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Doctrinal Theology.

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ETHICS.

III. THE MORAL SPHERES.

All the various states, relations, and acts of men determined by the moral law may be variously referred to various spheres. They are the spheres of moral *rights* and moral *duties*, and these rights and duties are either *religious*, or *domestic*, or *civic*.

The Spheres of Rights and Duties in General.

The moral law imposes duties and establishes and secures rights. God created man and gave him existence and human endowments; he has established various relations between man and man; he has ordained that man as a moral being should in all his ways and days live in conformity with the divine will. By the law, the utterance of his will, God would determine man's relations, disposition and conduct toward God and toward his fellow-men, and inasmuch as the divine law is authoritative in all its demands, it is man's *duty* in all these respects to fulfill the requirements of the moral law. And in still another aspect the moral obligations are duties. By the divine law men

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Papias and his contemporaries. *A study of Religions thought in the second century.* By Edward H. Hall. Boston and New York. Houghton, Mifflin and Company. 1899.—318 pages. Price, \$1.25.

The author of this "study" is a Darwinist in theology, who looks upon the Scriptures, the Christian church, Christian doctrine, and Christ himself, as products of a long-continued process of evolution on the principle of the survival of the fittest. His historical notions are those peculiar to his school. Of the Synoptic Gospels he says:—

There is little doubt, I think, that modern critics in general would allow that the three earlier Gospels have come to their actual form through successive stages of growth, and that any early dates assigned belong properly to the primitive germ. The amount of change to which that germ has been subjected must be a matter of pure conjecture. Pp. 276 f.

And again:—

But for the unauthorized and exaggerated claims that have been made for our Gospels, the idea here given of a gradual growth out of original oral and written traditions would seem the most natural and satisfactory explanation of their origin. P. 277.

The Holy Ghost appears as a product of doctrinal evolution in the following statement:—

The Holy Ghost as a member of the Christian Trinity, as indeed the philosophical formula of the Trinity itself, belongs to a still later date than the Fourth Gospel. P. 298.

The same theory is advanced concerning the doctrine of Christ, the God-man, in terms as these:—

No doctrine of the incarnation having yet been formulated, the relation of God to Christ was variously conceived, and appears in these different treatises under various forms of union. With Basilides, as with Marcion, if not also with Paul, it is clear that the whole process was apparent rather than real. Pp. 165 f.

And of Christian doctrine in general and the Christian church of the second century we are told:—

At that time, it must be remembered, there could be no genuine heresy, for there was no established faith. No Councils had yet rendered their decisions. There was no accepted Christian canon. There was no Christian Church. Churches there were, scattered through Asia Minor, Palestine, Greece, Rome, Africa, and Gaul; but no Church; no one organization including them all; no single head; no full consciousness of unity. P. 193.

Early Christianity is, according to this poet, not even a monotheistic religion. He says:—

For the theologian of to-day, to have two Gods to account for would be embarrassing. Not so to Marcion; hardly so, indeed, to any of the Christian divines of that early time, accustomed as they were to speak of the "prince of the world," or "prince of the power of the air," with his legions of evil angels or demigods. P. 154.

On the other hand, our author makes the Gospel according to St. John a veritable hotbed of heresies, when he says:—

The recognized earmarks of Gnosticism, Dualism, Docetism, with the Aeons and Demiurge, in reality if not in name, are certainly found in our Gospel, together with the allegory, the occultism, and the radical distinction between spiritual and unspiritual which characterize all Gnostic systems. Pp. 295 f.

With such notions as these concerning early Christianity, its doctrines and their sources, our author fitly unites corresponding opinions of his heroes. Of Papias, whom Eusebius very properly describes as *σμηχρὸς τὸν νοῦν*, is here "the first writer of distinction after the apostolic times,"¹⁾ an "indefatigable investigator."²⁾ Having quoted an extract from Papias, the author continues:—

Now could there be a healthier breeze over the dry wastes of church history than reaches us through these old-time sentences? They breathe of fresh woods and pastures, where the garnering has till now been slight, and the laborers are still but few. We are in

1) p. 2.

2) p. 5.

the creative epoch, it seems, within the echo of living voices; standing at the beginning of things, when the Christian Scriptures are not made but making. The first generations have gone, it is true, but their followers are still lingering on the stage, and have many things to tell which no written document has yet reported. Here is one reverent inquirer at least who knows their worth, and is determined that these precious memories shall not be lost. He did not succeed as he would have wished. The church in later times showed slight appreciation of his work, or at least took little pains to preserve it. Pp. 6 f.

To judge from what we know concerning Papias' work, the church was certainly right in its estimate, as it was in its judgment of his contemporary, Marcion, of whom our author says:—

Here is the first serious and competent critic of ancient records whom we have met, and one whose polemic purpose, if he had such purpose, would have been distinctly served by citing apostolic authority for his doctrines, had he known them, who yet recognizes only one Gospel, and that without a special name. . . . In due course of time his reformatory movement, often exaggerated and compromised by his followers, was ruthlessly crushed, and the Christian Church took quite a different direction. Pp. 94 f.

Of course, the fictitious discrepancy between Paul and the other apostles, which the Tuebingen critics have taken over from Marcion, is prominent also in our author's construction of history and theology. He says:—

To Marcion, as we have already seen, Paul was the only true Apostle. He was the "Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father."¹ He had a Gospel of his own to preach, very different from that of the older Apostles, whom he had so sharply rebuked for their "dissimulation."² Paul was the real representative of Christ and his word.

We cannot be surprised that Marcion found a difference between the earlier Gospels and Paul's Epistles (supposing that his Gospels and Epistles corresponded with ours), for the conflicting views of Christ which these writings present strike every thoughtful reader

1) Gal. 1, 1.

2) Gal. 2, 13. See Tertull. ad. Marc. I, 20; IV, 3; V, 1.

to-day. In the Gospels, we have the homely details of the Master's daily life and speech, with hardly a hint of his celestial functions; in the Epistles, the celestial functions become all in all, with hardly a hint at the human career. In the Gospels, the Jewish life and ceremonial are frankly assumed; in the Epistles, they are as frankly dismissed, as "weak and beggarly elements," to which no Christian should desire again to be in bondage.¹⁾ Pp. 138 f.

And as Marcion is the true disciple of Paul, so the Gnostics in general are the great leading theologians of early Christianity:—

In later days, as is well known, Gnosticism was declared a heresy; and it may be expected of me, before dropping the subject, to draw the exact lines which separate it from Christianity. Some of my readers have already taken exception, perhaps, to my treating the movement as if it were really part and parcel of Christian history. It must be remembered, however, that we are not treating Christian history as a whole; we are standing within the second century, to see what was happening then and there; and with the best purpose in the world, I can see no distinction whatever at that time between the three leaders here mentioned²⁾ and other Christian teachers. P. 190.

And further:—

If Justin and Irenaeus have a right to their views of the great Christian mysteries, so have Basilides, and Valentine, and Bardesanes, and Saturninus. P. 194.

And once more:—

Gnosticism was simply the theological attitude of the time, the form in which its religious philosophy chose to shape itself. P. 177.

To refute such talk as this in a review would be doing injustice to our readers. We have given them these extracts as an object lesson, and as samples for those among us who may be desirous of devoting a day or two to the perusal of some recent product of modern theology.

A. G.

1) Gal. 4, 9.

2) Marcion, Basilides, and Valentine. G.
