

## THE SCIENCE OF THEOLOGY.

In the *Homiletic Review* for May is a paper from the pen of Rev. Dr. Charles S. Deems on the outlook in theology. The writer takes the ground that theology is a progressive science, and distinguished from all other sciences by the fact that it is impossible to make the slightest advance in any department of science without making a contribution to theology. This is very good so far as it goes, but the eminent writer spoils it all in our view by the statement that, "Theology is a human science, just as astronomy is." "Theology is the formulation by the human intellect of all it can learn of the facts of God."

This appears to us a very poor definition of theology. It is based on the idea of the absence of present or continued revelation, and almost savors of doubt as to past revelation. Theology is a divine science, if anything. It is the science of God, and includes knowledge of the existence, character, attributes, laws and doctrines of God, our relationship to Him and communion with Him. It is written in scripture and abundantly attested by human experience, that "man by searching cannot find out God." It is only by Deity manifesting Himself to man that there can be any true knowledge of Him. Therefore, theology is not a human but a divine science. It is different in this essential respect from astronomy or any other human science.

It is because men have tried to formulate theological systems as they would arrange what is known, or supposed to be known, of natural phenomena, that there is so much confusion, dissension and lack of knowledge, that is, lack of science, in what is called theology. Revelation from God, if received in the spirit of faith, produces knowledge of divine things. Human speculation and research will not do this. They leave doubt and uncertainty in the mind and amount to little more than guess-work. What fixed principles there are in the orthodox systems of theology have come by divine revelation, and are tacitly accepted as such in the creeds.

Where there is no communication from God to man, or where men repudiate such intercourse, theology does not really find place. What passes for it is a poor counterfeit and cannot be properly called a science, for there is scarcely anything in it that is actually known. It is a matter of opinion, and opinions concerning it are almost as various as the minds of men. In the true science of theology are rules by which knowledge of divine things can be obtained and certainty be established in the place of theory.

Dr. Deems says "theology must be a progressive science." That is true but scarcely in the sense in which he views it. If theology is but a human science, as experience goes on and the mind of man enlarges, he can throw away many ideas that he once held and form others in their place to be repudiated with further advancement, and this he would call progress, and would be incidental to the development of "human" theology.

But in true theology progress means adding, not substituting. It gives "line

upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little," but does not reject first principles. As in the science of mathematics new rules are given with the advancement of the student, but the fundamental principles are ever preserved and are necessary to the system, so it is in true theology.

This necessitates continued revelation. And the world was always opposed to that. It is no different today. Even the teachers of what is called theology repudiate present revelation and do not believe that God speaks to man in the nineteenth century, though they profess to believe that He did reveal Himself in the earlier ages of the world. While they take this inconsistent ground, theology will always be to them an uncertain mass of incongruities and hypotheses.

With divine revelation there is no ambiguity. The word of God is truth. The Spirit of God guides into all truth. It manifests that which is unseen. It searches all things. Without its aid there can be no true theology, and the theology which depends upon its manifestations is not a human science, formulated out of the notions and opinions and discoveries of man, but a divine science consisting of revealed truths that have come and are coming and will continue to come from Deity Himself, and are a sure and certain guide to divine knowledge. Every truth developed in human science harmonizes with it, and it is the test and touchstone of them all.

By this the existence, character, attributes, mind and will and purposes of God, and the relationship and duties of man to Him are made known to those who receive His word and are led by His Spirit. And they advance in the science of theology according to their growing capacity, their faith, their diligence and their obedience, and will ultimately know Him even as they are known, and be prepared to receive a fulness of knowledge and be associated with Him who is the primal source of all science and all truth.

## THE NEW CHINESE EXCLUSION BILL

In the early part of April the House of Representatives at Washington passed by a very large majority the Geary Chinese exclusion bill. In its provisions this measure was as severe as even the old exclusion methods adopted in China in bygone times. It absolutely prohibits Chinese from entering the United States under any conditions except as diplomatic and consular officials and their servants. Even Chinese who may leave the United States were prevented from returning. The master of a vessel who would knowingly land a Chinaman on these shores would be subject to a fine of \$5000 and imprisonment for one year. Citizens aiding or abetting in any way to introduce either Chinese or persons of Chinese descent were subject to a fine of \$1000 and imprisonment for one year. Even Chinese tourists before entering the United States would be required to obtain permits from the Secretary of the Treasury. The bill also required Chinese now resident here to obtain certificates of identification from the Commissioner

of Inland Revenue, such certificate to be stamped with the portrait of the person it purports to identify. There were a number of other provisions equally as severe, but those already touched on, amply illustrate the character of the measure.

In the Senate a substitute to the Geary bill was reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations by Senator Dolph of Oregon. That measure virtually provides for the continuation of existing laws for a period of ten years longer. Mr. Squire of Washington and Mr. Mitchell of Oregon vigorously opposed the substitute measure, but the report was agreed to by a vote of forty-three yeas to fourteen nays. The title of the bill was next amended, making it read: "To prohibit the coming of Chinese persons into the United States."

A conference with the House was next asked for, and Senators Dolph, Davis and Butler were appointed conferees on the part of the Senate. Steps were taken by which a conference between both Houses was held. On the 3rd inst. the report of this conference was laid before the Senate, and after some discussion was agreed to by a vote of 80 yeas and 15 nays.

On the 4th inst. Mr. Geary presented the conference report in the House. After some ineffectual opposition the report was agreed to by a vote of 185 yeas to 28 nays. It appears that the compromise measure which the conference agreed on embodies essential features of both the original House bill and its Senate substitute. Judging from what Mr. Hitt of Illinois said in opposition, the compromise measure retains the certificate feature with portrait attached of the Geary bill for Chinese now resident in this country. He alludes to it as reducing a human being to the level of a dog by the tagging system.

The objection to existing legislation on this question is that it is defective in identification. When a Chinaman leaves the United States and returns to his own country, another takes his certificate and returns on it to this country, and present provisions are not adequate to detect the fraud. Under the portrait system of identification, it seems that the old defect can be, to a large extent, effectually removed. In future the celestial must enter entirely on his own cheek and queue.

## BUTLER AND JOHN BULL.

THE cost of carrying out the Bering Sea arbitration treaty between this country and Great Britain as estimated by Mr. Blaine, will be about \$150,000. Through the Secretary of the Treasury he has forwarded a request for an appropriation to the above amount, to be expended under the direction of the Secretary of State, with the approval of the President. Mr. Blaine urges the necessity of promptness on this matter, and it is expected that Congress will authorize the appropriation at once.

In relation to this controversy two distinguished personages have articles in the *North American Review* for May. They are General Benjamin F. Butler, and the Marquis of Lorne. The former in his treatment of the subject speaks in no uncertain terms. He