

UNION SEMINARY MAGAZINE

NO. 2.—NOV.—DEC., 1897.

I.—LITERARY.

THE SEMINARY COURSE OF STUDY—ITS RANGE, STANDARD, EXAMINATIONS AND TESTS.

In the last issue we endeavored to set forth the *purpose* of the Seminary, to guard against certain developments of seminary discipline; and to maintain that the church should have in every age a set curriculum, suited to the needs of the time, through which the seminaries shall carry their students. In the present issue we offer some further considerations on our general subject.

V.—THE CONTENTS OF THE SEMINARY COURSE AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION AMONG THE DIFFERENT CHAIRS.

According to the church's statement of the purpose of the seminary, in 1811, it was to teach the Hebrew and New Testament Greek, the exegesis of both testaments, sacred geography and antiquities, the overthrow of Deism, Natural, Didactic, Polemic and Casuistic Theology, Church History, Pastoral Theology and Church Government and Discipline. Our Standards also imply that the student must be trained in all these things. That is, a place must be given in the course to Exegetical, Apologetical, Systematic, Historical and Practical Theology. Stating the matter in this general way most of the churches of the Reformed faith would say the same. But, this by the way, the statement by our Assembly of 1811 is a very fine one. We have no time for an exposition of it; but call attention to one or two points.

1. The student is required to study, at the seminary, the Deistic Controversy and thus become qualified to become a

IS THE BOOK OF JOB FACT OR FICTION?

Perhaps no character in history has suffered so much at the hands of his friends as the patriarch Job. While he lived they made themselves proverbial as miserable comforters. Since he is dead they will not let him rest in peace. His latest friend is Prof. Karl Budde of Strassburg. By his recent scholarly commentary* on the Book of Job Prof. Budde has excited much discussion concerning Job and the book that bears his name, doing for them somewhat the same that Dr. Lyman Abbott did for Jonah and his book last winter, when it seems he had the whole world discussing whether the whale swallowed Jonah, and whether after all the story of Jonah is not pure fiction. Prof. Budde raises the latter question in regard to the book of Job, but only to brush it aside as a question of no real consequence. Of course this is not the first time that question has been raised. It has been up often before. Indeed, it is well nigh as old as the book itself. Prof. Briggs, in a delightfully written article entitled "Works of Imagination in the Old Testament," in the North American Review of March, 1897, asserts that there are six works of pure imagination in the Old Testament, and he heads the list with Job. The others are Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Ruth, Esther and Jonah. A great many scholars, especially of the more radical type, hold this same view. Indeed, Prof. Briggs states that these books are now *commonly* recognized as works of imagination.

At first, the suggestion that there can be a work of pure imagination in the Old Testament startles us. We refuse to entertain the suggestion. Yet upon more mature deliberation we can see no *a priori* reasons why such a thing might not be. The Bible is cosmopolitan in its nature. It contains nearly every one of the various forms of literature. We find Law, History, Prophecy, Oratory, and Poetry, both lyrical and dramatic. Why may it not contain a work of imagination, written to impress some great moral or religious lesson? The fact is there are many works of fiction in Hebrew literature

*Reviewed at length by Prof. William Henry Green in the Presbyterian and Reformed Review, October, 1897.

outside the Bible. The Haggadistic literature was composed largely of it. The Jewish teachers made free use of parables, stories and legends of every conceivable kind. Our Savior excelled in this method of teaching. His parables, for the most part, are works of pure imagination. Everybody who has read the Apocryphal writings knows that there are among them a number of beautiful stories which are fiction; Judith, Susanna, Tobit, and Bel and the Dragon, for example. Luther himself says of Tobit: "Is it history? then is it holy history. Is it fiction? then is it truly beautiful, wholesome and profitable fiction, the performance of a gifted poet." Do not these facts create a presumption that this form of literature may also be found within the Old Testament itself? Our own opinion is that such a claim may be made with almost absolute certainty for one book in the Old Testament. That book is the Song of Songs.

But returning from our digression and laying aside the question in regard to other books, let us inquire whether the Book of Job is real history or whether it is after all a work of pure imagination. Three great views have been held on this point. The *first* is that the book is all literal history—prologue, epilogue, dialogues and all—and that the author has recorded what actually occurred in his own time or was handed down to him from some reliable source. A *second* view is that the book is not history at all, but a work of fiction, a creation of the author's fertile imagination, written for a great moral and didactic end. Those who hold to this view do not believe that such a man as Job ever existed. A *third* view is that the book is neither literal history, nor yet altogether a work of fiction, but that it is a highly wrought poem, resting securely on a historical basis, which the author has modified and enlarged to suit his purposes. It is needless to say that the last view is held in many different shades, varying from that which reduces Job well nigh to the vanishing point, leaving him little but his name, to that which accepts the entire book as literal history except the dialogues. These three views exhaust the possibilities. They reduce themselves to this: Is the book all fact? Is it all fiction? Or is it a combination of fact and fiction? It will be our purpose to give the arguments for and against each of these views and then draw our conclusion.

1. In favor of the first view is the universal Jewish and

Christian tradition until the time of the Reformation. Up to that time it was generally believed that Moses wrote the book from materials which he found during his stay in Midian, and that every word of it was actual history. To this there were several notable exceptions, the most conspicuous of whom were a certain Rabbi Resh Lakish, of Talmudical fame, and Theodore bishop of Mopsuestia. Rabbi Resh Lakish, whom, by the way, all the commentators discuss *ad nauseam*, created a great sensation in his day by declaring in open school, "A Job existed not, and was not created; he is a parable." Theodore of Mopsuestia, (d. 428 A. D.), always noted for his free handling of the Canon, threw the book out altogether. He believed that such a man as Job had existed, but thought the book was a slander upon the pious patriarch. It was his opinion that the book was written in imitation of the Greek dramas. The dialogue between the Almighty and Satan in the prologue was especially offensive to Theodore. But worse than all was the name of Job's third daughter in chapter 42:14. Her Hebrew name is Keren-happuch ("the horn of eye paint"—the paint used by oriental women to add lustre to their eyes). But the Septuagint, which was the only bible Theodore seemed to have owned, curiously enough translates her name, "Horn of Amalthea." That name was too much for the bishop. It smacked rather of heathen mythology. So he threw the whole book overboard as an imitation of the Greek drama.

But these were sporadic cases going counter to the main current of tradition. That tradition prevailed until the days of the Reformation. It remained for Luther, with his characteristic boldness, to assert an opinion contrary to the tradition of the fathers. In his Table-talk he says: "I hold the book of Job to be real history; but that everything so happened and was so done I do not believe, but think that some ingenious, pious and learned man composed it as it is." That statement created no small stir. The church of Rome took it up at once. The battle began. It has not yet ceased.

The tradition of the Jewish and of the early Christian church is the greatest argument that the book of Job is all literal history and that the dialogues were transcribed just as they came from the mouth of Job and his friends. The weight of tradition, though tradition may be called "time's suspected register," must not be brushed aside without consideration nor estimated too lightly. It certainly imposes the burden of

proof on the critic who would hold any other view.

A second argument used in support of this view is that the book claims to be real history. The characters are all historical characters and not the creation of some fertile imagination. Each one is assigned to his own country. Some, indeed, identify the patriarch with Jobab of Gen. 10:29, others with the Jobab of Gen. 36:33, still others with the Job of Gen. 46:13. This might all be made to sound plausible enough if we use only King James' Version, but a glance at the Hebrew settles the question of their identity forever. There is absolutely no connection and but little resemblance between the Hebrew name of the patriarch Job and the Hebrew names Jobab and Job in Genesis. But even if this identity fails the argument still holds good. Those who advance it say the author gives us no intimation he is going to write anything but true history. He does not give us the faintest suggestion that his characters are not real, historical characters. We fear that this argument would have but little weight with one who holds that the book is fiction. Does Shakespere, or Scott, or Dickens give us any intimation that their works are fictitious and their characters not real? The beauty and power of a work of imagination depends upon the author's ability to carry us along with himself and make us believe all the while that we are reading real history. Granting that every character in the book of Job is a historical character, might not those who claim that the book is a combination of fact and fiction make the point that writers of fiction frequently use a historical basis with historical characters and yet give us a book that contains much that is pure imagination? Shakespere has done this in all of his historical plays, Scott has done it in his historical novels. May not the book of Job be written after the same fashion?

Still another argument for this view is the intense realism and the local coloring of the book of Job. There is a singular air of reality about the whole book. This effect is produced partly by the local coloring, partly by a consistency of the various characters, and partly by the minute and accurate accounts of incidents which would in all probability have escaped the notice of the ancient writer of fiction. It is agreed by the ablest critics of all schools that the descriptions of manners and customs, domestic, social and political, bear the genuine coloring of the age of Job. We might notice also the accounts

of Job's calamities. All the agencies by which they were brought about were common to his country. Might not a writer of fiction have made an error here? Again, it is agreed by all that the descriptions of Job's disease are very accurate. These descriptions are merely incidental and are found scattered through the whole book. A writer of fiction would no doubt have written his description of the disease in one place and done with the matter. May we assume that such mastery of detail is a work of pure creation? The most refined art fails in producing such a result, how much less the art of that age. M. Renan himself confesses that "antiquity had not an idea of what we call local coloring." This point is well worth our study. But in passing let us raise the question whether this point necessarily argues for a pure literal history in every detail, or whether a solid historical basis would fulfil all the required conditions as well.

These are the main arguments for the view that the whole book is literal history and that the dialogues have been transcribed as they came from the mouth of Job and of his friends. We will see whether the objections outweigh them.

Four great objections are urged against this literal view. The *first* is that the Prologue contains a number of things which are unnatural and incredible. Let us summarize them. There are those who object to the scene in heaven and say that it is impossible—impossible that Satan should appear before God with the angels. It is interesting to note that the majority of those who raise this objection do not believe that the Satan of the book of Job is the Satan we know. According to their view our Satan is a later development, borrowed perhaps from the Persians. The Satan of the book of Job on the other hand was a species of angels, just as good as any other angel, whose duty it was to test God's servants to see whether they were true and sincere. If such was his character, what was the impropriety, may we ask, of his presenting himself before the Lord with the other angels? We are reminded of consistency's being a jewel. For our own part we see no more difficulty in accepting this as an actual scene than in accepting many of the other supernatural things recorded in the Bible. But after all is it not more probable that the author of the book of Job is speaking anthropomorphically?

Others object to the prologue because of the frequent use of the symbolical numbers three and seven. He had *seven*

sons and *three* daughters, *seven* thousand sheep and *three* thousand camels. The Chaldeans formed themselves into *three* bands when they made the raid upon the camels. They argue that these symbolical numbers are mechanical and unnatural. Perhaps so. How a poor Hebrew writer could avoid symbolical numbers is more than we know when well nigh all their numbers were symbolical of something. We do not suppose the author intended to do more than give the round number of sheep and camels. He also gives the round number of yoke of oxen and of the asses. That was *five* hundred. There's nothing symbolical about that. Nor is there anything so incredible about the number of children. We have known families that had the same number. The family of which the writer happens to be a member consisted of *seven* children, and, *marabile dictu*, *three* of these are sons—the same inevitable, symbolical numbers, and yet we have never had the slightest occasion to doubt the real existence of that family.

It is also argued that the nature and simultaneousness of Job's calamities are unnatural and incredible, hence fictitious. We can see no reason why they should be to the man who accepts the supernatural at all.

The *second* great argument against the view that the book is literal history is that there are many things in the Epilogue which are incredible. We will give a brief summary of these.

It is urged that the manner of Job's restoration is unnatural. This is a strong argument that it is real. The writer of fiction would have made it natural. The writer of history must record what actually occurred. As Prof. Cheyne well remarks, Job's whole case would have ended much more triumphantly if he had been taken up with Jehovah in the whirlwind. But the author prefers to stick to facts.

Again it is objected that the restoration of the same number of sons and daughters, and the doubling of the number of cattle is incredible. Others find in 42:16 an exact doubling of Job's age. This is mere fancy. What shall we answer to these things? They are mechanical, but if we remember that the whole story professes to be supernatural, they are certainly not incredible.

Another stumbling block in the Epilogue is the significant names given to Job's daughters. They must have been invented by the author to suit the case. We ask, was not the patriarch in just as good a position to give his daughters sig-

nificant names as any writer of fiction could possibly have been? This exhausts the main alleged incredibilities of the Prologue and Epilogue. After all they do not seem very great when we come to look at them in detail.

The *third* argument which has been urged against the literal view is the appearance of Jehovah on the scene in chapter thirty-eight. We will not discuss this point. It is only necessary to say that it is no more incredible than the appearance of Jehovah on Sinai, and the many other theophanies of the Old Testament.

The *fourth* argument against the literal view is the character of the speeches in the dialogues between Job and his friends. From a mere literary point of view these speeches hold their place among the finest literature of the world. Thomas Carlyle says of the book of Job: "I call that book, apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written with the pen. There is nothing, either in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit." James Anthony Froude says: "It is a book of which it is to say little that it is unequalled of its kind. One day, perhaps, when it is allowed to stand on its own merits, it will be seen towering up alone above all the poetry of the world." Dr. R. A. Watson in speaking of the effect of this book on subsequent literature says: "After it have come in rich multiplying succession the Lamentations of Jeremiah, Ecclesiastes, the Apocalypse, the Confession of Augustine, the Divine Commedia, Hamlet, Paradise Regained, the Grace Abounding of Bunyan, the Faust of Goethe and its progeny, Shelley's poems of revolt and freedom, Sartor Resartus, Browning's Easter Day and Rabbi Ben Ezra, Amiel's Journal, with many other writings down to "Mark Rutherford" and the "Story of an African Farm." The old tree has sent forth a hundred shoots, and is still full of sap to our most modern sense. It is a chief source of the world's penetrating and poignant literature." This gives us an idea of the place and influence of these dialogues in literature as such. Can we suppose for a moment that Job, after sitting in the ashes for weeks, perhaps, and still sitting there, afflicted with a most terrible disease, uttered such sublime speeches? Are we to suppose that Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar could speak out impromptu the grandest poetry the world has ever seen? Or were those seven days of silence spent in framing their parallelisms? To suppose that these dialogues as we have them

now actually came from the mouth of Job and his friends is to suppose that four of the world's greatest poets were gathered together around an ash heap, and composed, without premeditation, and in the same literary style, the sublimest poetry of all the ages. To us it is incredible. We might ask who was the stenographer of the occasion and gave verbatim reports of these long speeches. But we refrain. These are the main objections to the first view.

2. Let us now notice the arguments for the second view which claims that the book is all fiction and declares that no such persons as Job and his friends ever existed. This view has a considerable following among the more radical critics. All the objections which have been given against the first view have been used as arguments in favor of this one. While these objections may be conclusive against the literal view they do not bear a feather's weight against the position that the book has a historical basis. In addition to the arguments which have been given others argue that the Jews classed the book with the Hagiographa, and thereby show that they did not understand it as history but as fiction. We need only reply that Chronicles, Ezra and Daniel were also classed with the Hagiographa. Certainly all must admit that these books are true history, or shall we "idealize" the whole of the Old Testament?

Again it is argued that the author is writing for the purpose of teaching a great moral lesson and solving the great problem of human suffering, and not for the purpose of giving the history of an individual. True, but everyone must admit that such a lesson drawn from actual history would be much more effective than a lesson drawn from an imaginary case. So the author even goes outside of his own nation (which was hard for a Jew to do) that he might get an actual case as the basis for his book.

Another sweeping argument for this view is that the whole book is mechanical and unnatural. It is useless to discuss this point further. We have noticed it in part already. It is only necessary to remind ourselves of the fact that the book does not claim to be natural, but supernatural. We will present the objections to this view in the way of arguments for the third view.

3. The third view we will remember is that the book is neither literal history nor yet altogether fiction, but that it

rests upon a solid historical basis. As we have seen Luther was the first great propagator of this view. It was at first received with decided disfavor. But after years of conflict this is the view now held by the great majority of scholars of every school. In favor of this view are all the arguments which we have given in favor of the first view—universal tradition, the claims of the book, and the intense realism and local coloring.

The strongest argument of all, that Job was a historical person is that Ezekiel and James, two inspired writers, refer to him as such. In Ezekiel 14:14 the Lord himself places Job alongside of Noah and Daniel, two real characters, if we may believe that any of the Old Testament characters are real. James (5:11) speaks of him in connection with the prophets of whom Elijah is especially named. Any one who reads this passage must be convinced that James, at least, believed that Job was a real historical character. The force of this argument, of course, depends largely upon one's views of inspiration. To one who believes the inspired writers knew what they were talking about, it is convincing.

The fact that the names of Job and his friends are not significant names is also used as an argument for this view. A writer of fiction would no doubt have given each a name which indicated his peculiar experiences or characteristics. But this is not the case. The writer had to take the names which were given them before they had these experiences.

Ewald brings out with great force still another argument. Literary fiction, on so large a scale, although it abounds in later Jewish literature, was unknown at that early period. It is alien to the spirit of antiquity. If the book is dramatic fiction then it rivals the Elizabethan drama. Is it possible that the art of that early age should produce such a work of pure fiction? It must at least have a historical basis.

One other argument which is of considerable weight is that a Hebrew writer of fiction would not have gone outside of Israel for his hero. A Hebrew would have answered his purposes so much better. Why then did he go outside of the nation? Was it not that he might find a genuine historical case of the point which he wished to illustrate? We may be assured that a Jew would have been very reluctant in ascribing such high praise even to an imaginary character outside of Israel, if he had not had a historical case before him.

These are the leading arguments for and against the three

views which have been held concerning this book. The reader may draw his own conclusion. For our own part we are driven to the conclusion that the third view is the correct one. But to decide just what is real history and what has been filled in by the author is a very different question. We see no difficulty in accepting the Prologue and Epilogue as real history. Indeed, the arguments in the case prove that they are. As to the dialogues, we must believe the discussion between Job and his friends did actually occur, but that the exact words of the dialogues as we have them now were spoken on that occasion we cannot believe. Is it not more probable that the poet took the outline of those discussions, and clothed them with thoughts from his own philosophical and poetical pen, guided by divine inspiration? May it not be that the inspired author is responsible not only for the words but for the greater part of the profound thought of these dialogues?

Be this as it may, we take as our conclusion of the whole matter the short introduction which Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi wrote to the book. "Job, maintaining his virtue, and justifying the utterance of his Creator respecting him, sits upon his heap of ashes the glory and pride of God. God, and with Him the whole celestial host, witnesses the manner in which he bears his misfortune.

He conquers, and his conquest is a triumph beyond the stars. Be it history, be it poetry; he who thus wrote was a divine seer."

W. L. LINGLE.

