

“The New Apologetic.”

The New Apologetic; or, the Down-Grade in Criticism, Theology, and Science. By Professor ROBERT WATTS, D.D., LL.D., Assembly College, Belfast. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.

THIS is one of those masterly productions which have made Professor Watts not only famous but formidable, and for which he deserves the thanks of all the Churches. The leaders of the down-grade movement, with which the volume deals, may conveniently ignore the author, or quietly smile at him, but they will hardly dare to meet him in single combat. This is not a book of consecutive chapters on a given subject, but rather a series of successive articles on subjects closely related both in thought and theology. It is a very elaborate, trenchant, and scathing review of the criticism, theology, and science of such scientists, specially, as Darwin, Le Conte, and Drummond, and of such critics and theologians as Drs. Robertson Smith, Dods, and Bruce in Britain, and Bushnell and Barnes in America. Its object is at once to reveal and to arrest this down-grade, which is shown to be due mainly to two principles—Evolution in science and Rationalism in theology. The down-grade leaders in theology proceed on the principles of the Evolution theory and of the Positive philosophy, which lead to Rationalism in criticism and theology. The logical result of the application of such principles to science and theology is clearly shown to be negative Agnosticism or naked Pantheism in the one case, and Rationalism or Socinianism in the other.

First of all, all living organisms are said truly to be the evolution of primary cells, but these cells are not held to be ultimately the outcome of primary organisms; and such biblical doctrines as divine revelation, the plenary inspiration and absolute perfection of Scripture as originally given; the primary moral perfection of man, and his temptation and fall as a historical fact or objective reality, the penal satisfaction of Christ to the justice of God and justification by His objective and imputed righteousness, are so minimised and even mutilated as to lose their place and truth and worth in Scripture. The doctrine of the New Apologetic in regard to all these truths is fully discussed and disproved and shown to be the apology of concession or surrender. Professor Watts as readily admits a certain kind and measure of development as he stoutly denies the Evolution theory of Darwin, and especially of his disciples, some of whom have transcended and even travestied their master. He will acknowledge the scholastic maxim *ex nihilo nihil fit*, or the necessity of creation and a subsequent progress in the history of the globe from lower to higher forms of life, and also the development of one thing into a

higher of the same kind or species or a certain modification of species; but he maintains and shows that the development of one thing or kind into a different kind, or the transmutation of one species into another species, has not only never been scientifically proved but is contrary to the facts of geology and biology, which do not reveal causal continuity in nature. Such a theory must be held to be as unscientific as the transmigration of souls is unscriptural.

Next, the critical methods of these scientists and theologians are shown to be at once illicit in beginning with the objections to a doctrine instead of with the evidence for it; imperfect, as proceeding on the fallacy of a partial induction of the facts or phenomena, specially in ignoring the claim of Scripture to plenary inspiration; and even assumptive in taking for granted that the alleged errors of the present text existed in the original autographs or Scriptures, and thereby ignoring the fact that most of these discrepancies have been already reconciled by a riper scholarship, and that, as Dr. Hodge affirms, there is not an instance of proved error in Scripture. It must be added that such views not only tend to unsettle men's minds in vain, but invalidate the claim of the written word to infallibility, and end in setting up finite human reason as the ultimate standard or judge of all scientific and religious truth. The consequence is that some of those truths of science and theology which we receive on ample evidence, but cannot comprehend, are being denied and discredited. We must notice, in this connection, that Dr. Robertson Smith and, in particular, Professors Dods and Bruce are dealt with as neither Scriptural nor scientific theologians, but rather as one-sided speculators, seduced by a vicious critical method, by philosophical pre-suppositions and pre-conceived ideas of certain Christian doctrines, and of the terms or conditions of human salvation or Christian character. Dr. Watts then demonstrates by a course of diversified and cumulative argument that the low view of inspiration, which would admit or leave room for errors and immoralities in the original Scripture, and which distinguishes between the inspiration of the substance and of the form of it, cannot be limited to any one class of subjects, doctrinal or historical; that, if carried to its logical consequences, it would be equally valid against the correct original communication of truth to the mind of the recipient as against his correct statement or report of it; that the Scripture teaches expressly that the sacred writers not only received the substance of their communications but the form, and both together, or that they not only thought, but spoke and wrote, being moved by the Holy Spirit; and, more especially, that the eternal Logos Himself, as the grand Prophet of the Church, was anointed by the Holy Spirit beyond

measure to qualify Him for the full and efficient exercise of His office as the Revealer of God. Here also we must add that a view of inspiration which would make the character or truth of Scripture depend on the subjective state or moral character and progress of the recipients and writers would not only vitiate and invalidate all Scripture, and be inconsistent with the confessional doctrine of its infallible truth and Divine authority, but also that, as the Supreme Teacher, He Himself wrote nothing, but left His work to be done by fallible men, an inerrant or infallible revelation, written or spoken, except the Decalogue itself, would be impossible.

Professor Watts is careful to notice in this connection that the supplementary corrective of the down-grade theologians to their view of the primary errancy of Scripture, viz., the testimony of the Holy Spirit, is not only absurd, as implying that the Spirit was more necessary to the reception than to the record of a Divine revelation, but is also a misconception of His work, which is in this respect to deal with men's minds, and not with the matter or form of Scripture. The work of the Spirit is not directly to prove the truth of Scripture, but to give a fuller persuasion of its truths, which is said in the Confession to rest on prior external and internal evidence sufficient to convince unbelievers, by which also the Spirit bears witness to our spirits, and apart from which our belief of the infallible truth of Scripture would rest on mere authority without evidence, and the grand basis or bulwark of our holy faith would be the logical fallacy of *hysteron proteron*, or assurance first and evidence next; while the religious consciousness, which is ecclesiastical Mysticism and neological Rationalism, would become the ultimate test of the truth of revelation.

The author then examines the way in which the

New Apologists deal not only with Scripture itself but with Scripture facts and doctrines, specially their denial or at least disparagement of the primary perfection of man and of an objective historical temptation and fall; of the penal satisfaction of Christ for sin to the justice of God, which is more than a mere moral atonement or display of God's love to sinners; and justification by faith in the objective and imputed righteousness of Christ, and not as Arminians say, by our subjective faith accepted for righteousness, or, as Bushnell states, by the character of God imparted to us, or by our subjective repentance and faith as in themselves righteousness. All these methods of justification by subjective feeling are as baseless and false as justification by works, and nothing less than mere forms of Rationalism or Socinianism, the articles of declining theologians and falling Churches.

Professor Watts evidently believes that the Confession of Faith needs no revision of substance or form; that this proposal springs from Arminian and rationalistic sympathies, which will not long maintain the Calvinistic system of doctrine; that the Revisionists are not superior in real learning to the authors of the Confession, but are often ludicrously ignorant of the history of the Standards, and thereby of the Standards themselves.

This volume is the work of a master in Israel, who has a giant's strength but does not exercise it, like a giant, tyrannously. If Dr. Watts, in concert with other defenders of the faith, should succeed in arresting the present down-grade in theology, he will be the honoured instrument of Britain's rescue from Rationalism, as the late noble Dr. Cooke and others were of Ireland's deliverance from Arianism in the North and Unitarianism in the South and West.

JAMES SCOTT.

Exegetical Papers.

Gen. i. 2 compared With 1 Kings xvii. 21.

BY THE REV. A. H. WRATISLAW, M.A.

It has often been remarked that controversialists of the Reformation epoch, and indeed controversialists of all times, appear to have a strong tendency to use the Scriptures rather as a storehouse from which to draw proofs for their own views, than as documents from which their views

themselves have to be drawn. This reading of theology into Scripture has had a baneful effect upon the science of theology itself, in that it has caused current views on revelation to be taken and accepted for revelation itself, and orthodoxy has come to be tested, not by what the Bible really says, but by what people, in their eagerness to know more than is actually told, have thought fit to read into it.

It may not unreasonably be contended that an instance of this is found in the treatment which