suspicion of anything of the sort. In speaking of the preparation of the world for Christ, he leaves out of consideration those vast masses of mankind—whole nations and "races"—such as the Chinese and the people of India, on the one hand, and savage races on the other, who made not the slightest discoverable contribution toward "the fulness of the times," and who have scarcely yet attained even the barest knowledge of the existence and life of Jesus. Like so many other apologists, he confounds "the world" of the Roman Empire with the actual world and all its human inhabitants. The sermon (xii.) on the "Great Forty Days" contains the usual assumptions, which may be true, which are certainly unverifiable, and which are wholly unnecessary for the proof of the Divine authority of the Christian Church.

We cannot imagine what possible service these sermons could render to anybody who really disbelieved either Christ or Christianity, because the very facts and principles here *assumed* are the very facts and principles which "unbelievers" insist upon having proved; but to *believers* they will be very refreshing. They put familiar truths in a new or interesting light. They draw desired conclusions from admitted premises. They are safe and conservative. For the class of readers for which they were intended, they would perhaps have been more effective if their positive assertions, offered on episcopal authority, had been freed from the encumbrance of a merely apparent argumentation.

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EVOLUTION: Its Nature, its Evidences, and its Relation to Religious Thought. By JOSEPH LE CONTE, Professor in the University of California. New York: Appleton, 1891. Second edition. 8vo, pp. xxii., 382, \$1.50.

"We regard the law of evolution as thoroughly established. . . . It is not only as certain as—it is far more certain than—the law of gravitation" (p. 275). So writes Professor Le Conte in the work before us. About the same time that he was penning these words, Professor Virchow, one of the foremost of European scientists, in a public address at the late ter-centenary of the University of Edinburgh, declared with emphasis, "Evolution has no scientific basis."

As one reads such conflicting statements, the question arises, How comes this conflict? On examining the book before us, the answer at once presents itself: Professors Le Conte and Virchow do not use the word evolution in the same sense; they are not talking about the same thing. The term evolution, as used by scientists in our day, has been not inaptly compared to the sheet which Peter, in vision, saw "let down to the earth; wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air" (Acts x. 12).

Charles Darwin, universally regarded as the father of the doctrine of evolution in its modern form, defines it: "The origin of species by descent, with modifications." And Professor Huxley, its most eloquent advocate, defines it in his words: "The evolution hypothesis considers that existing species are the result of pre-existing

species, and these of their predecessors by agencies similar to those which at the present day produce varieties and races, and therefore, in an altogether natural way." In this sense Professor Virchow undoubtedly understood the term when he said, "Evolution has no scientific basis." Professor Le Conte, on the other hand, in the opening chapter of the work before us, writes: "Every one is familiar with the main facts connected with the development of an egg. We all know that it begins as a microscopic germ cell, then grows into an egg, then organizes into a chick, and finally grows into a cock; and that the whole process follows some general, well-recognized law. Now this process is evolution. It is more—it is the type of all evolution. It is that from which we get our idea of evolution, and without which there would be no such word. Whenever and wherever we find a process of change more or less resembling this, and following laws similar to those determining the development of an egg, we call it evolution" (p. 3).

Such evolution as that presented in the case of an egg—while it is an *unfolding*, and so may be styled an evolution, if we have regard to the etymology of the word alone—is certainly not the evolution which Charles Darwin and Professor Huxley define. It is not "descent with modifications"; there is no "descent" in the case; and it does not result in the origination of a new species, but in that of a new individual of an old species; it is simply an instance of what is called growth-development, about the reality of which there is not to-day, nor has there ever been any difference of opinion among naturalists; and if it be "the type of all evolution," as Professor Le Conte affirms, then the doctrine of evolution does not solve the problem of the origin of species—it does not touch that problem.

The decisive objection to this whole doctrine of evolution, contended for by many scientists—Professor Le Conte among the number—is that it is irreconcilable with what, in the present state of science, we must regard as an established law of variation in organic nature—viz., that variations natural and artificial, many and great as they undoubtedly are, are all confined within the limits of natural species. The wild rose, for example, by "descent with modifications," has become the parent of innumerable well-defined varieties of roses; and the same may be affirmed of the geranium, but never in a single instance has a rose been transformed into a geranium or a geranium into a rose. Mr. Etheridge, whose long-continued connection with the British Museum has given him the largest range of observation on this subject of any living scientist, says: "In all this great museum there is not a particle of evidence of the transformation of species."

In the volume before us Professor Le Conte has done, perhaps, the best that could be done in support of the doctrine for which he contends. That he has given us a volume of interesting reading the fact that his book has reached a second edition is conclusive proof.

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THE SONGS OF SAPPHO. By JAMES S. EASBY-SMITH. Published for Georgetown University. Washington, D. C.: Stormont & Jackson, 1891. 16mo, pp. ix., 97, \$1.

The translations contained in this dainty little