

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

VOL. XXV.—MAY, 1893.—No. 5.

REVIEW SECTION.

I.—THE WORLD'S FIRST PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS.

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THE World's Parliament of Religions is no longer a dream. It has the assurance of such world-wide support that its realization appears but a question of time. The local interest in its coming is immense and growing. One clergyman of Chicago has received applications for two hundred seats from friends desirous of attending its sessions. The Chairman has been amazed at the enthusiasm with which so many look forward to this great convention. The dates finally fixed for it are September 11th–27th. It was impossible, on account of the crowd of congresses demanding the month of August, to bring the Parliament of Religions into the summer-time, when ministers usually have their respite from pastoral work. It is the general expectation, however, that churches will permit their pastors to take the month of September, this year, for the purposes of a vacation, in order that they may have the opportunity of attending, not only the Parliament of Religions, but also the other congresses which, together with it, will furnish an unrivalled opportunity for becoming acquainted with the religious thought and activity of our time.

The dates of the congresses, so far as fixed at present, are as follows : Lutheran General Council, Saturday, September 2d ; Lutheran Synodical Conference, September 3d ; the Catholic Congress, September 5th–9th. The Parliament of Religions opens Monday, September 11th, and its sessions will be held in the Hall of Columbus, seating about three thousand persons, in the new Art Palace, now approaching completion on the Lake front. This is not situated, as some have thought, within the World's Fair grounds, but in the heart of the city. It is expected that scholarly representatives of Buddhism, Northern and Southern, of Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism, of various forms of Hinduism, of Parseeism, of Mohammedanism, of Judaism, and of the great historic and other

tells us, that "scientific truth and revealed truth are essentially different," but we cannot assent when he farther says that "there is no indication that God ever intended to *reveal* a scientific fact." In making Himself known to us as Creator and Governor of the world, He has declared things which have scientific as well as religious significance; and the believer rejoices to find that the words of the Lord bear inspection from every quarter. The Bible has no false science, and it is often in obvious accordance with true science.

III.—BIBLICAL THEOLOGY.

BY PROFESSOR PHILIP SCHAFF, D.D., LL.D., NEW YORK CITY.

BIBLICAL theology, in its modern technical sense, is a systematic representation of the revealed or biblical religion in its primitive form, as laid down in the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, but as distinct from its subsequent development and comprehension in different ages and branches of the Church.

The Bible itself is no more a system of theology than nature is a system of natural philosophy or natural science, but it contains all the facts and truths which make up such a system.

Biblical theology embraces both dogmatic and ethic, which form an organic unit in the Bible.

It must also have frequent reference to the history of revelation, especially in the Old Testament, which teaches doctrine mostly in the form of example; yet the history proper should be left to historical theology ("History of Israel," "Life of Christ," "History of Apostolic Church").

Biblical theology sums up the scattered results of exegesis and arranges them so as to exhibit the organic unity and completeness of revealed religion. Notwithstanding the great variety of its authors, topics, styles of composition and modes of representation, the Bible contains a harmonious, self-consistent system of Divine truth. It stands alone in this respect in the entire history of literature.

But we must distinguish different stages in the revelation of this truth and different types of teaching. God revealed Himself, like a wise educator, in condescending adaptation to man's expanding wants and capacities. The germ of salvation lies already in the first promise (Gen. iii. 15), the rich fruit appeared in the death and resurrection of Christ. Moreover, the same revealed truth reflects itself differently in different minds and is expressed in different styles. Inspiration must not be confounded with dictation. The various talents which God has distributed among men are not abolished or suspended by inspiration, but purified, invigo-

rated, ennobled, and elevated to the highest degree of usefulness. Every prophet of the Old Testament has his peculiar style and temperament. In the New Testament every Gospel is aimed at a particular class of readers—Matthew to Jews, Mark to Romans, Luke to Greeks, John to mature Christians—and reflects the same Christ under a special aspect, as the Messiah, or the great Conqueror, or the healing Physician, or the incarnate Son of God. In the epistles we may discern four distinct types of doctrine—of James, Peter, Paul, and John.

Biblical theology is the connecting link between exegesis, Church history, and systematic theology. Inasmuch as it has to do only with the teaching of the Bible and derives all its matter from the Bible, it belongs to the exegetical department; but its comprehensive systematic form and method connect it more naturally with systematic divinity, especially with dogmatic and ethic. It is also the starting-point of the doctrinal section of Church history, for in the Bible are contained the vital truths which were subsequently discussed, opposed, perverted, defended, defined, and reduced to dogmas by the doctors and councils of the Church.

Biblical theology, then, is both exegetico-systematic and exegetico-historical. It is the first and fundamental form of didactic theology on which ecclesiastical and philosophical dogmatic and ethic must rest throughout.

It is neither apologetic nor polemic, but objective and impartial; yet not on that account cold or indifferent. He who would fairly exhibit the teaching of the Bible must sympathize with its spirit and aim.

Biblical theology should be the guiding star in all departments of sacred learning—"a focus of light in theological study." It refreshes, fructifies, directs, and rectifies dogmatic and moral theology by leading them back to the fountain-head of revealed truth. It brings us face to face with the Divine oracles in all their original power and freshness. It contains the living roots of all sound tendencies and developments in the history of Christianity, and furnishes a standard for the proper estimate of theological schools and parties, as well as for a correction of all abuses.

In the periods of scholastic theology, during the Middle Ages and in the seventeenth century, the Bible was subjected to dogma, and furnished merely proof-texts for a preconceived system of doctrine, whether Roman Catholic, or Lutheran, or Calvinistic. The proofs were taken from any book without discrimination or regard to the connection of the progressive periods of revelation. A passage from Job or Chronicles was deemed as conclusive as a passage from John or Romans. The Westminster Assembly first sent the Westminster Confession of Faith to Parliament (in 1647) without any Scripture proofs, but afterward added them by express direction of Parliament, "that the text of Scripture be printed with the Articles of Faith."

The normal way is to make the Bible the basis of dogma. It is of far more consequence to know the exact teaching of Christ and the apostles than that of the Fathers, reformers, and councils.

In the age of the Reformation the zeal for biblical theology asserted its supremacy over mediæval scholasticism, and produced such works as Melancthon's "*Loci Theologici*" and Calvin's "*Institutio Christianæ Religionis*." In our age biblical theology again claims the supremacy over the confessional and speculative theology, and will give rise to new systems of greater depth and wider breadth than those which have preceded them.

The growing sense of the importance of biblical theology has led to the establishment of special chairs in two or three of our theological seminaries. One of them has already become famous, and, we may say, historic. Dr. Charles Butler, the only surviving founder of the Union Seminary in New York, endowed such a chair in 1890 by the magnificent gift of one hundred thousand dollars, in honor of his friend, the late Dr. Edward Robinson, the pioneer of Palestine exploration and biblical scholarship in America, and one of the first professors of that institution. Dr. Charles A. Briggs, the first incumbent of the "Edward Robinson Chair of Biblical Theology," having been already for several years teaching that branch of study, delivered on January 20th, 1891, an inaugural address on "*The Authority of Holy Scripture*" (published by Charles Scribner's Sons), which created an exceptional sensation, and led to the most important heresy trial in America. His transfer to that chair from the chair of Hebrew was vetoed by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church at Detroit, May, 1891, and the Presbytery of New York, the largest in the denomination, was directed to try him for unsound views on the fountains of Divine authority, the inspiration, and the (imaginary) inerrancy of the "original autographs," and progressive sanctification after death. The long trial ended in the full acquittal of Dr. Briggs, January 9th, 1893, and a substantial victory for freedom of investigation beyond the narrow bounds of the creeds of the seventeenth century. But the Committee on Prosecution intends to appeal to the General Assembly, which is to meet in May, 1893, and may reverse the decision of the Presbytery of New York. Such a reversal, in my judgment, would be a calamity to the Presbyterian Church, and probably end in a new split or large secession. May God prevent it!

ESSENTIAL CHANGES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

A PLEA FOR A CONSERVATIVE REVISION OF THE REVISED VERSION, 1881.

BY REV. JAMES B. FINCH, M.A., AMAGANSETT, L. I.

IN an issue of a recent religious weekly it was said: "If the English and American revisers of the New Testament had been content to make essential changes, the result of their labors might be different." These words express the views of a great number of readers of the New Testament on both sides of the Atlantic.