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ALBRECHT RITSCHL AND HIS DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

I. RITSCHL THE RATIONALIST

The historical source from which the main streams of Perfectionist doctrine that have invaded modern Protestantism take their origin, is the teaching of John Wesley. But John Wesley did not first introduce Perfectionism into Protestantism, nor can all the Perfectionist tendencies which have shown themselves in Protestantism since his day be traced to him. Such tendencies appear constantly along the courses of two fundamental streams of thought. Wherever Mysticism intrudes, it carries a tendency to Perfectionism with it. On Mystical ground—as for example among the Quakers—a Perfectionism has been developed to which that taught by Wesley shows such similarity, even in details and modes of expression, that a mistaken attempt has been made to discover an immediate genetic connection between them. Wherever again men lapse into an essentially Pelagian mode of thinking concerning the endowments of human nature and the conditions of human action, a Perfectionism similar to that taught by Pelagius himself tends to repeat itself. That is to say, history verifies the correlation of Perfectionism and Libertarianism, and wherever Libertarianism rules the thoughts of men, Perfectionism persistently makes its appearance. It is to this stream of influence that Wesleyan Perfectionism owes its own origin. Its roots are set historically in the Semi-Pelagian Perfectionism of the Dutch Remonstrants, although its rise was not unaffected by influences of a very similar character and ultimate source which came to it through the channels of Anglo-Catholicism. Its particular differentiation is de-

Here and there throughout the book Professor Hayes gives a list of modern authorities in favor of the opinions that he is discussing. Often the references are not given. At times we could wish that they had been given, as, for example, when Holtzmann is included (p. 95) in the list of those who agree approximately with the view that the Gospel of Matthew was written about A. D. 66.

There is much that is praiseworthy in Professor Hayes' endeavor to make real to modern readers the personality of the New Testament writers, and in general he maintains correct views with regard to date and authorship and high historical value of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts. But the book would be more valuable if its romanticism were subjected to somewhat stricter discipline.

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Keynote Studies in Keynote Books of the Bible. The James Sprunt Lectures delivered at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. By C. ALPHONSO SMITH, Ph.D., LL.D., L.H.D., Head of the Department of English in the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md., and Author of "Studies in English Syntax," "Die Amerikanische Literatur," "What Can Literature Do For Me?," "O. Henry Biography," etc. New York, Chicago, London and Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell Company. 1919. Pp. 202. \$1.25 net.

It is hard to review a book that is so delightfully written as this volume of Sprunt Lectures; for any mere analysis would utterly fail to convey an impression of what the book really is. The most that can possibly be done is to urge everyone to read for himself. Certain it is that if anyone reads the admirable first chapter on "The Keynote Method" he will not be inclined to put the book down until the end. The chapter constitutes an eloquent plea, in opposition both to piecemeal reading and to pedantic criticism, for a sane method of interpretation that seeks the main thought of a book. It is difficult to choose a passage for quotation; for we should like to quote the whole chapter. But perhaps the following will serve (pp. 29, 30): "Sometimes it is a word that derails the critical judgment, sometimes an incident. Take the word 'holy.' It is, as you know, one of the distinctions of Isaiah that he is pre-eminently 'the prophet of holiness.' One does not have to be a Hebrew scholar to know what Isaiah means by 'holy.' Its orbit, like the orbit of other words, can be traced accurately in its use. It bears its credentials with it. Read Isaiah through from beginning to end and you will have a far better idea of what he means by 'holy' than will the philologist who knows the original meaning of the word but who is wedded to the conviction that words never throw off the halo or halter of their first meanings.

"The following paragraph," continues Professor Alphonso Smith, introducing a quotation from J. M. Powis Smith in *A Guide to the Study of the Christian Religion* (1916), p. 140, "is an illustration: 'When we learn that the root-word for 'holy' is the same throughout the Semitic group of languages, and that in Assyrian, for example, it is

used in one form to designate a 'prostitute' or 'harlot,' we get a new point of view for the interpretation of the Hebrew word.' I think not. The word 'holy' in Hebrew, like 'sacer' in Latin and 'hagios' in Greek and 'taboo' in Polynesian, meant originally 'set apart for a definite purpose.' The purpose might be good or bad. The word was ritualistic rather than ethical. But in Hebrew the ethical meaning soon dwarfed the ritualistic and in Isaiah's use 'holy' plainly includes the whole circuit of moral and spiritual perfection. The knowledge of the original or etymological meaning of Hebrew 'holy' does not give us 'a new point of view for the interpretation of the Hebrew word.' It is only another illustration of the well known principle of semantics that the first meaning of a word, while often interesting and even prophetic, will prove a barrier to interpretation if you carry it over into later meanings. The first meaning is a spring-board, not a harness."

This passage may be a little one-sided, but the tendency of it is certainly wholesome.

Our delight in Professor Smith's book does not mean that we are everywhere in perfect agreement with him. He has missed, for example, in our judgment, the "keynote" of the Epistle to the Romans. "The theme of *Romans*," says Professor Smith, "is usually said to be justification by faith. But this is far too narrow a view. It puts the emphasis, moreover, on the wrong word. Faith is the great word; justification is one and only one of its fruits." Here we are obliged to disagree. Justification is a greater word than faith in the Epistle to the Romans. For justification is an act of God, and implies the redemptive work of Christ. Faith is human, justification is divine; and the emphasis in Paul is upon God. It is true, however, that the theme of *Romans* is broader than justification.

With regard to the Epistle to the Philippians, also, Professor Smith goes astray. That epistle, he says, "is . . . by common consent the last letter that Paul wrote." What, then, shall be thought of the Pastoral Epistles? There are many who accept them as Pauline, and we should have supposed that Professor Smith himself were one of the number. Philippians is not the "swan song" of the Apostle Paul—not even in his own expectation (see Phil. i. 25, 26).

But it is only right to apply the "keynote method" to Professor Smith's own book; and applying it we are able almost to forget disagreement in detail in our enjoyment of the whole.

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The Virgin Birth of Our Lord. By the Rev. LEONARD PRESTIGE, M.A., Fellow, Lecturer and Dean of Divinity, New College, Oxford. London: Robert Scott, Roxburghe House, Paternoster Row, E.C. 1918. Pp. viii, 136.

Mr. Prestige's book, which is one of the series of "Handbooks of Catholic Faith and Practice," is a sensible defence of the historicity of the virgin birth. Here and there, it must be admitted, the author is imperfectly oriented in the general field of New Testament criticism.