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RELIGION IN HOLLAND.*

TO give a review and report on Dutch affairs in Switzerland, in a foreign language, within a very limited space of time, in a circle like this, may certainly be regarded as a very beautiful thing, but an easy task no one will consider it. Holland and Switzerland! What a diversity, but at the same time what a harmony is suggested by these two names! Here the land of Alps and glaciers; there the land of dikes and wind-mills. Here the splendid cradle of Father Rhine; there his extremely modest grave. Here, on the other hand, in the near vicinity, the last resting-place of the great Erasmus—with us, the city where he first saw the light of day. Erasmus! The name leads us back at once to the first half of the sixteenth century. Was it not the age of the Reformation, and was not the Dutch Reformed Church one of the earliest, most blessed daughters of the Swiss mother? But more: in both lands freedom of conscience has planted her banner, celebrated her triumphs, won her crown, thrown open her gates, as on hardly any other spot. The names of William Tell and William of Orange sound harmoniously together, and it is for the “children of the *refuge*” a question whether they have enjoyed the greater hospitality in Basle, or in some of the cities of our Holland.

I pass in silence, although not without difficulty, over many of your names, known and loved among us too—an Alexander Vinet, a Hagenbach, a Lobstein, without even speaking of those living. I pass in silence, too, over many other relations, theological, ecclesiastical, literary, and mercantile; and I can the more easily proceed from such passing allusions to the treatment of my present theme, because, with you especially, in the highest domain of all, the familiar “*tout comme chez nous*”—everything the same as with us—finds many an application.

* An Address by Professor J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D., delivered at the Meeting of the Evangelical Alliance in Basle, 1st September, 1879. Translated for *The Catholic Presbyterian* by the Rev. M. J. Evans, Carnarvon.

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benevolence, and conciliation. The natives would not have been driven into rebellion. And our troubles in South Africa,—Caffre wars, Zulu wars and all the rest of them—would not have taken place.—ED. C. P.]

THE LEGITIMATE PROVINCE OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM.

IF the Bible be, as all Christians believe, the inspired word of God, then no expenditure of labour, having for its object the determination of the sacred text, can be considered too great.

If the famous actor could say of the great dramatist, that he desired to lose no drop of that marvellous man, much more should every believer in Divine revelation desire to lose no drop of this river of water of life, the words of the Holy Ghost; nor can we discover any reason why we should not be equally anxious that every drop of impurity, which, from any source, may have entered it, should be removed; it can be of no advantage to any one to accept, as a word of God, that which is only a word of man.

To accomplish this result is the specific end of "Biblical Criticism," technically so-called; hence, to define it, is to indicate its proper limitations. The day has long since passed, as we believe, for fear or prejudice against this important branch of Biblical learning. The Church accepts, with devout thankfulness, the results of the Herculean labours of the great scholars who have sought to furnish us the complete and unadulterated Word of God. The comparatively recent death of Tischendorf, caused by a nervous disease, induced by the peculiar nature of the work of deciphering and collating manuscripts, deeply touched the hearts of Biblical scholars all over the world, and secured for him an honourable place among the martyrs of science. In the discovery and editing of the Sinaitic Manuscript, he has erected for himself a monument more enduring than brass.

In the long gallery of those who have deserved well of the Church, and conferred lasting benefits upon mankind, Mill, Bentley, Griesbach, Wetstein, Lachmann, Tischendorf, and many others, scarcely less famous, must occupy no inconspicuous place.

It may be readily confessed that "Biblical Criticism" has sometimes overstepped its proper limits, that it has been rash where it should have been reverential, that it has forgotten the broad distinction between the inspired oracles and the productions of the mere human intellect, that it has not been careful at all times to put its shoes from off its feet upon this holy ground; but, notwithstanding all necessary allowances for mistakes and errors, its results have been in the highest degree beneficial. It has provided for Exegesis firm ground on which to

stand; the conscientious interpreter of the Scriptures has derived from this science a confidence which he could not otherwise have felt, and which enables him to speak as one having authority; he applies the measuring reed to the real temple of God, and not to some court of the Gentiles. It is impossible to overestimate the strength realised by the interpreter, when he feels his feet, Antæus-like, upon the real soil of inspired truth.

The labours of these great critical scholars have given an immense impulse to all branches of Biblical study, and have thereby conferred great and lasting benefits upon the cause of Christianity in general. Indeed, it is manifest that they have been providentially raised up and guided in order that the truths of Divine revelation might be more firmly based, and thereby prepared the better to meet that storm of unbelief which, even yet, continues to bear, with scarcely abated fury, upon the citadel of Divine truth.

The field of this science is, in one sense, wide, embracing almost the entire sphere of human learning. It would be difficult to say what realm of human investigation has been left unexplored, in the effort to determine the sacred text, or what branch of human knowledge has not been made tributary to its high purposes. In another sense, the field is limited; for, while the term Biblical Criticism is sometimes employed in a popular way, so as to embrace all Biblical learning, in its proper and restricted meaning, its sole function is, to determine the precise words employed by the men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, to remove all stains, and brighten all obscure parts of this picture of silver, in which the golden apple of Divine truth is set.

It is well known that the original autographs have long since perished,—the oldest manuscripts of the Scripture-writers (we speak specially of the New Testament, those of the Old being still more recent) reaching back only to the close of the fourth century, and these but the copies of copies; and that, not only is there no “*textus receptus*,”—no manuscript that can claim the authority of a standard by which others might be tested,—but no class of manuscripts that can claim to be the lineal descendants of the originals, as against other families or groups. From a comparatively small number of “*Uncials*,”—some of them mere fragments, and all of them mutilated and more or less imperfect,—and a host of “*cursives*” of different classes and ages; from ancient translations which have come down to us more or less interpolated, from quotations in the “*Fathers*,” and from ancient liturgies and lectionaries, in which the reading is often doubtful, Biblical scholars have to furnish us the true text of the Word of God.

To group, to determine the value, to decide upon the age, and thus to determine the amount of importance to be attached to a single manuscript, or family of manuscripts, and thereby the value of a reading which may be found in them,—such is the proper work of Biblical critics. It will be seen, at a glance, that this must require a rare combination of attainments and qualities.

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There must be an accurate knowledge of the original languages in which the manuscripts are written, and of the antique forms of the letters, of the history of the times in which the manuscript originated or was employed, the forms of worship which were observed by the people among whom it appeared, the religious currents by which they were swayed, their peculiar type of thought ; all this, in addition to a deep spiritual insight, and a critical acumen of the highest order. But these are qualities and endowments which are not found in any man, or school, in their highest development and most harmonious union ; and so we must look to the combined labours of many scholars and many schools, working through many successive years, for our final text.

It is well known that many scholars were in doubt whether the work of examining, and sifting, and weighing existing materials had progressed far enough to warrant the issuing of a new recension of the Scriptures. This, however, will be determined when the new translation appears ; that this revision will be the final English translation, no one supposes ; that the translators will, however, so avail themselves of the materials already furnished and at their hand, as to make it a vast advance upon the present, we will not doubt, until the result shall prove the opposite.

The science of Biblical Criticism must be sharply distinguished from "Hermeneutics." The former, we must repeat, has to do merely with determining the text ; it separates the precious from the vile, the chaff from the wheat, the canonical from the apocryphal ; it removes everything which, from liturgies, doxologies, doctrinal bias, ignorance or mistakes of transcribers, or any other human source, may have, through the long ages, crept into the sacred text ; while, at the same time, its office is to insert in its proper place any word or particle which may have dropt out of it. The latter, "Hermeneutics," is a system of principles on which the text thus determined must be interpreted ; hence we have the "allegorical," the "mystic," the "historico-critical," and other systems of interpretation—*i.e.*, methods of dealing with the text which Biblical Criticism, as before defined, has furnished. The one asks, "What is the text ?" the other, "How shall we expound it ?"

It will be manifest what relations this science sustains to "Exegesis." The latter, as the word indicates, is the explanation or unfolding of the texts ; his subject-matter, and the principles which he must apply to it, are furnished to the exegete. His work is, not to determine the words, but the mind of the Spirit in the words. He may, however, discuss questions of criticism, and declare principles of interpretation. This is often necessary in order to justify his interpretation ; for, as his reading, so will be, of course, his explanation. His exposition will also depend largely upon his system of "Hermeneutics." The explanation of the allegorist will be the opposite of that of the literalist ; but, in discussing such questions, or stating such principles, he abandons the proper domain of Exegesis, and enters that of Biblical Criticism and Hermeneutics.

The relation of these three connected sciences to that which crowns

the edifice of Biblical learning, "Systematic Theology," is now easily determined. They furnish the material from which it erects its building. A text of Scripture, interpreted on true principles, has furnished the truth which the theologian builds into his structure; he deals with truth thus furnished, as the scientist with the facts of nature, arranges them in their logical order, shows their relation one to another, points out their mutual harmony, and their relation to that which is the central truth, or key to the whole. The critic furnishes the quarry, the exegete the stones; his is the architectonic genius that shapes them, and erects them into the temple of truth, radiant with the Divine glory, the final result and crown of Biblical studies.

It is not unusual for Biblical critics to undervalue Systematic Theology. This is not so much a logical inference from the greater progress that has been made in their favourite pursuit, as a result of that natural tendency of the human mind which leads it to undervalue the pursuits in which it is not interested, and, at the same time, unduly to exaggerate its own.

The changes hitherto made in the text are not such as materially to affect any one of the great fundamental truths embodied in the creeds and confessions of Evangelical Christendom. The forms in which these fundamental truths are cast change somewhat with the changes in thought and expression of each successive age, while, in essential character, they remain the same. The apostolical creed is still a synopsis of the faith of the true Catholic Church. Hodge and Van Oosterzee teach the great Pauline, Augustinian, Calvinistic theology of the Reformation period; they depart in no considerable point from the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism. As it is no disgrace to our astronomers that they still teach the Copernican system of astronomy, for the simple reason that it is true, and they can teach no other, so it is no disgrace to our eminent theologians that they have not progressed beyond Paul and Augustine, as to fundamental truth. It would be a useless waste of time to run over these doctrines that have their place in the former creeds and confessions, and to show that they are to-day the accepted doctrines of the Church, with but little modification in form, and none in essence. They still stand the test of the famous maxim regarding "what has been held at all times, by all persons, and in all places." We may readily surrender as spurious, the statement in 1 John v. 7, regarding the three witnesses; yet this will not modify, much less shake, our conception of the doctrine of the Trinity. That doctrine rests upon too solid a basis of Scriptural affirmation and inference, and is too deeply embedded in the thought and consciousness of the Church, to be affected by the authenticity of a single passage. The being and attributes of God, the Fall, the Divinity of Christ, the nature of sin, the atonement, the resurrection, the glorification, &c., are all deducible from that great body of Scripture which is found even in the most imperfect of the manuscripts, and are not

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likely to be in any considerable degree affected by the results of "Criticism."

It has been observed that the prevalence of Materialism is the indication of an age too weak or too indolent to think ; so we would consider indifference to Systematic Theology an evidence that men were either indifferent about, or incapable of, clear ideas and logical thought,—a sign of mental and spiritual decline in the Church. Happily, we do not discover any such symptom in the Presbyterian Church,—at all events, not in the United States. As a rule, Systematic Theology is the favourite department in all our seminaries ; it is still the Queen of the Sciences, and Biblical Criticism is a chief pillar of its throne. That some prefer another department of theological science is no reason why they should disparage those severer studies to which they have no inclination, or claim, for their own chosen department, a supremacy which does not of right belong to it. "Let the cobbler stick to his last."

There is but one way in which this science can affect Church government or worship—either, on the one hand, by proving certain passages, on which the advocates of any particular form have relied, to be spurious, or by proving genuine some passage which seriously affects the proposed view.

The High Church Episcopalian will be sure to claim a Divine warrant for his system, so long as he interprets the word *ἐπίσκοπος* by the functions of a modern bishop ; and the Presbyterian is hardly likely to forego his claim, so long as he believes "presbyter" and "bishop" to be synonymous terms, and finds, in the Pastoral Epistles, the officers, and substantially the courts, recognised in the Presbyterian system.

These are questions which are to be determined by exegesis, apostolical church history, and the application of principles which it may perhaps require much time to establish, so as to carry with them the weight of recognised authority. For instance, it seems not at all universally acknowledged that the Scriptures are of supreme and binding authority in all matters of government and worship, as well as of doctrine. Or, if this be admitted, then, upon the other hand, it is denied that they furnish any definite instruction upon these subjects.

That the Scriptures do furnish instruction upon these subjects we do most assuredly believe ; and that a careful, conscientious study will lead to such definite results, we as firmly believe. For these will be reached, not by losing ourselves in a mist, where no object can be clearly seen, and no voice distinctly heard, but by definite interpretations of words, which give a distinction of sound, and are not a mere voice.

There is observable, in certain quarters, a tendency to treat the Scriptures as though they were mere cloud-land—nothing settled, nothing defined ; a tendency which manifests itself in a nervous dread of clear and established principles. One would think, to hear persons under this influence, that the Bible was the most vague, instead of being the clearest book on earth ; and that to understand it in some general way

is the only attainment possible ; whereas it is the plainest of books—so plain that he who runs may read, and the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err therein. This tendency is at least increased by the dread that clear statements of Divine truth have a tendency to retard the progress of the Churches towards unity. But the very opposite is the fact, as has been forcibly shown by Dr. Shedd, in his admirable "History of Doctrine." Real unity can come only through substantial agreement, and this can be attained only by clear and definite statement.

It is not clear to our mind that Biblical Criticism can in any way affect the doctrine of verbal inspiration. Although some speak as if it had laid that question at rest, no one pleads verbal inspiration for words other than those of the original autographs. It is the dignified office of "criticism" to furnish us with the very words of inspiration, and thus furnish us with the thoughts of inspiration—inspired thoughts, in the only way in which, according to our conception, they could be presented to us—viz., in inspired words ; but the question of inspiration is aside from its province, and must be decided by our views of the nature of inspiration, and of the connection between thought and expression.

This science settles no question as to inspiration ; it hands over to us the Word of God, and bids us form our views of inspiration upon other data than those which it furnishes. So far as it is concerned, we may hold to the mechanical or the dynamical theory of inspiration ; we may believe in verbal or non-verbal inspiration ; we may hold to degrees of inspiration, or believe that the Word of God is all equally inspired ; we may or may not make the distinction between revelation and inspiration. These are indeed important questions affecting our conception of the Word of God, but questions on which our science has nothing to say ; they must be determined upon other grounds, and through the use of other lights.

It appears almost superfluous to add that the Scriptures, as determined by the best scholarship, form our authoritative guide in all that relates to the doctrine, the worship, and the government of the Church. The Word of God is the supreme rule of faith and practice. Nothing which cannot be confirmed by its express declarations, or deduced from it by *legitimate inference*, has any authority, or can bind the conscience. If the Scriptural argument for any rite or custom is found inadequate, such rite or custom must be discarded, or take its place among "the things indifferent."

It is vain to appeal to custom, in the absence of any Scriptural warrant ; indeed, such an appeal is of the very essence of Popery. Christ, the alone King and Head of His Church, possesses the sole authority to institute ordinances ; and to place them upon any other basis is an assumption of His prerogative.

Infant baptism, for example, must rest on the Scriptural argument ; unless it has such a basis, it is "will-worship," a human device, a hollow mockery, and should be immediately abandoned ; the sooner, in that case,

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it falls into desuetude the better. The practice of the early Church is a presumptive argument in its favour, but nothing more. What saith the Scripture? How readest thou? To this standard we must come at last. We, of course, are not to be understood as affirming that nothing has Scriptural warrant but that for which we can cite the very words of Scripture; we have previously emphasised *legitimate inference*.

We have another example in the controversy between Presbytery and Episcopacy. Those writers on Episcopacy who admit that "bishop" and "presbyter" are, in the New Testament, synonymous terms, and who appeal from Scripture to the practice of the early Church—although the earliest practice is undoubtedly against them—appear to us to abandon the whole ground; if diocesan bishops are without Scriptural authority, they have no authority at all; theirs is a usurped prerogative. In fine, "Biblical Criticism" must determine the sacred text, Exegesis expound it, and its decisions, when clearly made, must be accepted as final.

The so-called "higher criticism" (or, more appropriately, "destructive criticism") of Germany appears, along with rationalism, out of which it arose, to have spent its fury, although its waves are still "casting up mire and dirt" on Britain and America; for, as Danton said, the waves will beat upon the shore long after the storm is down.

Even this criticism—rash, defiant, impious, and, in many instances, utterly baseless—has not been without its beneficial effects, as the destructive flood leaves a *residuum* of fertility upon the land over which it has swept.

The denial of the genuineness of any passage or passages, simply because they contained a miraculous narrative, or a clear prophetic declaration, was to assume an "*a priori* principle," false both in logic and in philosophy. These critics should first have proved the impossibility of the miraculous; but this would have been troublesome,—as they well knew, impossible. So it was the easier method to assume it.

It is well known to all Bible students how frequently some passage has been declared incorrect in the statement of some fact of history or science. But further investigation, or some new discovery, has confirmed the Biblical statement, and exposed the rashness and ignorance of the critic. The restoration, quite recently, of the name of Sargon, King of Assyria, to its proper place in history, as a result of the excavations of M. Botta, and the confirmation of the prophecies of Isaiah and Nahum regarding the destruction of "populous No" by the translations of the cuneiform writings, are among the more recent illustrations of this fact.

It is superfluous, however, to enter into detail; all persons who have the slightest acquaintance with the progress made in the study of Egyptian and Assyrian antiquities, know in what a marvellous manner these long-buried records confirm the Bible history, and what fears of its friends, and hopes of its foes, they have served to dissipate.

The progress of science is at present tending to the same result. Recent investigations in Geology, in some instances, bring down the

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period of the existence of man on earth to little more than that indicated by the Usher Chronology. Our American astronomer, Newcombe, says of our globe :—"The latter has probably been revolving in its orbit ten millions of years ; man has probably existed on it less than ten thousand years." Evolutionists to the front !

In concluding these remarks, it may be proper to notice, that, while Biblical Criticism is still a progressive science, we do not anticipate, as a result of its future advance, any considerable change in our views of the Scriptures, either as to their form or their fundamental teaching ; the progress which we anticipate is rather in the line of fuller and clearer comprehension of the truths which they contain. We believe, with John Robinson, that "there is yet much truth to break forth from the Word of God," and hail with pleasure all efforts which assist us to a more assured conviction with reference to its subject-matter, and deeper and clearer conceptions of its meaning.

J. R. W. SLOANE.

METRICAL VERSIONS OF THE PSALMS.

AT the Reformation, a notable change, in respect alike of substance and of mode, was effected in the service of praise, as a part of public worship. The purifying and transforming spirit which brought about that mighty revolution, found here, as elsewhere, ample scope for its exercise. Except in Bohemia, where the exquisite tunes of the early Church had long been wedded to a vernacular ritual (an attempt to suppress which, made by the seventh Gregory, mainly because of the loud and general singing it encouraged, provoked a wearisome and resolute conflict that had much to do, eventually, with separating the national communion from Rome), the use of song in the sanctuary had, everywhere throughout Western Christendom, become woefully depraved. It was not congregational, nor devotional, nor scriptural, nor even natural. Of course, therefore, it was inartistic also ; for truth and beauty, the essential elements of art, were lacking. Ordinarily, the "offices" of the Church were rendered in the most slovenly and irreverent fashion. Even the music of the mass was chattered or gabbled over in a style at the farthest remove from the genius and principle of that transcendent rite, and was such as to throw a mockery over the performance. Ditties of a questionable sort, set to roystering tunes, took the place of the authorised words and ancient voice of the Latin Church in her benediction hymns. In brief, degeneracy and corruption had proceeded as far in this department as in any other. As it was in respect of faith and rule, so it was in respect of worship.

A radical difference was established as regards the principle embodied in the service, and the immediate end to which it was directed. While