

British American Presbyterian

Vol. 6—No. 7.

TORONTO, CANADA, FRIDAY, MARCH 16, 1877

[Whole No. 267

Contributors and Correspondents

For the Presbyterian.]

MODERN BIBLICAL HYPER-ORITISM.

BY REV. JOHN GRAY, M.A., ORILLIA.

No. IV.

The history of the Church has frequently given rise to this axiom, that half truths are more dangerous than positive errors.

The only view of our blessed Lord that satisfactorily explains all the facts revealed respecting Him in the Bible, is that which presents Him as one person with two distinct natures, the divine and human.

The Unitarian, adopting the half-truth of his humanity, and ignoring the complement of this half-truth, His perfect divinity, has elaborated a system of doctrine, which sets forth the facts and teachings of the Word in a painfully imperfect, and one-sided manner.

And, though in a somewhat different manner from our Lord, the Holy Scriptures possess a human, and a divine character.

But many German rationalists, with their English-speaking servile imitators, treat the Bible with bold irreverence, as if it were solely human in its claims and teachings. Overlooking the divine glory that overshadowed the God-inspired Book, they start low and carnal theories regarding many parts of it, and cut and carve its inspired statements with the knife of the inner critical spirit.

A notable example of the manner in which a professedly pious teacher of theology may be led astray, by a slavish following of continental rationalists, is seen in the case of the youthful Professor Smith.

As might be expected from his former statements, he assails the title of the Canticles, which assigns their authorship to Solomon, in the face of strong evidence, both external and internal in favor of the royal authorship.

"The power of tradition has been the second great source of confusion of opinion, about the song of Solomon. To tradition we owe the title, which apparently indicates Solomon as the author, and not merely as the subject of the book. The authority of titles in the Old Testament (see Bible) is often questionable, and in the present case it is certain on linguistic grounds, that the title is not from the hand that wrote the poem."

Following still in the wake of his rationalistic friends, Professor Smith speaks in this fashion of the view of this sacred song, held by the vast majority of pious commentators in all ages. "To tradition, again, we owe the still powerful prejudice in favor of an allegorical interpretation, that is, of the view, that from verse to verse, the Song sets forth the history of a spiritual, and not merely of an earthly love. To apply such an exegesis to Canticles is to violate one of the first principles of reasonable interpretation."

The views held by commentators respecting this beautiful song, may be classed as the *sensuous*, and the *spiritual*, with its subdivisions of allegorical and typical.

The Sensuous may be regarded as the rationalistic, and purely modern theory, and the latter as the ancient and common view, held by the pious in all ages. Is it necessary to intimate that the Professor strongly advocates the sensuous theory, and seeks by one sided assertions to overthrow the spiritual?

He argues thus. "We are not at liberty to seek for allegory, except where the natural sense is incomplete. This is not the case in the song of Solomon."

"Nor is there any allusion to Canticles in the New Testament."

There is in the course of his argument the customary reckless assault on the purity of the Hebrew text.

"A more legitimate explanation of difficulties seems at least in some cases to lie in the state of the text."

In regard to chapter iv, v. 6., he says that "it ought to be observed that the words in question were subsequently added from the version of Aquila, which substantially represents the Massoretic text, yet the false reading has established itself so firmly in MSS. of the Septuagint that our knowledge of the interpolation is almost accidental, and we have no certainty that other interpolations of the same kind have not been made without our knowledge. In these circumstances, the argument drawn from the versions for the purity of the Hebrew text has no great value. On the other hand the a priori probability of interpolations and corruptions is very great in a poem like Canticles, passages from which were used among the Jews as amatory songs." After stating that the allegorical exegesis "fixed the text in its 'presumably most interpolated form,'" he proceeds in

this strain, "Thus it is not inconceivable that the sensual passage in chapter vii. which if genuine can only be an interlude of some unexplained kind, is nothing more than the insertion of an early reader, a *propos* of the mention of the dance of Mahanaim."

What unsophisticated reader of these remarks, would but conclude that the Song of Songs is so full of errors and interpolations as to be untrustworthy. And this unsettling process depends, not on any real basis of fact, or critical discovery, but on the conjectures and high-tuned discernment, through an inward critical taste, of the learned Aberdeen Professor.

After the display of so much superior wisdom and critical insight into the book, it may not be out of place to briefly describe the sensuous theory of this champion of modern rationalistic views.

He regards the poem as dramatic, using "dialogue and monologue to develop the story." Its structure is "amphibian."

The plot is as follows:

King Solomon, passing by Shulem, accidentally sees, and is smitten with the beauty of a young Shullamite, the daughter of a widow. He conducts her to his tent and seeks to gain her affections. But these had been previously bestowed on a neighboring shepherd. After trying in vain to dazzle her with the splendor of his court, and finding all his endeavors to win her heart unsuccessful, he releases her, and she returns home to her attached lover. The plot has also a political object in view, favoring the conservative ideas of the northern tribes, in opposition to the innovations of Solomon.

"A poem in the northern dialect, with a northern heroine, and scenery contrasting the pure simplicity of Galilee with the corrupt splendor of the court of Solomon, is clearly the embodiment of one phase of the feeling which separated the ten tribes from the house of David. The kingdom of Solomon was an innovation on old traditions, partly for good and partly for evil. But novelties of progress and novelties of corruption were alike distasteful to the north, which had long been proud of its loyalty to the principles of the good old times."

These extracts will show the spirit in which the article has been written as well as its destructive and faith-unsettling tendencies.

In studying the parts of the confession of faith, bearing on the canon (chapter i., sections 2, 3, and 8), its statements are seen to be somewhat meagre and general.

The principles that underlie these sections are the names and number of the sacred books, the exclusion of the apocrypha from their list, the particular order in which they are given, and the original languages in which they were written.

He then, who takes from the Books of Scripture, any one of them, who throws into confusion the order in which they are stated, and casts constant doubts on the purity of the text of the original languages of the Bible, cannot but be accused of violating the teachings of the confession in letter and in spirit, and assailing the integrity of our present canon.

If the text, especially of the Old Testament, be corrupt and interpolated in many places, the doctrine of verbal and plenary inspiration becomes very uncertain in its operations and influences. And he who believes in such corruptions and interpolations, can possess no true basis for such an important truth.

Such attacks as those of Professor Smith on the very foundations of our faith cannot but produce very disastrous results, and be fraught with tremendous power for evil.

And, however reluctant we may have been to expose what we consider to be very grave errors in one occupying a chair of theology, we shall feel that one of our objects has been gained, if the attention of several of the learned Professors of our Canadian colleges be drawn to the subject, and the false principles and heterodox views presented by Prof. Smith, exposed and gainsaid. What a contrast might be exhibited between him, and his youthful contemporary, Dr. F. L. Patton, of Chicago. The former was thrust at once from the probationers' list into the Aberdeen chair, before his opinions were matured, or his theological principles fully established. And youthfulness and inexperience have produced their proverbial harvest. The latter, with his several years' experience in the pastorate, and also in our Canadian mission field, entered on his professional duties with well defined views on most theological topics, and his conflict with Mr. Swing, unfolded a mind of unusual logical power and definite and not hazy theological opinions.

And these two, Smith and Patton represent inside the Church the destructive and constructive tendencies of the age, as well

as the dreamy and the vague, and the clear and crystalline grasp of divine truth peculiar to each.

A traveller relates that once when a train of cars was passing through a western American plain, a huge buffalo, with characteristic fury attacked the marvellous monster. For a moment the train was almost stopped as it encountered the onset of the beast, but without an effort pushing to one side the mangled remains of the crushed animal, it pursued its speedy course across the plain. And the Bible borne along the path marked out for it by its Divine Author, and dragging behind it the precious freight of saving and sanctifying truth embodied in the creeds and confessions of Christendom, pursues the even tenor of its way, crushing and flinging from its resistless sides the *membra disjecta* of infidel scientists, rationalistic hyper-critics, and pious, but latitudinarian socialists, who butt their puny heads against its impregnable bulwarks.

For the Presbyterian.]

ORIENTAL OCCUPATIONS.—THE TAILOR.

BY REV. JOHN DUNBAR, DUNBARTON.

Having written already on the manufacture of cloth, attention is now called, as a natural if not necessary consequence to the manufacture of clothing. Although the word tailor is neither found in the Bible nor sanctioned by oriental usage, yet we read of the needle, of sewing and of needle-work, but as neither of these terms nor all combined, either cover, or convey all that is intended by me, I fall back upon the term tailor now so common and withal so comprehensive. It is somewhat noteworthy however, that while frequent mention is made of covering for the head, the body, and the feet, yet we never once read, as a distinct occupation, of the latter, the tailor, or the shoemaker, or of any such cognate terms, leading us to the inference that clothing was not only all home-made, but made by the female domestics of the household. Knowing so little of the workers, let us look then, a little at the work.

The simplest and most ancient articles of clothing were the fig-leaf aprons, or rather girdles of the first pair, and although neither a Highlander, nor the son of a Highlander, yet to me the conclusion seems unavoidable, that here we have the origin, as in our own day we have the continuance, down through all time, though in various forms, of the veritable Highland kilt. Whether these aprons of Adam and Eve were the conjoint productions of the ingenuity and handiwork of both, or whether each one wore respectively that which each made, the record saith not; all that we read is, "they made themselves aprons," and soon thereafter God caused them to make "coats of skins" as being at once more comfortable and more suitable, and if, as is supposed, these coats were of skins of animals offered in sacrifice to God, such clothing would ever carry with it a direct, as well as a deep symbolical meaning. Let none, however, be carried away with the idea that coats of skins then, bore any resemblance to coats of skins now, so comfortable and convenient in our Canadian winters, but rather regard them, as similar to the fig-leaf girdles in shape, differing it may be only in size. It is somewhat remarkable that after this mention of clothing we read no more about garments for well nigh eight hundred years, assuredly showing that the fashions were not so fickle and frequently changing then, as in our day. During that long period however, they seem to have increased considerably in length, extending up over the shoulders and down the knees. The making was simple as the process was short, a piece of cloth is measured off, a hole cut in the middle for the head to pass through, the sides are then sewn together leaving openings for the arms. Such it is said forms a dress not uncommon in Arabia at the present day. By and bye sleeves were attached, at first short and extending only to the elbows, but afterwards down to the knees, so that it thus somewhat resembled a shirt. In such garments workmen performed their daily toils. The sleeves being wide were easily thrown back, hence the expression to "make bare the arm," just as we in summer roll up the sleeves for freer and fuller action. The body being somewhat loose was bound round the loins with a girdle, which at once gave vigour and gracefulness to the person, and fuller liberty for his work, so that to "gird up the loins" became a significant figure of fitness and readiness for service, and to "loose the girdle" implied giving way to indolence and repose. When a person had no other garment than this, he was said to be "naked," just as we speak of a man at work being stripped. Thus we are told

that Isaiah walked naked, that Saul prophesied naked, and that Peter was naked in the ship. In these and kindred cases the word naked, simply means stripped, or not in full dress. In time this garment grew to be both larger and longer, hanging more loosely round the body, reaching as low as the ankles and frequently fringed at the bottom; hence for either walking or working the girdle became a necessity not only for binding it close to the body, but also for tucking up the skirts, thereby leaving the feet free. Besides girding up the loins the girdle served many other purposes, one end, for instance, being doubled back, and the edges sewed up, served for a purse, hence the origin doubtless of the Highlander's *sporran*; in it too, the Scribe carried his ink-horn, and there too, the Arab carries his dirk, his hankerochief and smoking materials, while for the sake of ornament and display these girdles were often richly ornamented.

Besides this inner and under garment, there was in after times an outer or upper one. This was not so much a made garment as simply a piece of cloth, some three or four yards long and about two yards wide, occupying a position and serving a purpose similar to the Scottish plaid, to which it is more than probable that it gave origin. These were used not only as a protection from the weather, but also, like the plaid, to carry things in. This may have been the garment with which Noah's sons covered their father's nakedness, and this too, may have been the mantle of Elijah. Thus, the Israelites carried their kneading troughs (small wooden bowls or pieces of skin), when they departed from Egypt "bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders." Thus too, was carried the "lap full" of wild gourds, and in this way also Ruth carried her "six measures of barley;" hence the meaning of the expression "good measure given into the bosom." While this upper garment was used as an article of clothing by day, it was also very often used as a covering by night, hence we read "if thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down, for that is his covering only, it is raiment for the skin, wherein shall he sleep?" Besides the common, there were the sacred garments of the priests, in number, nature, and form all according to divine appointment. These will be noticed in the order in which they were put on; first the "linen breeches" of fine twined linen, and blue and purple and scarlet, of needle-work, then the "bonnet," also of fine linen, doubled round many times and sewed together. While the dress of the high priest included all already mentioned, he had in addition thereto, first a "robe" which was one piece of woven work, curiously wrought with gold-wire, purple and blue and scarlet thread. It somewhat resembled a long loose shirt, strengthened and ornamented around the neck with a border. This reached down to the feet, and on the lower hem there were seventy-two little golden bells, alternated with pomegranates all around. These were for causing a sound when he went into the holy place and when he came out, "that he die not;" then the "ephod" a kind of short cloak consisting of two parts, one of which hung over the shoulders and the other over the breast, both being united by a clasp or buckle on each shoulder and secured as we read by a "curious girdle, round about, under the arms." Upon each shoulder also was an onyx stone, on each of which were engraved the names of six of the tribes of Israel; then the "breast-plate" about ten inches square, not made however, of metal, but of the same sort of cloth as the ephod and doubled so as to form a kind of pouch or bag, in which were placed the "Urim and Thummim." On this breast-plate were set twelve precious stones, each different from the other and on each was engraven the name of the head of one of the tribes of Israel. This was fastened on the breast of the high priest with rings and ribbons, and chains of gold; then the last was the "mitre" or head-dress made of a number of yards of fine linen sewed in circular folds and inscribed upon a plate of pure gold fastened in front of the mitre were the significant words, "Holiness to the Lord." While all the sacred garments of the priesthood were to be made not only for use, but "for glory and beauty," yet those of the high priest were far more costly and magnificent than those of the common priests. Neither, however, were allowed to wear their sacred robes except when officiating. Their ordinary garments, though similar in shape were simply of fine linen, clean and white.

In addition to all these, mention is made of the "royal apparel of blue and white," which belonged to kings and princes, in which Mordecai was honored, and in

which Herod died,—the "scurlet robe," in which our Saviour was arrayed in mock majesty was a military cloak,—the "wedding garment," also white, was a festal robe, and provided by the maker of the coat,—the "cloak" of Paul was a travelling cloak, with hood to protect against the weather, and "sackcloth" was a coarse fabric, made of goat's hair and other materials, it was thick and worn by mourners. While the difference between the men and women of the East was by no means so strongly marked as with us, yet there was a distinction, and Moses expressly forbade any exchange of apparel between the sexes. In earlier times the common dress of the females, was as cheap and simple as that of the males, and in many respects resembling it. Soon, however, differences developed themselves, not only between male and female attire, but between the attire of females, for in the time of Jacob there were different kinds of clothing which distinguished the unmarried, the married and the widows, from each other; and thus females' attire went on developing from the simple and essential to the complicated and the ornamental, until in the time of Isaiah it presented a catalogue well nigh as formidable as that of the present day. From the general character of the Eastern dress, loose and largo, we see at once how one person might, without inconvenience, wear the clothes of another. Not so with us, but with them it mattered but little for whom a suit was first made. Thus there was no difficulty in the mother of Jacob clothing him in the "goodly raiment of Esau," or of Jonathan fitting his robe and garments on his friend David. These garments once made never needed to be remodelled, for then, fashion, fickle, and formidable as it is, and often fantastic, had neither imposed her tax nor inflicted her tyranny, and thus people could contentedly either wear their clothes or lay them past without the shadow of a thought ever disturbing their mind that they either were, or would be out of fashion.

Presbytery of Huron.

At a meeting of the Presbytery of Huron held in January the following were appointed Commissioners to the General Assembly: Ministers, Messrs. Ferguson, Young, McQuig, McQuarrie, Fritchard, Leask; elders, Jackson, Strachan, Turnbull, Matheson, Gardner, Wilson. At an adjourned meeting held since, Melville Church, Brussels, was separated from Walton, and Mr. Ferguson remains minister of Melville Church with a stipend of \$750, with a manse. Blyth and Belgrove, were also separated into two independent charges, and Mr. McLean remains minister of Blyth with a stipend of \$800 and a manse. Mr. Thomeon of McKillop, accepted a call to Union Church, Brucefield, and his induction took place the 21st February. At a Presbyterian Sabbath School Convention held in Clinton in connection with the Presbytery of Huron, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted.—I. That this convention returns hearty and sincere thanks to Almighty God for His great goodness in permitting so large a delegation from all parts of the Presbytery, to attend this the first Presbyterian Sabbath School Convention in the County of Huron.—2nd. That it is a source of great pleasure to have so many favorable reports of the work done in the various Sabbath Schools within the bounds; still your committee believe that much greater energy may be thrown into the work, and therefore they make the following recommendations to be carried out as fully as possible.—I. That all Sabbath Schools be kept open during the whole year, if at all possible.—II. That the International series of Lessons be adopted in all our schools.—III. That Teachers and Superintendents use all helps within their reach, so as not to abuse them, as aids only. The practice of teaching with lesson helps in the hand is strongly deprecated, and we urge earnest and prayerful study upon all who undertake the important and responsible work of Sabbath School teachers.—IV. That pupils be taught to give liberally for the spread of the gospel at home and abroad; and in order the better to inculcate this duty it is considered necessary to take up collections at every meeting.—V. That Superintendents be requested to select the Hymns in such a way as to be specially applicable to the subject of the day's lesson, and that the practice of singing be cultivated to a greater extent than at present.—VI. That the committee cannot too strongly insist upon the punctual and regular attendance of Superintendents and Teachers. If, however, absence is unavoidable on the part of any teacher he should make provision for his class, or give timely notice to Superintendent.—VII. That when pupils are absent, the teacher should visit such children and their parents as soon as convenient, and do all that can possibly be done to secure regularity of attendance.—VIII. Lastly, that the great importance of holding regular weekly meetings for the lesson cannot be over estimated, and we respectfully urge that such be established either on the Sabbath day or week day in connection with all our schools. Your Committee, in conclusion, respectfully recommend that the Presbytery shall make arrangements for an annual convention, as in opinion of your committee a great good to the Church at large would be the result.