

by Professor Willis J. Beecher, D. D.

THE FALL AND MODERN THOUGHT, by Rev. D. S. Gregory, D. D., LL.

VOLUME IV. *New Series.*

JULY, 1901.

NUMBER 1.

# The Bible Student

*The Bible Student*  
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Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

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# The Bible Student.

CONTINUING

## The Bible Student and Religious Outlook.

Vol. IV., New Series.

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**Creation versus Evolution.** "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth." That is the first article of the baptismal creed of Western christendom. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." That is the first sentence in the Christian revelation. That God alone is the first and the last, who changes not; that all that exists in the work of His hands, and depends on His power for its existence and its continuance in being alike: this is the unvarying teaching of the whole Bible. It is part of the very essence of Christianity therefore that the explanation of the universe is found in God; and its fundamental word is accordingly "creation." Over against the Christian conception there has arisen in our day, however, a movement which has undertaken to explain the world and all that it contains without God, —without any reference to any unseen, supernatural, spiritual element. The watchword of this movement is "evolution." And its confession of faith runs: "I believe in an eternal flux, and the production of all things out of their precedent conditions, through the natural interworking of the forces intrinsic to the changing material."

**Pfleiderer's Evolutionary Scheme.**

Perhaps we may find as good a presentation of this evolutionary program as can easily be turned up, in OTTO PFLEIDERER'S discussion of "Evolution and Theology," which holds the first place in the volume of essays lately published by him under that title. The era of "scientific theology" is at last come, he tells us. And he explains "scientific theology" to mean a theology that has adopted "the scientific method." "This method," he proceeds, "is simply that of causal thinking, according to which every event is the necessary effect of causes whose operation is again determined by their connection with other causes, or by their place in a reciprocal action of forces according to law." Thus everything that comes into being, "is to be regarded as the effect of the causes lying in the preceding condition, these causes again serving as means for the purpose of the following condition." On the universality of the application of this principle he insists with the utmost emphasis. "There is only the one choice: either the evolutionary mode of thought is right, in which case it must be uniform in all fields of investigation, in history, then, as well in nature; or it

are doubtless true, and will probably remain no less so. Even the inventor himself, at least in this book, keeps up the discussion in a rather bantering spirit, calling attention to feminine inconsistency, girlish shyness and ignorance, etc., in the Odyssean passages which seem to make for his novel and air-spun theory. Thus women are slowly but surely coming even to their literary rights. Only after all these years have the two greatest female authors the world has ever seen at length obtained tardy recognition!

**Frederick Godet** There is published in the number of *La Liberté Chrétienne* of January 15th,

1901, an exceedingly interesting appreciation of the great commentator, **FRÉDÉRIK GODET**. It is from the pen of Prof. **CHARLES PORRET**, of the theological faculty of the Free Church of the Canton de Vaud. Prof. **PORRET** was a third of a century ago a pupil of **GODET**'s and writes out of a thorough knowledge of the man and of his work. **GODET**, it seems, was the son of a distinguished advocate and was born at Neuchâtel on the 25th October, 1812. His education was obtained first at his native town and later in Germany; he was a student in Berlin at the time of **SCHLEIERMACHER**'s death (February 12, 1834). After his ordination in 1836, he became for seven years the tutor of the Prince Royal of Prussia (Frederick III.), and during this period laid the solid basis of a wide culture. Returning to his native land he first served as "subside" or assistant pastor of the Val de Ruz, and not till after the revolution of 1848 was he made pastor of the town of Neuchâtel. Soon afterwards he was appointed by the Synod Professor of Biblical Exegesis, but it was not till

1866 that he gave himself solely to this work. Meanwhile, however, he at first devolved the work of the Old Testament exegesis on an assistant, confining himself for a time to the New; and only on the demission of his pastoral work assumed the entire charge of both. In 1881 he again laid aside the Old Testament work, and in 1886 ceased altogether to teach, in order to give himself entirely to literary labors. Both in 1861 and in 1873 he was vigorously engaged in the controversies then raging concerning the relations of the church to the state and became one of the principal founders of the independent church. In 1868 and 1869 he did noble service in defence of the supernatural against the agitation for "liberal Christianity," raised by **M. FERDINAND BOUISSON**,—a cause he was called upon in his old age to defend against the new "liberalism" of the Symbolo Fidéists. He died full of honor and years on the 29th October, 1890. His first work was an *Exposition ou Examen de la Doctrine Saint-Simonienne*, "by a student of theology," published when he was only nineteen (1831). This was followed by a most successful text book on Geography, the fruit of his experience as a tutor in the royal family of Prussia. In 1859 he published a *Histoire de la Réformation et du Refuge dans le pays de Neuchâtel*. It was not till 1863, when he had reached the mature age of fifty-one, that that series of Biblical studies began, which has earned him a reputation second to few teachers of the Bible of our day. These include *Commentaries on John* (1863-65), *Luke* (1869-71), *Romans* (1879-80), and *I. Corinthians* (1888), together with *Biblical Studies on the Old Testament*, and on the New Testament, published in the early seventies; and his *Introduction to the New*

*Testament*, which remains unfinished, only the sections on Paul and on the synoptic gospels having been issued. Besides, he published a volume of *Conferences Apologétiques* in 1869, took a preponderant part in the *Bible annotée*, and printed a very large body of occasional essays, review-articles, encyclopedia-articles and the like. His main works are all accessible in English; and he made himself indeed a factor in the religious life of the whole Protestant world. In giving us all these facts, Prof. PORRET does not permit his readers to fancy for a moment that they sum up GODER to him. The gist of his article is rather indeed that GODER was infinitely more than his works. While in a sense represented by his works, he is not done justice to by his works. In his published writings we do, to be sure, perceive something of the remarkable union of depth of religious insight and breadth of outlook, with conscientious scrutiny of details of language, fact and form, which characterized him: but not in the same proportion and not in the same balance in which they existed in the man and exhibited themselves in his class-room work and more familiar conferences. The prophet sank somewhat into the scholar when he took pen in hand. Prof. PORRET even suggests that GODER's conscientious labors on details were a snare to him and obscured his really preëminent gifts of intuition and creation. In particular he compares the published form of the *Introduction to the New Testament* with the lectures he had heard fall from GODER's lips on that subject, with a wail in his voice over the lost treasure. In publishing it, GODER, he thinks, permitted all its life to evaporate,—because he felt impelled utterly to change its method. "Probably he followed no theory in this: he simply obeyed his conscience; he wished to be as com-

plete as possible—the result is the work remains incomplete; and what there is of it will be read by a very narrow public. We may be permitted to grieve over that Introduction,—so rapid in its progress, so large in its grasp, so forcible in its spirit,—which we knew in the days of our youth, and which might have been for the whole church of God a revelation of what it possesses in its New Testament. M. GODER might have given us in the sphere of Introduction, something analogous to what THIERSCH has done for the history of the Apostolic age, and, in the sphere of exegesis, an exposition of the greater part of the books of the canon, after the fashion of M. SCHLATTER. In such work as this, we believe our venerated professor would have attained his full measure." The personal characteristics of GODER are summed up as follows: "He had received from God noble gifts and remarkably balanced faculties; to those who were admitted to a close view of him, and who were subject to his direct influence, this balance is perhaps what most struck them in this rich personality. A suple, quick, acute intellect,—an exquisite and intense sensibility,—an energetic will,—all these elements smelted into a remarkable unity. All these faculties were dominated, governed by a conscience which submitted all his acts to the law of duty." This dominance of conscience, could, indeed, even seem severe. "There emanated from his person an atmosphere of holiness. He appeared to us like the incarnation of the moral law. And this impression was not always unaccompanied by a certain uneasiness. One felt himself under judgment and many recalcitrated against an authority which hurt them. We have had occasion since to note the same thing among the hearers of BECK; there were

some who by their attitude of more than reserve protested against what seemed to them a sort of restraint upon their liberty." This modern world, indeed, does not take kindly to any restraint upon its "liberty"—on the basis of any authority whatever. It is not surprising then that a good deal of Prof. PORRET's article is taken up with a not very whole-souled defence of GODET against the charges of "traditionalism" and the like brought by those who do not like his appeal to "the brutal facts," and the authority of the apostolic record, in his attempt to stem the waves of "liberalism" which have been successively sweeping over the church. This is the most honorable page of GODET's history: the only pity of it is that even he was scarcely sufficiently whole-hearted in it. The truth is that GODET was the representative in French-speaking Switzerland of the best form and highest development of the "mediating theology," and exhibited alike its finest traits and its inherent weaknesses. Those who wished to go further in the "liberal" pathway naturally could not understand why, having come so far, he stopped short: those who would not go so far, naturally could not understand why if he stopped short, he should go so far. "He defended with decision the pre-existence of Christ:" "he took so seriously the full humanity of the Saviour that the adherents of orthodoxy were frightened and foreboded the gravest consequences." There it is in a nutshell.

He adopted with enthusiasm an extreme doctrine of Kenosis which is in principle Socinian: then he defended with ardor the preëxistence of Christ, which is hopelessly anti-Socinian: and very naturally neither party was satisfied. Theologically he was formed in and by the Berlin of the early thirties; and never receded from the stamp then put upon him. It emphatically might have been much worse; but surely also it might have been better: and with all our admiration and gratitude for what GODET has done for sound theological thought and vital religion, we cannot but express our deep regret that his vast and fully deserved influence has been thrown in the scales for that odd complex of doctrines for which the right wing of the "mediating theology" stands—or rather has tried to stand: for now that a newer liberalism than the liberalism of the "mediating theology" has risen to try conclusions with it, its inherent inconsequence and instability is become all too apparent and it crumbles before the onslaught with amazing rapidity. Americans can perhaps best understand GODET by picturing him as occupying in French Switzerland something of the same position as that occupied in America by Dr. PHILIP SCHAFF. We are not absurdly comparing the two men in gifts, attainments or performance: but only in theological position and providential opportunities. When limited to this, the comparison may perhaps be useful.

B. B. W.