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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—CHARLES H. SPURGEON.

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CHARLES H. SPURGEON was a man whom everybody wanted to account for. What is the secret of his power? How do you explain his unparalleled fame?—these were the atheistic questions that past from mouth to mouth. People who ask wrong questions are likely to get wrong answers. They wanted to find the reason on earth, whereas it was only to be found in heaven. It has been the way of God to puzzle and perplex an atheistic Christianity. There need be no scruple in using the word atheistic in this connection, for even Christian people of undoubted standing seem to be prying into odd earthly corners for answers or explanations which could never be found there. "There was a man sent from God whose name was" Spurgeon. That is the answer to the riddle. Why do we not recognize God in any and every form in which He may choose to appear? But this is a common crime even of the church: the church will have explanation; it will have geometrical form; it insists upon genealogical or official pedigree. Instead of taking Spurgeon as a special creation and election of God, people sought to extrude—certainly to ignore—the divine element from his personality and ministry. For example, they exclaimed, "He is so young!" as who should say, How can one so young be an apostle chosen of God? Thus men daily turn the common course of Providence into a miracle, a surprise, or a contradiction. So young? Certainly. This is a young man's world. For the old there is nothing in it but a grave; honored indeed, and choicely beflowered, but a grave notwithstanding. When did God ever choose an old man to work for Him? Name one. It is impossible. In the Old Testament a man was an infant at forty; Methuselah would hardly account him a man.

NOTE.—This periodical adopts the Orthography of the following Rule, recommended by the joint action of the American Philological Association and the Philological Society of England:—Change d or ed final to t when so pronounced, except when the e affects a preceding sound.—PUBLISHERS.

space, and hopelessly gathered around its hospitable doors. My loving regard must ever accompany the ministry of the devoted sons who bear Mr. Spurgeon's name, for that very name is itself a responsibility as well as an honor. They have been conspicuously loyal to their father's doctrine and method, and I pray God that when they come to close their ministry they may be able to look back upon a course in which they have been faithful, industrious, and useful.

II.—RECENT RECONSTRUCTIONS OF THEOLOGY.

I. FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY.

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STRICTLY speaking, theology has not been "reconstructed" in recent, or, for that matter, even in modern, times. When men have thought themselves through the subject, and built up the fabric of their theology in a completed system, they have ordinarily been found to give us much what we have been familiar with for a couple of centuries. The Arminian probably remains to-day the latest real reconstruction of theology. The several treatises on dogmatics that come to us from time to time run on the essential lines of the old types and fall readily into place as Sacerdotal or Socinian, Arminian or Lutheran or Reformed dogmatics. The Decrees of Trent and the Racovian Catechism, the *Formula Concordiæ* and the Remonstrance and its Apology, the Canons of Dort and the Westminster Confession have thrown up the dykes between which the streams of theological thought still flow. A brave attempt to open a new channel was indeed made by the "Mediating Theology," but its stream has dwindled to a trickle. Men like Ebrard and Dorner and Martensen, to be sure, will not soon cease to be read with profit; and the glamour of the conceptions which dominated their generation still dazzles eyes which strain to catch their light at some distance from its source. Thus in America we have quite recently had a system from Dr. Gerhart, of Lancaster, reflecting this light, and only the other day a handbook from Dr. Clarke, of Hamilton Seminary. But in the land of its birth the candle of the "Mediating Theology" has already gone out with a splutter; and everywhere it has come to be perceived that its precious "Christological" principle is little more than the old "Anthropological" principle of Arminianism, writ large. The Ritschlianism which has sprung vigorously up in the field left barren by the wilting of this once flourishing plant, as yet lacks its thoroughly wrought-out system of dogmatics. When it comes, if it comes on the lines laid down by "the Master" and diligently worked by his most consistent and conspicuous followers, it will not create a new category of theological construction;

the old category of Socinianism will be quite capable of receiving it. Meanwhile, however, we have no real "reconstructions of theology" of recent date which we may be expected to estimate. There are on every side of us tendencies, suggestions, tentative movements of thought; bundles more or less large and more or less miscellaneous of conceptions old and new; but scarcely "reconstructions of theology." I presume that what is asked of me is some estimate of the direction and value of these more or less strong, but certainly existent currents in theological thinking. Are they mere swirls and eddies on the surface of the great stream, or do they promise to combine after a while into a flood which shall break the barriers and perhaps cut out a new channel? From "the point of view of Systematic Theology," I am expected to make some estimate of the systematic value of these movements, of their effects on the system of truth concerning God and His relations to His universe—in a word, of the possibility of their flowing ultimately together into a system, and of the nature of the system which in such a case they will give us.

Our time is admittedly marked by a considerable confusion in its theological outlook. The currents that flow up and down in the theological world—sometimes apparently up and down within the limits of a single mind—seem to run very much athwart one another, and it is not always easy to attain a satisfying estimate of their value, either separately or in their various combinations. But there are some general characteristics which are shared by all, or nearly all, of those theological movements that can with any propriety of contrast be spoken of as recent, which have a very decided significance from the point of view of systematization. And by withdrawing our attention from the confusing and often very confused details, and focusing it for the time on these broad common characteristics of "recent theological reconstruction," we may manage very quickly to arrive at some sound estimate of them from "the point of view of Systematic Theology."

1. I fancy that there is nothing more widely characteristic of "recent theological reconstruction," in the sense defined, than a tendency to cut loose from all "external authority." Our new guides may differ in many things, some of them of fundamental importance, not only in a systematic, but also in a vitally religious, aspect. But they all pretty much agree in looking with some reserve, upon "external authority" as a source of knowledge of divine truth, and in readily substituting for it more or less completely the authority of the human spirit in one or another of its powers, or in one or another of its states. There are differences in the completeness with which all appeal to "external authority" is renounced; differences in the frankness with which the appeal is made to the bare spirit of man. It is comparatively rare, perhaps, that the baldly rationalistic ground is taken up, and the naked reason openly looked to as the sole source of truth. We hear it more

commonly called "the Christian consciousness," "the witness of the Spirit in the heart," "the indwelling Spirit which is the common endowment of Christians." Nor are men always able to break so sharply with the past as to turn their backs once and for all upon all dependence on the guidance of the Scriptures. Even when the logic of their thought, or even the express sense of their assertion, abolishes all "external authority," they may still be found clinging to its fragments, and building out of them a foundationless house for their spiritual home. But it is undeniable that "recent theological reconstruction" holds at best but a crumbling Bible in its hands. There may be some to whom it is a supreme grief to see it crumble,—whom we may picture as appropriating to themselves the words of the poet:

"I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand,—
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep,
While I weep—while I weep!
O God! can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp?
O God! can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?"

But there are others whom we can equally easily fancy replying to the soul-cry of these, their weaker brethren, with a certain sardonic pleasure, that there is certainly not one atom of that old "external authority" which used to tyrannize over men that can be saved, and that for themselves they are glad of it.

Look, for instance, at the jubilant tone of freedom with which the last vestige of "Apostolical authority" is cast from them by the whole school of Ritschl, whose teachings are just now invading our American churches, altho already perhaps beginning to show signs of waning influence in Germany. Adolf Harnack has lately taken opportunity to make a quite emphatic pronouncement on this point, and to give it validity for the whole school. Gustav Ecke had been seeking points of conciliation between the Ritschlites and the Evangelicals, but found himself ever confronted with the irreducible difference that the Ritschlites, one and all, refuse to allow to the Bible the authority which would attach to revelation. He is right! exclaims Harnack: no Ritschlite will accord revelation-value to the Scriptures; no one of them will permit himself to be brought (the emphases are his) "into *subjection* to every Bible doctrine," or will consent to look upon the teachings of the New Testament as capable of being described any otherwise than euphemistically as the "Apostolic confession of faith." Accordingly, we see Dr. A. C. McGiffert, the leading representative of the Ritschlian school in America, in his recent "History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age," not only laying aside whole tracts of the New Testa-

ment as not in his judgment apostolic in origin, or trustworthy in narrative, or authoritative in teaching, but denying even to those parts the apostolic origin of which he can bring himself to allow, any peculiar authority in the church,—any more authority than belongs to the utterances of any Christian man who is led (as are all Christians) by the Holy Spirit.

At quite the opposite extreme from this open breach with the whole authority of the Scriptures stands such a writer as Dr. James Denney, whose attractive "Studies in Theology" rest throughout on the frankest use of Scripture, as if it were of authority in Divine things. But even he at the end sets forth a "doctrine of Holy Scripture" which evaporates its authority, which speaks of it as "in the first instance" merely "a means of grace" and as only secondarily, through the medium of the new life quickened in the heart, becoming a source of knowledge, because, forsooth, "no religious truth, no spiritual truth, can be communicated" "by telling it in so many words." Thus he, too, throws back the spirit upon itself, under the euphemism of "the witness of the Spirit in the heart," for the source and test of all truth. One of the strange things in connection with this widely prevalent subjectivism is the tendency observed in many and very diverse quarters to represent it as a return to the attitude of the Reformers. It stands rather, of course, in direct contradiction to the Reformers' attitude. What they renounced was not "external authority," but "human authority," inclusive naturally of that of their own spirits; and what they fell back on was "Divine authority," which not only includes, but primarily exhibits itself in, the Scriptures. When it is "external authority" that is renounced, the authority of God goes with it, and we can revert only to the human authority of the individual soul. And *that*, conceal it under whatever honeyed phrases we may, is nothing but a return to the fundamental principle, not of the Reformation, but of "Rationalism."

2. A second very marked characteristic of recent drifts in theological thinking may be recognized as a direct outgrowth of its attitude of doubt and hesitation (when it is not an attitude of open denial) as over against the authority of the Scriptural revelation. This is the general indefiniteness in doctrinal construction which seems to be coming in upon us like a flood. The outlines of doctrinal statement are becoming more and more blurred in the hands of our more recent guides. We are hearing more and more frequently sharp complaints of the "intellectualism" which is assumed to be inherent in any clear conceptions of doctrinal truths. Of one element after another of the Christian system, it is declared with ever-increasing emphasis that no "theory" of it can be attained, and that we must therefore fall back on the simple "facts," and renounce altogether the hope of understanding them. Here is the root of that general indifference to doctrine that is becoming so characteristic of our age. The constitutive doctrines of

the Christian system are growing more and more doubtful, more and more shadowy things, and men are accordingly caring less about them. This is, of course, the inevitable effect of the increasing disregard of the authority of the Scriptures. For, if we are not to trust the Scriptures, where are we to go for information as to what is true about these tremendous problems? Such doctrines as those of the Trinity in Unity, of the Deity of Christ, of His work of Expiation, of the Supernatural Redemption—such doctrines, in a word, as constitute the complex of what is known specifically as Christian theology—rest on Scripture and on Scripture alone; are drawn out of Scripture, or are not drawn out at all. And in saying this we have unveiled the seriousness of the drift into indefiniteness, consequent on the renunciation of the authority of the Bible. Speaking from the standpoint of the systematist, it portends the destruction of the whole system of Christian doctrine; speaking from the standpoint of the religious life, it means the destruction of Christianity itself. For all the Christianity of theology on the one hand, and all the Christianity in religion on the other, comes from the Bible. Apart from the revelation of God deposited for us in the Scriptures, there is no Christianity. Obliterate this revelation—theology may remain, but it is no longer a Christian theology; religion may remain, but it is no longer the Christian religion. In proportion, therefore, as faith in the Bible revelation is abolished, and the outlines of the doctrines dependent on trust in that revelation are washed out, in that proportion Christianity will be effaced. Our systems of theology will to this degree cease to be distinctively Christian, and our religion will lose its specifically Christian traits. In a word, if we are to follow our more recent guides, we shall inevitably drift toward a purely natural religion.

Copious evidence of this exists all about us. Perhaps none of it is more striking than the increasing deference which, in the construction of doctrine, is given on every side to what are called the data of "Science," as over against the data of "Revelation." Nothing is more characteristic of the mental outlook of our day. This was, for example, the note struck twenty years ago in such books as the notorious "Scotch Sermons." They essayed not to bring "Science" into harmony with Christianity, but Christianity into harmony with "Science." The note has become painfully iterant since. Scores of books appear every year with no other object than to conform Christianity to what are deemed the latest deliverances of "Science," that is, to the freshest and most untested products of speculation. Of the latest type of theological thinking which has acquired widespread influence, indeed—the Ritschlian—this point of view deserves to be called its very principle. Dr. James Orr has pointed this out very clearly in his recent informing little book on "Ritschlianism." He says: "It would not be an unfair description of Ritschlianism to say that it is an attempt to show how much of positive Christianity can be retained compatibly

with the acceptance of the modern non-miraculous theory of the world." And then he justly adds: "This is not to keep Christianity separate from modern thought, but to make a surrender to it. . . . It is the modern view which controls the Scripture statement."

Of course such a procedure can bear but one interpretation. The truth is, that our modern leaders are in ever-increasing measure turning away from revelation and turning to nature as the source of authoritative knowledge of divine things. And what that means is that men are more and more de-Christianizing and more and more naturalizing our theology. After a while, if we proceed on this road, we shall have in our Systems of Theology only that knowledge of God which is derived from a study of His works. We shall have returned to a purely natural religion. We may designate it under whatever euphemism we may please, but the growing impatience with clear and sharp definitions of doctrine is a symptom of nothing other than a reversion to mere "Naturalism."

3. We may recognize as but one instance of this general drift toward the obliteration of the doctrines distinctive of Christianity, a third most marked characteristic of recent theological thinking. Perhaps we may call it its most strongly marked characteristic. I mean the widespread, the almost universal tendency to depreciate the uniqueness and the unapproachable majesty of the Son of God. It is undeniable that "recent theological construction" is restless over against the idea of a divine Christ. In its general theological indefiniteness it tends at least to indistinctness in its conception of the Deity of our Lord. In its growing detachment from the authority of Scripture it feels itself on no firm foundations in speaking of Incarnate Divinity; for nature, of course, knows nothing of a Divine Christ. In its renunciation of all "external authority" it can not patiently brook the yoke of the God-man. Thus it comes about that there is no current in recent thinking that flows more broadly and strongly, or with a rush which promises to make a cleaner sweep of old conceptions, than that which impinges on the doctrine of Christ's Godhead.

The older Unitarianism—even in its extremest Socinian form—was not averse to leaving us at least "Christ our Prophet" and "Christ our Example." Our modern teachers would deny us even these. The Jesus they offer us is a Jesus who thought as a man of His day, who lived as a man of His day, and who ceases to be a trustworthy guide to us in either what He said or what He did. It may be still allowed that His living in the world marked an epoch in its history; that the impression which His life, and perhaps His teaching, made on men still reverberates down the ages. But it is denied that it is a valid inference from this that He was more than a remarkable man—of a type, tho possibly the supreme instance, other examples of which we may discern in the Confuciuses, Sakya Munis, and Socrateses. Some

words of a recent poet indeed quite exactly express what a sadly large number are thinking of Jesus:

Then woke the world with sudden stir.
 " Whence came this power our hearts to draw?
 Call ye this man a carpenter?
 He is a God!"—they cried in awe.
 Ah me, it was no God they hailed,
 No arbiter of life and death,
 But a poor man that dared and failed,
 A carpenter of Nazareth.

Of course such an attitude is that of extremists. It is, nevertheless, the attitude toward the "historical Jesus" which is inherent in the most recent influential type of theological thinking, the Ritschlian. A most startling indication of this has been lately given us in Dr. A. C. McGiffert's book, already mentioned, on the Apostolical Church. For the most distressing thing about that volume is not its destructive attitude toward the authority of the New Testament Scriptures, bad as that is. It is rather its terribly low estimate of Jesus. This estimate is such as to lead a quite independent critic, uninformed of Dr. McGiffert's ecclesiastical connections, to say in his simplicity: "We gather from the first two chapters that the author writes from the standpoint of Unitarianism, and, to a believer in the divine claims of Christ, his account of the Christian origins can not fail to appear prejudiced and misleading." It is a mark of the times that such misjudgments can occur, and that such corrections as *The British Weekly* made in this case are possible and necessary. "*Literature*," it says, "in its review of Dr. McGiffert's 'History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age,' concludes from internal evidence that Dr. McGiffert is a Unitarian. We believe that this is not so. Dr. McGiffert, if we are not mistaken, is a Presbyterian." How deeply the canker has eaten could not be better exhibited than that nowadays some Presbyterians write of Jesus in a manner that is indistinguishable from Unitarianism.

This, we say, is no doubt an extreme case. But it is far from an isolated one. And from this up it is rather a question of degree than of kind. In the more orthodox circles the driftage is strong at least in the direction of an extreme doctrine of *kenosis*. And what is that doctrine but a happy expedient by which we may lull our reverence to sleep by still speaking of Jesus as God, while we yet find nothing but what is purely human in His speech or action; by which we may decline His authority while offering Him an empty homage? Our presses are groaning with treatises from the hands of those who have not forgotten how to call Him their Lord and their God, the whole purpose of which is to find reason why they need not in this, that, or the other thing believe Him, and ought not to be expected to follow Him. Gloze it as we may, men to-day do not wish to have this Man to rule over them, to dictate what they shall believe or to show what they shall

do; and the strongest drift in our theological thinking is toward the abolishing of the Divine Christ. The flimsy artificial barrier of a *kenotic* theory can never hold back that flood; and the issue of the present theological movement can be nothing other than a new Socinian defection.

I beg my readers to understand that I am not assuming the rôle of a prophet. I am, indeed, told by our modern teachers that if I be a Christian at all, I am led by the same Spirit and have the same right to be heard as a Paul or an Isaiah. But I have myself more confidence in the prophetic gifts of those old, if somewhat outworn, writers than in my own; and I fall back gladly on their assurance that God will not permit His truth to perish out of the earth. I am criticizing tendencies, not predicting the future. And it is one thing to say that the current theologizing is in the direction of Rationalism, Naturalism, Socinianism; and another thing to say that Christianity is to sink in that slough. After all, the Divine Christ is not abolished because men bid us cease to reverence Him, or the Christian system of truth destroyed because men ask us no longer to believe it, or the Divine Word robbed of its power because we are warned no longer to bow to its authority. Men may come and men may go, but these are things that abide forever.

III.—GOD'S CALL TO THE CHURCH OF TO-DAY.

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I.—WHAT THE CHURCH SHOULD STAND FOR.

TO-DAY is a crisis period in the world's history. Every period of the past has doubtless had its markt characteristics and its importance as related to the future, but no thoughtful person will deny that the present hour is fraught with greater interest to the whole world than any previous hour in human history. Whether we turn to church or state, to religious or to secular matters, the revolutionary character of the age is emphatically markt. Change and uncertainty are stamp upon it; old beliefs are subject to reexamination, if not indeed to repudiation; old economic systems are discarded; the thinkers are distrustful of our present social order, the toilers are dissatisfied with it. In every respect the present is evidently a transitional period. It is characterized by great restlessness and discontent, by antagonism of classes, and by a want of confidence between man and man. It is markt by the coming to the front of a new element of power. The common man is coming to feel and to assert his power among the great forces that move society and sway the future. The newspaper, the political party, the so-called "higher classes" with their wealth and