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Great Britain-France-Italy-Germany-Hungary

A DISSOLVING VIEW OF COMTEAND THE POSITIVE PHILOSOPHY.

A few weeks ago we gave a sketch of the latest portrait of Voltaire, from recent drawings by his admirer, Thomas Carlyle. Our readers will remember the pitiable, humiliating, disgraceful figure presented by that once formidable foe of true religion, of whom it has been said that "without believing in the devil, he saw him everywhere, even where he was not." We now take, likewise from the delineation of a partisan that is by faith. He inveighs against the and an admirer, an almost equally humilia- demand for proof so loudly heard, and in ting account of the Coryphæus of modern the State, which be foresees is to arise upon French infidelity, M. Comte, the author of the universal acceptance of his system, the the Positive Philosophy. This Philosophy is known to our readers as an elaborate, scientific, and in many respects, great system in which modern materialism is enshrined. It has had powerful attractions for some of the ablest minds of the age; it has found zealous advocacy in the pages of the Westminster Review, and it is from an article in the last number of this periodical, over the well known initials "J. S. M." (John Stuart Mill,) that we draw the whole of the material for this article

activity of men is as repressive as any The reviewer bases his frank exhibitions actually known to the dark ages. His of his master's weakness upon the later. great anxiety is lest people should reason writings of Comte, and upon expositions of and seek to know, more than enough. The his system by his French followers. In these, Positive Philosophy is discovered-how the Positive, Philosophy has been carried foolish for men to wish for more ! He out to its extreme consequences. It is apeven lays down laws prescribing the proper plied as a law of life to the individual and number of chapters in every treatise, and to society. It is exhibited as a system of of cantos in every poem. He insists that "religious" belief and practice. The vices, the minimun length of a sentence is 250 the extravagances, the measureless absurletters! And to cap the climax of this dities, and the deplorable degradation mania for regulation, he has a fantastic and which it exhibits in these developments, elaborate arrangement, by which each sechave shocked many of its followers, and tion of a work must be made to begin with a are too much for Mr. Mill. Some of the certain letter of the alphabet determined beworst of them indeed he defends; others he would regard as mere excrescences. We cannot perceive that he regards the system from which they have sprung as vitiated by them. Nor do we intend to enter into an argument upon the relations of the sys tem, as originally propounded, with these down as law, to be enforced in the era which after-thoughts of its author. Enough for the writer confidently expected, of the us to know, that materialistic and atheistic universal prevalence of the Positive Philhabits of thinking have led the greatest osophy. and most celebrated unbeliever of the century, into imaginations as perverse, into, doctrines as degrading, and into conceits as frivolous and ridiculous, as his maturer, mortality, supernatural objects, sin, revelacooler and saner speculations are sweeping tion, Christ, everything but man, enature and science, and only the phenomenal, not and formidable. As to the moral character of the man, the essential, in these objects, has undertaken knowing almost nothing of it, we dispose to be religious! And Mr. Mill undertakes of it first. He may have been comparato show that religion and atheism are not tively pure in his domestic relations, as the incompatible; and he puts this atheistic French estimate, that virtue. It appears, caricature of religion in disparaging contrast with-" the conception of human nature however, that he separated from his wife, as incapable of giving its:love and devoting and that he was the subject of an intense affection for the wife of another man, imit its vexistence to sany object which cannot prisoned as a felon. This latter attach. afford in exchange an eternity of personal enjoyment," a most unworthy and inadement, we are obligingly informed by Mr. Mill, "always remained pure," although quate account of evangelical piety, which "it gave him a year of passionate enjoy- we need to comment on no further just now, ment," We are further informed that this than to point out where Mr. Mill's preferintimady "gave him an insight into the ences evidently lie. true sources of human happiness which changed his whole conception of life." This may all pass in an atmosphere tainted by the low morality of the French nation; but we are surprised at the matter of course | the lowest forms of heathenism-man-worway in which it is treated in an English ship and tetash worship. M. Comte's lead periodical. As to the philosopher himself, if an unlawful love was needed to crown and consummate his character. we are not to blame for suspecting rottenness at the core. Comte with his Clothilde, and Voltaire with his "divine Emilie," are not too tive Philosophy. Yet this last issue of the far apart to illustrate each other's character. human intellect grovels among the meanest Passing now to the political application and basest forms of that era which it deof Comte's philosophy, we find that he clares to be lowest of all. The first and hates and despises parliamentary and representative governments, and that he would have the whole world under the absolute sway of three Dictators, and one functionary, whom he calls High Priest, or Head Pontiff of the human race. All the mental and scientific activity of man, he teaches, should be controlled by law. The studies to be pursued should be laid down ; a problem should be assigned, upon which exclu-



or pronounced insoluble, when it should be And not only is the race, as a whole, to be ence and otherwise. Our aim is to be a must be made," says this self-constituted by their ontward acts; whereas the heart is put aside and another substituted for it. thus put in place of God, but individuals All studies not contributing positively to of one's own family, particularly the mother, the public welfare are to be forbidden as the wife, the daughter, living or dead, are idle and useless. The greater part of all designated as among the new gods of the the sciences, and especially of astronomy he Positive Era. In other words, an improved puts under this condemnation. Selecting form of Chinese worship is to be the acme about one hundred volumes of those now of civilized religion. Or, are we not reextant, he would, in the spirit of the Sara- minded of the loathsome and Hasphemous cen conqueror at Alexandria, commit all the demonstrations of the French revolution, rest to the flames. We do not hear that when an abandoned woman was drawn in the Bible is among the hundred to be extriumph through the streets of Paris, and empt. This, says Mr. Mill, (whose works, hailed as the goddess of the new era, and would doubtless go into the bonfire) is even when Christian churches were profaned by worse than the early Christians who only the vile deeds which shock us when narraburned the books of their enemies. It is ted even of heathen temples? Such an the one thing in M. Comte's projects issue might not have been expected by which merits real indignation." He would Comte, but the worship of woman in a sohave every race and species of animals and ciety from which all regard tor God is explants not useful to man extirpated.

supernatural; he would scorn the idea of

accepting a revelation by faith; his follow.

ers cannot abide the method of some be-

lievers, who substitute appeals to faith for

proofs. But the author of the Positive

Philosophy, fondly imagining that he has

reached ultimate truth, demands' that his

conclusions be received without reasoning,

vouth are to be trained to a knowledge of

its leading principles, which they are to re-

ceive with absolute unquestioning acquies-

cence. Does any Christian parent require

more of his child in teaching it the Bible?

Comte, making no claim to supernatural

guidance, which his system totally excludes,

which they believe to be divined

cluded must inevitably lead to it. M. Comte would banish faith in the There is however a lower deep in this gulf of revived heathenism, of which we shall

speak in our next.

THE AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN FOR 1865-66.+

The circulation of our paper is steadily on the increase. New fields are opening to us in various parts of the country and our friends upon old fields are preparing to renew their efforts to increase our list. We cannot but believe that the decided action taken on two occasions by the last GENERAL ASSEMBLY on the religious press, was an indication of increased regard among our ministry and people for this important adjunct of pastoral and evangelical effort, and that they are better prepared than ever to take the advice of the Assembly on the subject. We will all hild had

demands for his teachings a regard which The Standing Committee of the Assemhe ridicules men for according to teachings bly on Publication felt impelled, by the importance of the matter, to suggest the His project for regulating the intellectual following deliverance upon pressing the circulation of our three religious papers: "These," say the Committee, "are our denominational (organs, and we should do more than has been done to push them in advance of all others, and even to the exclusion of some which have stolen in where they do not belong. Outspoken efforts to set ourselves right before the people, and keep the principles we love fresh in the hearts of those who are with or unsafe, righteous or unrighteous concesperverted, are absolutely necessary."

ally on the Religious Press, it will be seen

sent a carefully-prepared resume of the state of the world abroad in its religious. aspects, as gathered from the latest sources. In illustration of these statements, we need merely call attention to the present the most marked manner, to correspond to our general plan in these particulars. We foubt whether an equal amount of care fully digested information on these subjects is to be found in any three current numbers.

of the leading religious periodicals of the ountry. when unimously is the already including writers in this country, in England, Syria, India and China, and such names as Jessup, Gillett, Adams, March, Hammond, Sawyer, Wilder, our correspondtranging to add others in the West in lifornia and in Italy. We hope soon to nounce a story of great interest and foroughly evangelical spirit, from the thor of one of the best recent books for be young.

n this manner, therefore, we are conriputing our part in facilitating the work laid upon the churches and the ministry the last General Assembly. Will these also do their part? Will the members who lready take a religious paper of their own lenomination, let their light shine by commending the same courses to their neglectportance with any separate enterprise of the in the effort to secure the patronage of the churches to their own papers, instead of squandering it where the returns of de-

A SERMON TO THE PREACHERS. Had not the leading editorials of the New

nothing?

York Times for the last two months amply, prepared us for the advocacy of almost any safe cheap cotton and party success, we should its article of Monday week on Ecclesiastical that the Assembly took a very exalted view Reconstruction. In that article, it denounof the importance of this instrumentality. | ces the position taken by the Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist churches, that rebellion is a crime, which must be repented of like any other, and that none who have been guilty of it can be admitted to those communions without evidence of repentits ministrations. Hence, if the press is anos. The assuming of this position, says to be recognized by the Church as an in- the Times, destroys the influence of the churches for harmony and "goes to perpetuate discord." As if an offence unrepented of and poisoning the bosom of the offender still, could consist with real concord. As if the truest and, broadest basis f peace is not a frank and honest acknowledgment of wrong done, and the avowal of a purpose to avoid it in the future ! The Times has got into the veriest shallows and mud-flats, of argument since it undertook to sustain, through thick and ous policy of concession to rebels. But in the following paragraph it reaches, we think, the climax of weakness and confusion its yn M am hei nei 1 Again, some distinction must be made be-tween a political and moral offence. The one may come from an error of the head simply : the other must proceed, if its author is sane. from badness of heart. The one may be comfrom badness on near the other cannot. A mitted conscientiously; the other cannot. A rebel may mean to do right; a thief or mur-derer cannot. A Christian minister of the North would not dare to withhold spiritual. unsolation from a dying Southerner, simply for failing to express repentance for supporting the Confederacy; and yet he would give no such consolation to an unrepentant thief or murderer. The assumption that every man of the six millions who have participated in this rebellion acted against his convictions of duty, and voluntarily committed what he knew to be a crime, is monstrous. It would prove a moral depravity in the Southern people beyond anything known to human history—a depravity which would as much history—a depravity which would as much forbid us to have political as religious asso beran eternal disgrace to restore them to American citizenship. Nobody believes it The great body of the Southern people who sustained the Confederacy did so on honest, bouch as we are mitted on an interest though, as we say, mistaken convictions of duty. It is because we have this belief that they are freely welcomed back to the Union. What is there in religious principle that disallows a similar recognition, and correspondng action? What is there that requires the churches to be more implacable and relentless toward a crime against the government than is the government itself? Cannot Christian charity yield as much as political It is a long time since we have seen crowded into the same space so many crudeand erroneous views, such manifest miscon-

be punished ! As if it needed any argument to prove that an unjustifiable proalavery rebellion, against, a peaceable and wine, and destroyed the lives of his parishioners; that was a moral offence, yet he declared he did it conscientiously to release if they really believed this to be the fact. them from their hopeless poverty. Saul and inquisitor plead conscience in justification of his cruelties ?. Would not Louis Napoleon tell you he was conscientious in ful fellow-members ? Will the ministry were necessary to remove impediments from doctrine in all the history of error which church? Will ministers and people unite has not been held conscientiously? Were not the leaders of public opinion in the maintaining the sacredness, excellence; and nominational profit are, decidedly less than divinity of American slavery? And is their opinion a whit less noxious and less necessary to be repented of, and not rather

much more so, on that very account? We: have not a doubt that there have been a considerable number of conscientious rebels and pro-slavery men in the South. But has there been, in all the history of opinion, a deluus, but are many of them being insidiously sion to rebels for the sake, of superficial order, sion more gross, and a great practical error From Judge Mansfield's report specifi- have been greatly astonished at the tone of ryism and rebellion in this free country, proposal to establish the entire machinery and in the middle of the ninetcenth centu-Or does it understand what it wants? As to the great mass of the six million rebels, it is most absurd to speak of conscience being concerned in the matter. The rebellion was a frenzy in its origin. The truth is briefly put in the phrase about firing the Southern heart." It was ungreat body of the Southern people who sustained the Confederacy' had no convictions. honest or dishonest about it. "Duty" was a very unimportant idea in the considerations which prompted and which sustained the movement. The South was intoxicated with one of those wild dreams of plantation; it dreaded the advance of those pregnant ideas of liberty and equality which property in man, and it flew to arms in obedience to these mere instincts, which a few half-crazy philosophers and theologians undertook to elevate into convictions but it was largely the other way. The rebel Vice President was, doubtless, honest in his convictions to the very last moment. (and later, too, we imagine,) that the rebellion was unjustifiable. And the Times, of course, knows of a certain rebel General position on Gen. Scott's staff, followed "his gain upon one the more you come in con-State," and became the main prop of the conspiracy, which his conscience had con-

journal of Pesbyterianism in all the world. teacher of the loyal churches, "between a the very province of the Church. The At the same time, our space allows us to political and moral offence." As if politi- State requires obedience, the Church represent a copious selection of facts every cal offences were never also moral ones! As quires the principle of holiness. It is often week from the religious papers of other if the thirteenth chapter of Romans had the duty of the State to punish where the denominations, and every month we pre- never been written, or the Bible every- church forgives, as when the latter recogwhere, did not inculcate obedience to the nizes the conversion of a criminal whom regularly constituted authorities of the the law still insists justly on retaining as a State ! As if Mr. Johnson himself did not | prisoner, or on leading to the gallows. And declare, though we fear, like Mr. Raymond, on the other hand, the criminal may serve he has found it convenient to forget the out his term, may pay his fine, may comply number of the paper; which happens, in sentiment, that treason is a crime and must with the prescriptions of the law or the conditions of his pardon, and may never afterwards incur a penalty ; shall the church therefore recognize him as 'a fit subject of just Government was the greatest of crimes! her privileges? The questions in the A political offence, proceeds our moralist, Times seem almost to take for granted a may be committed conscientiously, a moral union of church and State in the country, offence: cannot ... But how about that Swe- or at least imply that the morality of the Toit the correspondence department, dish priest who poisoned the communion church is quite on a level with that of New York and Washington politicians. Surely the politicians would themselves be alarmed

The Presbyterian, Methodist and Baping editor, Bush, and many others, we are the persecutor, verily thought he ought to tist. Churches will adhere to their princido many things contrary to the name of ples. We publish to day a brief account Jesus, yet he counted himself the chief of of the proceedings of Kingston Presbytery sinners, and regarded his forgiveness as a in East Tennessee, from which it appears, miracle of grace. Conscientiousness! Is that in accordance, with the action of the there a crime in the catalogue for which last General Assembly, the names of two this has not been plead in extenuation ! Was ministers were stricken from the rell for not Philip II of Spain conscientions in his disloyalty. The politicians may take their relentless and bloody policy to the revolted course They may prate about . conscience. Netherlands? Has not every persecutor and we must bear with their confusion of ideas on a subject, with which, especially since the lamented death of our praying, honest-souled. President. Lincoln, they eviusurping the imperial power in Francey and dently have little practical acquaintance. in all the public and secret massacres which So much greater the need that the churches abide firmly by their declared policy of preach on the subject, as one of equal im his path ? Is there a single perhicious treating rebellion in the light of the New Testament, and of requiring repentance, above all, for the sin of sustaining a manstealing, anti-republican, prison-starving rebellion like this. Their position, firmly churches of the South conscientious in maintained, may become the very palladium of our Republic. Even the New York Times may see the day when it will thank us for it.

BULING ELDERS AMONG HOTTEN-TOTS.

It has been supposed by many inteligent persons that the complete organization of Presbyterian, Churches out of recently converted heathen was impossible on account of the lack of suitable less excusable than conscientious pro-slave materials, for the eldership. And the I an Evangelical Church, early, among ry? And should not any professedly loyal heathen converts, has been treated by editor hang his head for shame at some active friends of missions as visionthe thought of lecturing men who would ary, and an excuse has been made for simply preserve the Christian church from tolerating a very loose form of Church a contaminating compromise with it! Or government on the mission fields, on the would the Times be understood as requiring tence and unfitness. The following acsame general ground of native incompethe churches to open their doors to all, of count of the office-bearers in the Presbywhatever shade of opinion or peculiarity of terian churches of Caffraria, communicatpractice, who professed a conscientious ed by Rev. John A. Chalmers to the Unitattachment to those opinions and practices? ed Presbyterian Record for September. will give some light on the subject :---"These elders of our church are a noble band of men; side by side they, stand with us, endeavoring to stem the mighty torrent of evil with which we have to contend. They have passed through many trials; they have been driven hither and thither by the desolating blast thinking, uncontrollable passion, with the of war, and still they stand firm to their masses, and conscience was neither consult profession. They have been mellowed ed, nor listened to, nor thought of ... " The by the trials and dangers through which they have passed; single-handed, our fathers, so far as human aid is concerned, fought these battles; but we have trophies of their conquests, and though these elders have not received our advantages, yet we cannot but look up to them in an emergency for their counsel, as their experience is greater independence which seize upon restless than ours. Their names are household men; it was drunk with the arrogance of the words; and the future historian, if such there be of our chequered Caffre mission. will not only recount the trials and deeds were incompatible with the barbarism of of the missionaries, but also those of the elders, for their acts are interwoven with ours. "Such an one truly is Bacela, to whom I introduce you, who is well worthy of the important sphere in which he and to justify as such. The truth is, there is laboring. Well do I remember, years was not a little conscience in the South ago, at the Chumie, when I was but a about the commencement of the rebellion. mere child, seeing him a full-grown man, sitting in the same class with little boys, learning eagerly to read his Testament: he thought it not a degradation of his manhood to sit with children and learn to spell the words of Divine truth. His teacher, Pella, whose name is well known. has long ago gone to his rest. His whole Lee, who expressed the same convictions demeanor is an appropriate illustration of at the opening of the movement, but who the words, 'Diligent in business, fervent in spite of them, and in spite of his solemn | in spirit, serving the Lord.' He is one oath as a United States officer, and of his of those unassuming, modest men, who tact with him. He is man of a kind. generous, charitable disposition ; a peacemaker, who wins the hearts of others by words of kindness and affection. Sur

franke setter teter and an and an and an and an and an an an an an an and a poor at and

forehand, the letters being selected so as to compose words having a "synthetic or "It is patent to every man that the newssympathetic significance," and as close a paper has a wider and deeper influence relation as possible to the section or part to upon the members of our congregations which they are appropriated. And all this than tracts, books, or quarterly reviews. It comes nearer than any of them to the is not put forth as mere opinion, but laid living preacher in the time and manner of strumentality for good supplied to her by the providence of God, she ought to take a deep interest in the most popular and influ-But the worst is to come. The most ential of its issues, the newspaper, and try irreligious, atheistic and intensely worldlyto use it so as to promote the good of men of modern systems, which denies God, imand the glory of God."

That report estimated that there are in our Church some 30,000 families who take neither of the three denominational papers Supposing that in this number are included all the families among, us too poor to subscribe, there would yet remain enough of a different class to sustain, by their pat- thin, Mr. Johnson's lamentable and danger conage alone, two first class religious journals, if not three. In view of this startling fact, the Assembly exhorts these delinquent families to subscribe for at least one of our fusion : papers, declaring the influence of such a paper as "second only to that of the preached Word in the moral and spiritual culture of the Christian household." Ministers are. also requested to preach on the subject, impressing upon church members "the duty of being loyal to the denomination in

Let us however turn to this new fangled religion, which boasted to have sprung from [this respect, and the duty of parents to a negation of all the fundamentals of true provide the right kind of papers for their religion. It is, in brief, a rehabilitation of children to read." It is time we were beginning to carry

out the wishes of our Assembly in this reing historical axiom in regard to the prospect. The season for efforts of this kind gress of human thought, is that the theologiis drawing, near. It is not only our intercal form of conception is the lowest, the meest, but our pleasure and our duty, as taphysical higher and more recent, and the publishers of the AMERICAN PRESBYTElatest and highest development is the Posi-RIAN, to aid in giving effect to these wise resolutions. We shall seek to do it, by presenting the churches with a paper as nearly as possible answering to the high uses and functions of a religions journal. We are continually seeking to enlarge the leading object of worship prescribed by Comte is man. And this worship is not simcircle of our correspondence, both in this ply the high, devout and self-denying re- country and the Old World. Especially gard for human welfare which Mill defends as are we at pains and expense to gather up truly religious, and which is indeed a beau- all matters of interest in the progress of tiful and honorable feature of the Positive our own branch of the Church We claim, Philosophy; it is actual adoration specifically we think justly, a pre-eminence in this justice? prescribed, and regulated as minutely as in particular. Nowhere else can so full a any monkish ritual. The Human Race ac- view of our Church as it is be found. cording to Comte, is strictly and properly Other branches of the Presbyterian Church, sively the whole attention of thinkers an object of devout meditation and prayer. at home and abroad, are very fully repre-

Cintertantic, and they are not only as in the latest and delarm that fine Spirit, and that's to largest and

demned, for four years! As to the questions with which the para- | words of hand hearted heath graph ends, a moment's thought will show ens, who have long stood out against the that the position of the secular government gospel, he has yet gained for himself a ception, such confused and loose notions on and of the church is widely different. The vast influence in that district where he should be concentrated until it was solved it is the "Grand Etre," the Great Being. sented in our columns, both by correspond- the most vital subjects. "Some distinction Government is bound to judge its citizens is located."