

# The Princeton Theological Review

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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-

mains for further study, but whatever the results of that study may be, they will relate to a being whose existence is already known and assured." The task of the philosophy of religion, Mr. Barrow suggests on page 52, is to ask of Christian experience the same questions which he has asked of religious experience in general: "Whether the Christian religious experience or the religious experience in its full meaning is exhausted in the experience or points to a source outside, whether it allows of the truth of its implications about such a source being tested, whether what it does give is objective detail, and whether the test can be completely applied to all that is implied."

Such a misprint as "reducio ad absurdam" on page 133, is inexcusable.  
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*The Living Christ and Some Problems of To-Day:* Being the William Belden Noble Lectures for 1918. By Charles Wood, D.D., Pastor of the Church of the Covenant, Washington, D. C. New York: Fleming H. Revell Co. Pp. 218. \$1.25 net.

The reviewer as he takes up this volume recalls an inspiring sermon preached by Dr. Wood in a college chapel on the theme, "The Saints in Caesar's Household," and the same qualities which have made Dr. Wood a favorite university preacher are shown in these lectures delivered at Harvard University. Dr. Woods loves young men and has a sympathetic insight into their problems, and he combines the accent of scholarship with the tone of moral authority in such a way as to appeal effectively to an academic audience.

Dr. Wood puts the moral appeal first, reminding us that we are apt to put into a problem what belongs to a duty that lies between us and the problem; and yet, while professing to be a preacher rather than a scholar, he discusses the intellectual problems of the modern student so clearly and with gleanings from so wide a range of literature that the reading of these lectures is a delight and an inspiration. Among the topics discussed are the vitality of the religious sentiment, the availability of God, aims that end in self and endless aims, the Christianity of yesterday, to-day and to-morrow, the place of Christ in our modern world, and Christ's goal for humanity.

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## EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY

*The Synoptic Gospels and the Book of Acts.* By D. A. HAYES, Professor of New Testament Interpretation in the Graduate School of Theology, Garrett Biblical Institute. New York, Cincinnati: The Methodist Book Concern. [1919.] Pp. 354. \$2 net.

In this volume, which forms a part of the "Biblical Introduction Series", several of the New Testament books are studied from "the standpoint of the personalities of their authors." It is often a fruitful method of study. But where the personality of the author is as much

in the background as is the case, for example, with the Gospel of Matthew, the method has its dangers. After first accepting without much argument the tradition that the author of the first Gospel was Matthew the publican, Professor Hayes bases upon that fact a large part of his treatment of the Gospel. For example, he says, the orderly arrangement of the Gospel is in accordance with the orderly business habits of a custom-house officer (p. 72); and the special interest of the first Gospel in Jesus' declaration about swearing is natural in view of Matthew's familiarity with the swearing and forswearing characteristic of custom-houses! (p. 71). If such skill in tracing connections may be employed, Professor Hayes is perhaps quite justified in concluding (p. 84) that "there is scarcely a feature of the book which does not correspond with some feature of Matthew's peculiar personality."

Professor Hayes believes in the use of the historical imagination, but admits that it has limits (p. 196). The limits must be very broad if they leave room for the romantic life of Luke on pp. 197-199, or for the picture of Mark as "the spoiled child of a wealthy widow" (p. 105). Such romanticism is really quite unnecessary. The Gospels are so much more interesting when treated with a simplicity akin to their own.

The treatment by Professor Hayes of the genealogy in Matthew is not perfectly clear. The presence of the women in the genealogy is used to prove that Jesus, according to the Evangelist, was not free from "taints of blood" in his human ancestry, and that "whatever perfection of human character he attained was reached not by the aid of perfect purity of heredity, but in despite of a heavy handicap of sensuality and sin handed down to him through human weakness and moral failure and all the black catalogue of crime" (p. 64). What, then, shall be done with Matt. i. 20, "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost"?

According to Professor Hayes "the abrogation" by Jesus "of the Levitical law concerning the clean and unclean meats" was due to "the common sense of a carpenter, a plain working man", to what "always has been the plain man's attitude to ecclesiastical prescriptions" (pp. 156, 157). The reader may well be aghast at the unhistorical romanticism which treats in this way one of the great moments of history.

Jesus, according to Professor Hayes, "had no such reverence for the Word of God as contained in a book that he was not willing to listen to the word of God in his own soul. If the two ever came into conflict, the book was set aside" (p. 157). In this formulation, it is Professor Hayes, and not our Lord Himself, who is speaking. Professor Hayes has rejected what he is pleased to call "verbal" inspiration (p. 284). The Holy Spirit could not possibly be individually responsible, he thinks, for "the minute and meaningless variations" in the parallel columns of a Gospel harmony. Why not? Some very small things are under the care of God. Even a sparrow does not fall to the ground without Him. It should be observed ever anew, however, that the doctrine of plenary inspiration does not involve suppression of the personal characteristics of the Biblical writers.

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.

Princeton.

J. GRESHAM MACHEN.

*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