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TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1884.

ONE cannot help admiring the manner in which the American people bow to the vote of the majority even though the majority is provokingly small. A few of the professional politicians talk about an "appeal to arms," and "fighting it out to the bitter end" and indulge mock heroics of various kinds, but the good citizens of all parties say let the will of the people rule if the majority be but one. We have not seen anything finer in spirit for many a day than the utterances on this point of the great religious journals of the North. The New York *Evangelist* was strongly in favour of Blaine, but bows to the popular will in a most admirable article which it ends by saying: "Even though we may not like Cleveland it is more Christian to pray for him than to anathematize him." Other journals write in the same strain. Our neighbours know that they are a self-governed people, and that the majority must rule or their Democracy must turn into chaos. The Christian people of the great Republic save from destruction. If the destiny of the country was left in the hands of the professional politicians the life of the Republic would soon come to an end. Scurvy politicians often sneer at the Church. Were it not for the Church they would not have a country to rob. Real statesmen know this and acknowledge it, too.

THERE is a rather amusing controversy going on just now between Dr. Newman Smyth, one of the apostles of the new Andover Theology, and the New York *Evangelist*. The *Evangelist* criticised some recent writings of the Andover theologian and rather damaged them by the handling. In fact the editor was altogether too strong for the professor of the new school. The professor sought space to reply and the *Evangelist* gave it, though publishers rarely give space to an author to reply to criticisms that he himself invites. A second article followed and space was again given to a complaint that the *Evangelist* had not properly comprehended the writer's positions. The *Evangelist* says it comprehended all that was written in so far as it could comprehend such "nebulous" matter, and asks Dr. Smyth to try and say what he does mean. Dr. Smyth was rejected some years ago by the Visitors of Andover on the ground that he lacked "profoundness of thought and precision of expression." He is not gaining much in precision of expression as everybody knows who tries to wade through his expositions of the new theology. May it not be that the new theology is itself "nebulous." When a man who has no precision of expression, and no clear views of truth to express, undertakes to instruct others he makes it very hard for his readers.

THE *Mail* has been trying to show lately that the Christian religion is in great danger of being banished from this earth. The special thing that we wish to notice here is the peculiar way that our contemporary proves some of its positions. After making a number of statements the evidence is produced in this way: "A writer in such and such a magazine says so and so." Now, does the *Mail* really expect that anybody at this time of day will accept a magazine article as conclusive proof that Christianity is dying out? The magazine itself may be infidel or agnostic, and it would be just as reasonable to accept its statements about Christianity as accept all the *Globe* says about Tories or the *Mail* about Grits. The writer in the magazine may be a soured, disappointed man; he may be a crank; he may be a fool; possibly he may be an avowed agnostic or an agnostic in disguise. We make

no special reference to anything the *Mail* actually did quote, but desire to say that our contemporary's style of argument is an exceedingly poor one. We could easily show from magazine articles that daily newspapers are little better than a nuisance. Does the *Mail* think so? The *Mail* prides itself on its good English. Richard Grant White, a noted magazine writer, thinks daily newspapers are corrupting the language. Does the *Mail* think so?

A FEW years ago one of our western ministers preached a series of sermons to his congregation on the ordinances of the Gospel, and of course gave a sermon or two on Baptism. The rev. gentleman was astonished to find the daily papers telling the world one morning after he had preached on Baptism that a great controversy was raging in his town on the immersion question. Principal Grant is having a similar experience in Kingston just now. The learned Principal is preaching a series of university sermons on the Gospel commission, and Bishop Cleary, of the Limestone City, has said some things that are supposed to be criticisms of the Principal's views on miracles. The public are of course duly informed that a great controversy is raging between Principal Grant and Bishop Cleary. Now, it seems to us that the proper course in such circumstances is for every preacher to go right on as Principal Grant is doing and say to his own congregation just what he intended to say without the slightest regard to outside criticism. Surely a minister can preach to his own congregation what he believes to be true without being charged with provoking controversy. Surely he can say what he believes to be the truth about Baptism without being accused of attacking the Baptists and what he believes to be true about miracles without being accused of attacking the Roman Catholic Church. The fair, manly way is to preach what we believe as a church to be true, and if Bishop Cleary or any other man does not like it his dislike is his own affair. Presbyterian ministers are not supposed to please Catholic Bishops by their sermons. If they did they would not be Presbyterian ministers very long.

#### THE SACRED BIOGRAPHY.\*

THE most interesting of all biographies is the life of Jesus Christ, the God-man. The inspired prophets foretold His advent, described His characteristics, predicted His sufferings, death and rising again from the dead, and the universal triumph of His kingdom. The four evangelists narrated the leading incidents of His eventful life, and the remarkable circumstances attending His crucifixion. They also give clear indications of the scope and spirit of His teaching. His apostles after His ascension continued to preach His truth while life lasted. In the apostolic and subsequent ages great interest in the life of Jesus was manifested. Numerous pseudo-gospels went into circulation, and tradition was busy in constructing impossible fictions.

Amid the complex forces of the present there is no diminution of the interest felt in the marvellous life of the Son of Man. In our own day destructive criticism and consecrated learning alike have been devoted to a close study of the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. The avowedly hostile work of Strauss and his imitators, the plausible negations of Renan have their counterparts in the erratic brilliancy of "Ecce Homo," and in Young's more just and reverent "Christ of History," in Farrar's "Life of Christ," and in the comprehensive work bearing the same title by Dr. Cunningham Geikie. All of these works have been extensively read, showing that the object to which they are devoted is still one of absorbing interest to thousands of thoughtful and intelligent readers.

Distinct from any of the works just named another valuable contribution to this department of Christian Apologetics has recently been added, "The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah." Its author was specially qualified for the work he has undertaken and executed with so much ability. A Jew by birth and education, he came to realize that Jesus was the Messiah promised to the fathers. He accepted His teaching and entered on His service. For a time he laboured as a missionary to his kinsmen on the continent of Europe.

\*THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JESUS THE MESSIAH. By Alfred Edersheim, M.A., Oxon., D.D., Ph.D. Two volumes. (New York: Arson D. F. Randolph & Co.; Toronto: Williamson & Co.)

Then he accepted a charge in connection with the Free Church of Scotland, in Old Aberdeen. He afterwards became Warburtonian lecturer at Lincoln's Inn. He has through life been a most diligent student and has made valuable contributions to philosophical literature.

Among the studies occupying his attention he has given an important place to Hebrew literature in all its branches. He is thoroughly conversant with Rabbinic lore. The cultivation of this particular field has enabled him to render the important service to sacred truth of which these volumes are the result. Dr. Edersheim indicates that the primary purpose of his work is, from careful and independent study, to ascertain the meaning of Christ's life, to reach the truth irrespective of consequences. This purpose has been steadily adhered to throughout the two volumes of which the work consists. The result arrived at by the author, and doubtless by many candid readers also, is a clearer understanding of the person and work of Christ, a profounder love for Him and a firmer conviction than ever that He is all He claims to be. In sending forth his book the author says: "If anything personal may intrude into these concluding lines, I would fain also designate what I have written as *Apologia pro vita mea* (alike in its fundamental direction and even ecclesiastically), if indeed that may be called an *Apologia* which is the confession of this inmost conviction of mind and heart. "Lord, to whom shall we go? The words of eternal life hast Thou! And we have believed and know that Thou art the Holy one of God."

Another object aimed at in the "Life and Times of Jesus" was to delineate the actual circumstances of the time in which He lived, the manners and customs of the people, the intellectual and spiritual life of the age, and the special influences moulding these. This may be said to be one of the distinctive features of the present work. It not only gives movement and colour to the narrative, but the clear and keen perceptions of the writer enable him to separate what is essential for his purpose from what is accidental or trivial. There is no wearisome enumeration of needless details cumbering his pages. What is fitted to remove misconception and give a definite view to the reader, is plainly and concisely stated. Much valuable information is imparted in reasonable limits, and all subordinated to the principal object the author has in view.

There is also an admirable analysis of the intellectual and religious thought and opinion in our Saviour's time. This is done for the purpose of clearing away the objections that the infidel, rationalistic and mythic theories have sought to raise. Here, too, it will be felt that Dr. Edersheim has done his work well. He has written with candour and honesty of purpose. It may not be that to every reader he offers an entirely satisfactory solution of all difficulties, but to the candid truth-seeker he affords assistance.

The main body of the work is also a very valuable elucidation of the Gospel narrative as given by the four Evangelists. The author says in his preface: "I may truthfully designate it also a Commentary on the Four Gospels—though an informal one."

From this meagre outline it will be seen that in several respects this is an important contribution to the higher Christian literature of our time. The remarkable favour and interest with which it has been welcomed show that the subject it seeks to elucidate is one of great public interest, and that the book has met the expectations it has excited. The first edition was exhausted in a few months, and the second is now issued.

To the scholarly reader the value of the work is greatly enhanced by the number of subjects that receive fuller treatment in the Appendices than would be appropriate in the body of the work. Much light is thrown upon difficult points and information given respecting some imperfectly known portions of Hebrew literature. In the Appendices the same condensation and clearness characteristic of the text are to be found.

The style is free and flowing, yet pure and accurate. The average reader can readily follow the exposition of the Alexandrian Neo Platonism with as much ease and interest as he peruses the graphic delineation of historical incidents. Dr. Edersheim exhibits the same carefulness in matters of minute detail in his endeavour to give an adequate elucidation of his main theme. It is no crude and hastily-executed piece of task-work, but the result of close application, patient