

himself may serve to inspire others to advance against—say, the close array of the Philistines. To change the figure, these straggling paragraphs do not aim at the completed outline and solid figure of the critical essay. They are little more than the notes we pencil along the margin of those books we read with pleasure. Transferred from their original entry, they are inserted here in the hope that they will prove finger-posts, neither unsightly nor misleading, to guide the feet of straying readers into those paths of pleasantness which meander endlessly through the world of books. Also, I take refuge in the device which I fly like a warning flag at the head of this column. It does not promise too much. A great poet gave it to us in a pleasant mood, and I must not shrink from wearing the badge of all our tribe.

New Testament Theology.*

IN no respects do modern methods of the study of Theology differ more widely from those of earlier times, whether potristic, scholastic, Roman or Reformed, than in the recognition of the importance of the personal and historical elements. In former days if a writer wanted to prove the truth of a certain doctrine, he traversed the Bible from its first page to its last, picking out texts anywhere and anyhow, sometimes with a sublime disregard of their connection, in order to obtain the assent of his readers. It has now long been seen that such a method was entirely unscientific and its results far from trustworthy. A safer and a more reasonable way has been found in the historical method—the method which takes up the study of a writer or a period, and tries to ascertain the point of view and the whole scheme of the theology of that person or of that time.

It is obvious that there can be no study of this kind more important than that of the Theology of the New Testament. We are not, of course, disparaging Old Testament Theology, which has been admirably handled by Oehler, Schulz, and others, and which cannot properly be neglected; but the great subject of study for theologians must always be the New Testament; and, as we have now come clearly to see, the New Testament in its historical order.

One of the first workers in this field was the great Neander, in his admirable work on the Apostolic age, and he has been followed by Reuss, in one of the most fascinating works on the subject, including, however, the teaching of our Lord as well as that of the Apostles. Among later works we should mention especially the most learned one of Weiss.

The present work of Beyschlag has, quite naturally, been compared with that of Weiss; and we are substantially in agreement with what Beyschlag says on the subject of the difference between them. "We in Germany," he says, "prize Weiss's book as the most thorough and complete collection of materials for an historical account of the New Testament religion, but no one can call it an historical account in the proper sense." This is a little too strong; but it points in the right direction. We should strongly recommend students of New Testament Theology to have both books at hand. In fact, whilst we admit that Beyschlag's book is the more thoroughly organized, we are more disposed to accept the conclusions of Weiss, as being nearer our views of Christian truth.

The order and method of the present work are beyond praise. First, the author treats the Teaching of Jesus according to the synoptics, and we have admirable remarks on the Kingdom of God and on the other leading topics. In Book II., we have the Teaching of Jesus according to the Gospel of St. John; and there we note with satisfaction that Beyschlag holds unhesitatingly to the Johannean authorship of the fourth Gospel. We must add, however, that it is with a feeling of pain that we learn that he does not hold the proper Godhead of Christ, nor does he believe that it is taught by St. John.

The third Book deals with the "views of the first Apostles," first as represented in the Acts, next as set forth by St. James, thirdly in the first epistle of St. Peter—the second he regards as spurious, and late. Fourthly, he considers the Pauline system, at great length, and generally with supreme ability. Here, however, again, we find the

same need for caution as in his interpretation of St. John. He does not accept the Nicene faith; and we regard the Nicene confession as of the essence of Christianity.

Next comes the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews, admirably handled, with the exception already indicated. When he comes to the Apocalypse, he clearly leans to the opinion that it is the work of the Apostle, and utterly scouts the notion that it is compounded of a Jewish fragment and some Christian patches added at a later period. There is much in his exposition of the Apocalypse which is of great interest and value.

As we have noted one cardinal point in which we must separate widely from our author, we must mention that he is sound and clear on the resurrection of Christ.

It will be seen, from what we have said, that we have here a work of the highest rank, which no real theologian can afford to disregard. If, on the one hand, it must be read with caution and reserve, on the other, it is a mine from which may be dug much golden religious and theological thought.

Can Brutality be Weeded Out?

A GENERATION ago most people calmly acquiesced in the existence among us of all manner of evil—physical and moral—on the supposition that so it had always been and so it must always be; and that the sole hope of amelioration lay in the reformation of each individual who might come under influences sufficiently powerful to regenerate him. Now the present writer would be one of the last to minimise this source of reform. It is the main source of the real moral elevation of the individual, and—as society is made up of individuals—of society as well. But it is not the only means of lessening the misery and evil of the world. Science, which teaches us so many things, has taught us now, pretty generally, how a great deal of the physical suffering of humanity is due to removable causes, and how a great proportion of the misery, which is not physical, is closely connected with these removable causes. We cannot, it is true, work a moral change in any man, through mere law and restriction, even though law and restriction have their place as preventives of vice and crime, and thus of great benefactors of humanity at large. This is the strong argument for prohibition, which, I think, takes much more philosophic ground than the arguments opponents recognise; and, therefore—when the wisdom of the majority of our people is cleared from the selfishness which biasses the judgment of so many—must eventually win the day. At all events it is in line with most of the great preventive movements of the day, to one of which attention has been recently strongly drawn in a contemporary periodical. Can viciousness and brutality be in any degree eliminated from our civilized life? This is clearly an important question, and if it could be answered in the affirmative we should all surely hail the answer with delight. And it seems to be, in some degree answered in the conclusions reached in a most suggestive paper in the *Arena* on the treatment of imbeciles, by a lady who has, as teacher in a school for imbeciles, devoted much attention to the subject.

The writer of this paper makes a distinction, at the outset, between imbeciles and idiots, which is not sufficiently observed; and defines imbecile children as those "who are feeble-minded, who are naturally slow, who are blunted morally and intellectually, but who show no special defect." And it is precisely this class which, if she is right, constitute the greatest danger to the peace of society, simply because the danger is not sufficiently recognized and guarded, as it is in the case of the idiotic and insane. For, as she asserts, from close observation "such children are totally unfitted to battle with the world, are the legitimate offspring in numerous instances, of the gaol, the infirmary and the insane asylum, and they grow up, following in the parental footsteps, and leaving to their own progeny the same inheritance of vice, disease and laziness; always either actively evil agencies, or a passive burden on society." "The imbecile is the result of corrupt living, frequently of guilt, sometimes of ancestry unbrightened for ages by a single responsible, moral individual. In every case where there has not been some pre-natal shock, accident or sickness, somewhere in the family annals there has been opium-eating, immoral conduct, drunkenness, insanity, imbecility, or actual crime, or perhaps all of these. The large majority of feeble-minded children come

* "New Testament Theology," or, Historical Account of the Teaching of Jesus and of Primitive Christianity according to the New Testament Sources." By Dr. Willibald Beyschlag. Two vol., price 18s. net. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark. Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Co. 1895].