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# THE AUBURN SEMINARY REVIEW.

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What shall be the future of THE AUBURN SEMINARY REVIEW? The last issue of the present editors is a good time to look over the past and think of the future. The REVIEW has had a creditable record. It was started by students and has been under student management. At the same time the articles published have been mostly by men of mature experience and thought. Many have been interested in the REVIEW and have generously contributed to its success. Valuable letters have come from our alumni in foreign lands, and the Alumna with the aid of Dr. Beecher has been growing in fulness and interest. The short life of the REVIEW has proved its right to be.

But a live thing must grow, and we have large ambition for this child of Auburn. Some of our alumni have suggested that the REVIEW should develop into an official organ of the seminary largely controlled by the Faculty. The thought of the majority of our church, the liberal-conservative, or the conservative-liberal, has now no adequate expression in review or paper. But our Faculty are over-worked men, trying to enrich our curriculum and cover the fields of study, six men doing the work for which other seminaries have from ten to fifteen men. It is evident that our professors cannot be asked to assume new responsibility. The immediate future of

object of the conference was attained by suggesting to each association the valuable working points of all the others. Prominence was also given to promoting scriptural habits of giving among students — a subject having too little place in our prayerful thought.

Representative as the two conferences were this fall, at Oberlin, O., and Madison, N. J., we look with expectative interest to the international convention of theological students and professors to be held next autumn, which is invited to meet at Princeton seminary.

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### THE BELOVED JOHN — WHERE IS HE ?

In the famous painting of the Last Supper, now so extensively known through various reproductions, no face next to that of the Master attracts spontaneously so much interest as that of the young man who reclined on the breast of Jesus in that memorable feast. In that face, in which youthful sensibility and tender love and inward purity and devoutness are so strikingly comingled, Leonardo has happily incorporated the loftiest and sweetest ideal to which the Christian church has ever been able to attain of the disciple whom Jesus loved. While Paul has commanded universal recognition for his philosophic genius and doctrinal skill, and Peter has been honored for his earnest vigor and apostolic zeal, and James has been revered for his profound ethical convictions and practical honesty, John has through all the ages been held, not merely in reverence but in tender affection, for those antithetic qualities which the brush of the great painter has so well portrayed. The beloved apostle stands like a Grecian statue before the sympathetic vision of the Christ, as true and pure as marble, as thoughtful as he is sincere and affectionate — the synonym of meditative spirituality and of unselfish and elevated devotion.

The character of John as thus conceived has been the theme of myriad discourses, has elicited the praises of the greatest Christian minds from Augustine to Jonathan Edwards, and has been a powerful influence in determining the doctrinal faith and teaching of Christendom. Many an illustration of this fact might be drawn from the pages of church history. So powerful is the impress of this striking personality just

now enforced by all that John has written, that many are calling for the retirement of the dogmatic system of Paul and the substitution of what is termed a Johannine Theology; less dogmatic and more intuitional, characterised by spiritual feeling rather than intellectual virility, and centered, not in the eternal decrees, or in the divine sovereignty, but in the person of the Immanuel. It has been affirmed that this would be the trend of Christian doctrine in the coming century; and it has been predicted that, as Paul has ruled the thought of the church since the Reformation, John will come to be the dominating teacher of Christendom in the ages that are yet to come.

What are the sources of this vision which the church has so long beheld and cherished? There are pleasant pictures of John in the three synoptic Gospels, and in the book of Acts, if we are allowed to accept as historical all that these portions of Holy Writ have told us respecting him in his personal qualities, and in his relations to the apostolic group, and to the growing household of faith in the first century. But if we had nothing more to build upon, we could not possibly account for the actual concept of the beloved apostle, as Christendom now cherishes it. Such a picture as the imagination of the church has drawn could never have existed. It is in his own writings that the fine portraiture of the man has been discovered. Though he writes but little about himself directly, and is concerned altogether in delineating the Christ and in setting forth his clear, profound, spiritual conception of the religion that Christ taught, yet his own benign features are continually shining through his delineations; his beautiful personality becomes apparent on almost every page. His gospel reveals with singular distinctness the character of the inspired and consecrated man who wrote it. His three epistles are full of himself, though never in any form of laudation. The opening chapters of the Apocalypse tell us of the lonely apostle on Patmos to whom the last revelation of the ascended Savior was vouchsafed; and the book closes with another personal reference of like import and interest. Obviously these writings which bear his name are the chief sources from which the vision of his sacred personality has been derived. And so long as the Christian church reverently receives these writings, and appreciates their heavenly temper and message,

so long will the beloved John hold his place of equality by the side of James and Peter and Paul as an authoritative representative of Christ and his religion.

The five books attributed to John constitute as to quantity a very large part of the canonical New Testament, and in their doctrinal and spiritual significance they occupy even a larger space. They are beyond all price in value. Taken together, they constitute—as has been said—a sacred trilogy: the Gospel, the Epistles and the Apocalypse representing in turn the evangelistic founding, the organic shaping, and the eternal future of the Church. They portray for our faith in vivid terms the Christ who was, who now is, and who is to come. To tear them from their place in the organism of Scripture, would be like tearing some vital portion out of the human body. The loss of their teaching would be a loss indescribable in words; and with their obliteration from the New Testament would follow the fading into some dim and uncertain shape of the cherished concept of the apostle himself. How great that bereavement would be, who can frame an adequate description?

But recent criticism claims to have discovered that these five books were not written by John the Beloved—not one of them! It has been discovered that the real author of the Gospel was probably some Jew, unknown to history, a man familiar with the Old Testament, and somewhat familiar also with the acts and teachings of Christ. This Hebrew may have been a disciple or companion of John, and may have gathered some of his materials from the apostle. But he wrote for himself with what is described as a free hand. He was accurate in his accounts so far as he had reliable information, but quite inaccurate in other parts of his treatise. One illustration of this is adduced in those passages in the Gospel, which represent Christ as speaking so positively about his own divine personality—something which could not have occurred. This delineation of Christ is said to be an ideal picture, neither always true to the facts as presented in the other Gospels, nor worthy to be accepted in itself as a really historical account of the person and ministry of Jesus. The Gospel, we are assured, is not indeed a mere piece of religious fiction, composed in the second century, as some other critics have affirmed; but though it belongs to the first century, we have no record of the time or place of its production. The author per-

sonally is absolutely unknown to history. In some way or other the name of John became attached to this Gospel, though he never wrote a line of it. It is suggested that there is a considerable body in it of what is described as genuine apostolic matter; but this is confessed to be indistinguishable from much that is not apostolic. As for the formal discourses of Jesus here recorded, they are simply the composition of the author, embodying to some extent, though we have no means of knowing to what extent, the actual teachings of Christ. This is the last word of criticism, first German, then American, concerning this Gospel according to Saint John which the church has reverently been studying through all these centuries under the delusion that it was written by the beloved Apostle.

This criticism is now affirming also, that the first of the three Epistles was written, not by John, but by the same person who wrote the Gospel, though there are no means of ascertaining the facts or the circumstances, beyond what the critical instinct furnishes. It is said that the Epistle was directed against certain false teachers, and that its polemic tone is in marked contrast with the calm and even tenor of the Gospel; yet there are said to be similarities between the two productions which favor the hypothesis of a common authorship. It is surmised that the author somehow, we cannot tell how, derived his material largely from Paul rather than John. We are told that he exhibits the same sort of rigorous superiority to observed facts — whatever that may be — that is seen in Paul; and like Paul he relies on theory over against the testimony of experience. Whoever he was, wherever or whenever he lived and wrote, it is quite certain, we are assured, that he was not the apostle John.

It is not in evidence, we are further told, that the same person, mysterious and unknown, wrote the second and third Epistles, though there are some resemblances which render this hypothesis probable. Tradition and the sources do not help us in solving this puzzle. All we can say is that the writer — whoever he was — belonged to the same school, breathed the same atmosphere, and was familiar with the Johannine literature. This would quite naturally be the case if he wrote it himself — as seems to be implied. How the name of John came to be attached to these three Epistles, if not during his lifetime then at least in a very brief period thereafter, these critics do not tell us. Did the apostle sign

and endorse them as his? Was his name fraudulently appended to them? How did the church in the dawn of the second century fall into the delusion that they were his?

As to the Book of Revelation, this type of criticism has discovered that the compiler, whoever he was, was not the author of the Gospel of John; and still less that he was an apostle himself, though he seems to be impersonating the apostle. We are told that all that can be said of him is that he was a Christian teacher of Jewish birth, but a man of universalistic principles (whatever these may be) whose name was John, and who resided in Asia, and was familiar with the conditions of the seven churches addressed in that book. His conceptions are said to have a Jewish character, and he evidently made large use of Jewish or Jewish-Christian sources and material in the preparation of his treatise. Some countenance is given to a theory broached by other adherents of the same school of criticism, that the treatise is really a compilation of a cluster of apocalypses, some Jewish, some Christian, gathered up by some unknown redactor or editor with additions of his own here and there, and with such omissions and subtractions as he thought best to make. It is said positively that the Revelation was written during the reign of Domitian, and probably during the latter part of his reign (A. D. 81-96) in order to strengthen Christians in enduring persecution, by portraying the ultimate triumph of the Gospel. Whether the compiler or author was the person known dimly in history as the Presbyter John, or some wholly unknown John, he at least was not the apostle. Yet his book was written during the lifetime of the apostle, and the church early in the second century fell into the delusion that it was his work, and that the events recorded in it really befell him at Patmos and elsewhere.

If we are to accept all these conclusions as correct, it follows at once that the interesting conception of John the Beloved which the Christian church framed early and which has been cherished through all the succeeding centuries, must now be surrendered as having no valid historical warrant. Indeed we are told by the same school of criticism that though John was a leading figure in the church of Jerusalem at first, he found the extreme conservatism of that church uncongenial, and retired somewhere, possibly to Palestine, to labor; and finally, after a whole generation spent in obscurity, so far as

history goes, appeared in Asia, and spent the latter part of his life in Ephesus, dying there during the reign of Trajan. But what manner of man he was, what were his beliefs and teachings, and what his religious characteristics and experiences, what were his feelings toward the Jerusalem church and toward what is called Paulinism, we have no means whatever of determining. In blotting out his writings, the man is blotted out; historical knowledge concerning him is almost wholly lost; and the church through all the centuries has been loving and revering and rejoicing in what turns out to be an historical shadow.

It follows also that the apostolicity of those five books which constitute so interesting and important a part of the New Testament, must be altogether given up as unfounded. According to this verdict of criticism they have no known authorship or origin; they retain nothing of that peculiar value which the tradition, that they were each and all written by the beloved apostle, has so long attributed to them. They cannot be traced to any single author or any number of authors; it cannot be proved that the men who wrote them were even Christians rather than Hebrews. They are merely stray compilations, issuing we know not whence or where or how, sustained by no recognizable personality; and the trust placed in them rests only on some internal rather than historical basis. Moreover they come to us tainted with at least a distinct suspicion of fraud as bearing untruthfully the imprimatur of the apostle who never wrote, probably never saw them. How is it possible that the Christian church has been so long deceived by them? How can that church, on any such hypothesis, rest on them for a day longer?

Moreover on this hypothesis, it is not apostolicity alone, but also inspiration, that is forfeited, except in some very vague and general sense of that term. It is well nigh incredible that in these five sacred books, holy men of God, who were wholly unknown to the church and whose existence has never yet been discovered historically, spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. That the Spirit of God illuminated their minds, guided and purified their thoughts, gave them the revelation and directed them in the recording of it, so that no essential or delusive error should taint the record, cannot, if this view of them be true, be intelligently affirmed. Indeed it is not only suggested but openly affirmed



by these critics, that the writer of the Gospel did not always tell the truth ; and it is at least implied that a similar lack of truth attaches to the other books also. It is noticeable, further, that those who hold such views of the Johannine literature rarely affirm inspiration in any really positive sense, and seem conscious that they could not be consistent with themselves in any such affirmation. On this theory apostolicity and inspiration appear to vanish simultaneously.

The real authoritativeness of these portions of Scripture in like manner fades away into some uncertain and intangible shape. No preacher can use passages extracted from any of these books with the assurance that the truth he derives from them has come directly through properly qualified media from God. Neither can he enforce any duty inculcated in them as being assuredly and wholly a divine mandate. Nor can any reader rest his faith or his destinies on their teachings with an unquestioning confidence that they represent the mind of God, and are sealed and glorified with his supernatural signature. On this basis their authority becomes more human than divine ; it is drawn from the religious consciousness rather than from the objective Word. And it may be added finally, that what is true respecting these five books, would, by parity of reasoning, seem to be no less true respecting the Epistles of Peter and James, the Pastoral and other Pauline Epistles, and the other three Gospels. The entire New Testament is in fact exhaled into an airy vapor, unsubstantial and cheerless, in which human speculation and human surmises are much more conspicuous than the Holy Ghost and His Perfect Work.

EDWARD D. MORRIS, D. D.

Columbus, O.

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### CULTURE AND RELIGION IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

The Christian church is frequently blamed both by her members and by the world for certain defects, such as coldness of manner, rudeness, unsociability and lack of spirituality among her members. While we must acknowledge the charge, yet we must assert that these are not peculiar to the church. They are found in all phases of human intercourse. There are rude men in commerce; there are unsociable men in the professions; there is coldness in fraternities. So when we