

American Presbyterian

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THE AGE OF CRITICISM. ITS NECESSITY, ONE-SIDEDNESS, AND WEAKNESS.

"Fides precedit intellectum."—Aristotle.
"Neque enim quero intelligere, ut credam,
sed credo ut intelligam. Nam et hoc credo,
quia nisi credidero non intelligam."—Anselm.
"If ye will not believe, ye shall not be
established."—Isa. vii. 9.

The mental characteristics of the age through which we are passing, may be concisely described in one word: Critical. It is an age of question, rather than of assertion; of doubt, rather than of belief; of analysis, rather than of synthesis. In literature and in high art, men are criticising rather than creating; are writing histories and philosophies of histories, rather than achieving great works; in politics, they are, with notable exceptions, revolutionizing instead of building up nationalities; in religion, they are rationalizing, i. e., criticising the grounds of faith, rather than accepting and reposing upon them. No production in any department of thought can appear, but instantly a swarm of critics, with keen sight and keener talons, swoop upon it, like the gathering together of the eagles around the carcass. No journal is complete without its critical department; some live upon that department alone. Not merely for regard to the public interest, but from the force also of this critical bent, had we a Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War, and a committee of the whole editorial fraternity of the land vigorously discussing every phase of it, from the beginning to the end. We have criticisms of the critics by other critics. We have reviews reviewed by other reviewers, and a rationale of rationalism by the latest tribe of rationalists. The highest philosophical problem of the age is said to be in methodology.

This phase of thought is upon us, around us, and in us, and cannot be avoided. Its excesses and perversions are criminal; itself is providential, natural—a necessary process in the development of the thinking man. Reflection and analysis it seems, sooner or later must come, in all progress of the individual or of the race. After every period of more or less unconscious activity, we may expect a pause, in which the mind shall turn to survey what it has done or what has transpired within its sphere; shall analyze the elements of its new knowledge, discuss its value, and recognize and appropriate what is good and true as a basis for future advances. Thus its ideas will gain clearness. It will know, as a prudent man of business, the actual amount and state of its possessions. It will be furnished with tests of error.

Therefore the critical stage of thought must not be disparaged or denounced as worthless and dangerous. It is a necessary element of progress. Protestantism itself is, in great part, a challenge of the dead spirit of acquiescence in authority, the spirit of stolid and unquestioning content in past acquisitions, that had overspread the world. But this is not all of Protestantism, which its enemies, and false friends alike, would indeed charge with being a mere negation. It asserts the right of private judgment as against all human assumptions of infallibility, while it bows the reason and the will in intelligent submission to the Word of God. Protestantism is not mere rationalism, or cold criticism of the foundations of truth. Criticism of itself is one-sided and defective. Pushed too far, it becomes a vice and an abomination. It may be greatly overvalued and suffered to usurp a place far beyond its own importance and worth. It may be practiced, not only with the honest purpose of clearing up our knowledge, but with the perverted aim of sweeping it all away, and unmooring us from all the hard-won landmarks of the past.

Has the race really made any progress? Has it gained any knowledge of the mysteries of our being and destiny; or is every thing yet at the mercy of mere guesses? Is the critical spirit, in its full development, the only real evidence of progress man can show? Is it our greatest achievement to have found out that we have never, as a race, really achieved anything? It is indeed to this *reductio ad absurdum* that criticism, pushed to its one-sided extreme, would bring us. In religion, it assails, with sweeping analysis, the standards of our faith, and not only honestly endeavors to give us exact views of their nature, internal relations and value, but pushes its work to the actual destruction of their elemental

* "Faith precedes knowledge."
† "For I do not seek to know that I may believe, but I believe that I may know. For I also believe, because unless I shall have believed I shall not know."

parts. If we yield ourselves to the exclusive direction of this bent of our nature, it will land us in utter barrenness of thought, in universal skepticism, in sneering Sado-duceism. We not wonder that the poet, Wordsworth, declared that he "held the critical power very low, infinitely lower than the inventive," or that he said to a friend, "if the quantity of time consumed in writing critiques on the works of others was given to original composition of whatever kind it might be, it would be much better employed." He doubtless had in view the class who indulge that one-sided bent of their natures to excess, and who blindly exalt it to a supreme place in the mind.

We protest against the exaltation of the critical faculty in religion, as Wordsworth did in literature. It is a grand and fatal mistake, and a grievous wrong to other faculties of the soul. It is a sin against the law of proportion and of healthful development of those faculties. It is worse; it is giving to a faculty, meant only to hold secondary rank, supreme and exclusive importance. It is making the prying, doubting, questioning spirit the ornament and glory of man's nature. It is making it his chief function to suspect. Useful and necessary as this may be in its place, it is a mere weakness, a morbid activity, when carried to the extent we see exhibited all around us. The true glory of man is in the right exercise of his CAPACITY OF FAITH. All movements which in themselves, tend to weaken, confuse, and corrupt this faculty, are hostile to man's true interests and true dignity. They are a degradation instead of an advancement. The true dignity and safety of the intelligent creature is an intelligent, unshaken trust in the Creator, and in his revealed word. The highest and most satisfying exercise of the human mind is in grasping firmly the great truths, the soul-sustaining doctrines of the Gospel. The true strength is to be strong in faith. As the highest dignity and excellence of literature is in originating—"inventing"—as Wordsworth asserted, and in inventing in painfully going over and computing the worth of what has been produced, so the highest exercise of the religious nature is in appropriating and having formed in ourselves, as a personal reality, the truths which God has revealed for our acceptance. The first necessity is to believe; and the second necessity: to know why and what we believe, is never so great or so plain as the first: to believe. In a word, the first, the second, and the third necessity, is still, to believe, and all criticism is superfluous, noxious, and wicked, which blinds us to that prime necessity, or seeks to make it secondary. First, we must live, after that and in subordination to that, we may study hygiene, anatomy, and medicine. First, we must have the ship, and though after long voyaging she may need to have her bottom cleansed, let us suffer no man, under pretense of removing barnacles and sea-weed, to heave the staunch planks from her bottom and to rend them from her sides.

The capacity to believe in God and to embrace the truth as it is in Jesus; this it is which we must guard, cherish, and cultivate above all things, and hold it as infinitely above all the attainments of a busy, boasting, speculative criticism; as intrinsically the most valuable and honorable of the powers with which man is endowed; as giving him real personal, eternal possessions, which criticism may measure, estimate, and deery, without a title to the smallest portion of them, or indeed of any other real good. The mere critic will die in the midst of the plenty he is chemically investigating, while the believer lives and is happy forever.

IMPARTIAL SUFFRAGE.

We are glad to notice that Dr. William Adams, of New York, reiterates, in the current number of the *Presbyterian Quarterly*, the position taken by him last spring on the above subject. We quote a few sentences from page 91:—

"We like the expression *impartial suffrage* better than *universal suffrage*. Whatever qualifications may be thought proper for the high and solemn duties of a voter, let those qualifications be allowed to work, impartially, without regard to color. Those qualifications existing, let none be denied the right of voting because of the complexion of the skin; and on the other hand we may well hesitate to confer that right on any, because they are black, when wanting the qualifications which are expected of others."

We believe the colored men of the country would be entirely satisfied with suffrage on these conditions. History may be searched in vain, we believe, for an example of a race so lately enslaved, improving with such ardor the opportunities just placed in their reach, to fit themselves for the duties and responsibilities of citizenship.

ALL HAIL, CONGRESS!

True hearts all over the land rejoice in the high, honorable, and eminently safe position assumed and steadily maintained by Congress, on the relations of the lately rebel States to the loyal part of the Union. While there may be some members elect from those States, whom it would be entirely safe to admit, as individuals, to the deliberations and the act of the body, who is there that did not feel a thrill of irrefragable relief, when the greater part of the delegations that had trooped to the Capitol of the nation, confident of easy admission to its highest councils, found out how grievously they (and some others) had mistaken the real sentiment of the nation, and, like a flock of unclean birds, disappointed in their prey, reluctantly rose, took wing, and disappeared from the sight. Thank God! we have a Congress, in which, not yet, a recent traitor, fresh from scenes of fiercest and bloodiest effort to overthrow the country, can take his seat unquestioned by the side of the men that have risked their all to defend it, or can share with them the most sacred functions entrusted to the servants of the Republic. Thank God! no disloyal community in the South, has, as yet, secured representation, as such, and over the heads of the loyal portion of the community, white or black, in the legislative branch of the Government. Thank God! no State which refuses the commonest measure of justice and of protection to the Freedman, and that gives evidence of a wish to perpetuate his degradation, has been recognized as upon the rolls of this free and victorious sisterhood of States! Thank God! the precious fruits of victory, purchased by an enormous debt, and by the sacrifice of three hundred thousand loyal lives, are not legislated out of our reach, nor are likely to be, by the Thirty-ninth Congress, or by any body of legislators truly representing the people. All praise to this faithful, immovably loyal body, which seems conscious of the vastness of its responsibilities, and which may yet be hailed as the saviour of the country, as truly as Gen. Grant and his brave soldiers, or as Mr. Lincoln and his Cabinet.

There are worthless, heartless politicians, who are looking greedily towards the elements of future party strength in the reconstructed South, and who are vieing with each other in bids for its support. There are those who have not lost, and never will lose, the trick of fawning and groveling upon the dominant class of the South. There are those who, with all their show of statesmanship, leave out of view the important element of justice in their schemes of national policy, and who can see no reason for delaying the process of reconstruction, to satisfy such an abstraction as the public conscience. There are those who are supremely anxious for a speedy return to a specie basis in business, to a plenty of cotton, to the palmy days of traffic with the South, and who are perfectly willing to "jump the hereafter" if their selfish wishes may but be gratified in the present; just as they would have yielded the South everything they asked, rather than break with them and go to war. There are those who suffer unchristian and unreasoning prejudice against the colored man to close their eyes to his rights, to make them indifferent to his fate in the hands of his old masters, or to his aspirations and capabilities for the future. All these and similar influences are at work in the community; all have their organs in the newspaper press, and their lobbyists (who are often reporters to these papers) in Washington. Some lay large claims to the influence of the Executive, and in a manner most scandalous in a free country, menace the representatives of the people with the dire consequences of the displeasure of the Executive, if his wishes are not complied with in the matter of reconstruction. Such paragraphs as the following, telegraphed from Washington to one of our city dailies during the early part of the session, are a disgrace to the columns of an American journal:—

"The action of the Senate caucus upon the joint resolution is an augury of better times, and affords sincere gratification to the conservative masses. The radicals have but to remember that the President holds the strongest hand, both in a constitutional view and also in the matter of patronage, to compel, if need be, an acquiescence in the only policy which he feels sure will restore harmony and true peace to the nation. The power to appoint and remove is one that few of even his bitterest opponents can withstand, and when it is once known that the President has determined to use that power to bring the malcontents to terms, there will be a far different feeling in Congress from what was evinced during the early proceedings of last week."

"The Mexican resolves are, at best, bugaboos. A large amount of valuable breath will be wasted in the 'vindication' of the Monroe doctrine, as was the case at the last

session; but were Congress to pass a whole hatful of resolutions, it would not succeed in driving the President into a hostile position."

Such unworthy attempts to influence a body of high-minded, honorable and unusually able men, put forth, doubtless, utterly without authority, it might be seen beforehand, must fail of their object. Never had we a Congress which so truly represented the best sentiment of the country—never had we a body of men in Washington so little likely to be swayed by mere partisan influences. Against the resolute will and the stern sense of duty of these legislators, the tide of semi-rebel sentiment, North and South; the reaction towards excessive and misplaced leniency; the shortsighted haste of covetousness calling itself business enterprise; the wicked prejudice against the negro; the whole *vis inertiae* of the respectable conservatism of the North, backed by threats of Executive displeasure, as false as they are insolent, have availed nothing.

Representatives, shrink not, swerve not from your position. Stand true to your glorious and incalculably precious charge, to which so many have proved unfaithful, and the old Roman Senators shall not have a reputation as honorable and as fragrant as yours.

* Special Dispatch to the Public Ledger.

THE DEMAGOGUE TURNED REFORMER.

We have already informed our readers of the extraordinary assumptions of the editor of *The Press* to superiority in Scripture knowledge, to greater regard for the public morals, and to more enlightened, unselfish and practical designs for the public good, than those of the entire body of the evangelical clergy in the city. Doubtless they are prepared to learn, that this sapient editor has taken a fresh step in arrogance, and now assumes to play the pedagogue, not only over the clergy of the city, but over the legislators of the State. They, too, shall learn from the pure and sound light of this great and experienced moralist, to draw right distinctions between questions of public morals and public utility, to understand the nature of the Sabbath, to know their duties generally as speakers, as committee men, as legislators, and as guardians of the true interests of the Commonwealth. For some time, by means of agents at the State Capital, this editor has been inculcating his views upon individual members of the legislature, and has so far succeeded, that bills to allow the running of passenger railway cars in the city have been promptly introduced into both houses. The disposition made of the bill in the Senate, however, does not please him. The Speaker of that body is not a proficient in the new doctrines. The Chairman of the Senate Committee on Railroads is also a poor scholar. He does not want the bill in his Committee. The Speaker consigns it summarily to the Committee on Vice and Immorality. What a shocking disposition of the pet measure of this new teacher of public morals! Naturally he is disgusted. The instructions of his Harrisburg agent having failed, he will now take the stupid legislators, and especially the perverse Speaker of the Senate in hand, and read them a terrifying lesson through more public channels. Hear the Reformer speaking *ex cathedra*.

"A QUESTION OF UTILITY.
"The Speaker of the Senate, at Harrisburg, is an estimable gentleman, no doubt, but he was egregiously elected to that dignified and useful office to discuss religious theories, as if he were a professor of theology. On Thursday, Mr. Donovan, one of the State Senators from Philadelphia, read a bill in the Senate to allow passenger railway cars to run on all days of the week, in compliance with the general demand for such accommodation. The Speaker referred it to the Committee on Vice and Immorality. Mr. Donovan, who is a practical man, requested that it should be referred to the Railroad Committee, but the Speaker said it would be because it had reference to the morality of the community. Herein, it is clear that the Speaker had fallen into the too common error of begging the question. The bill in question refers not to a moral question, but to a matter of public utility, and has to be considered, in and out of the Legislature, on that ground, and not upon any fanatical theory, whether broached by the clergy or the laity. The Speaker will please take notice."

But seriously, does this editor expect the legislators and the moral people of this Commonwealth to accept his teachings on matters of morals and high public utility, as sound and disinterested? Does he think they have forgotten, that through his political maneuvering, it came to pass that the imbecile James Buchanan occupied and disgraced, beyond all precedent, the Presidential chair; or that they have forgotten how, like the high priests abandoning the wretched Judas, when they could make nothing more out of him, this same editor abandoned Mr. Buchanan, when he became

useless to his schemes of political ambition; or that they fail to observe now the attempt of the same man to cast off and crush the religious part of the community, to destroy the institutions of the Gospel, and to introduce a Parisian Sabbath into our good old Commonwealth, after he has gained from the endorsement of the loyal and religious community all the reputation for decency he ever had, and all the additional chances for political preferment he could? "Utility," forsooth! No doubt he, and the classes he represents, would like to have not only the fourth, but all the ten commandments removed from the sphere of morals to that of "utility," if not abrogated altogether.

In a word, this editor is egregiously mistaken, if he thinks he is not thoroughly comprehended by the religious community; if he thinks his old and half-forgotten character of demagogue is not instantaneously brought back, by his recent attempt to play the Reformer; if he thinks the dissonant notes of the mere self-seeking politician are not recognized, under the assumed lion skin of the public reformer. Whatever success he may have in his schemes of advancement, let him no longer calculate on the support of the religious portion of the community, unless Unitarians, Universalists, Swedenborgians, spirit-rappers *et id genus omne*, are its representatives.

SABBATH-BREAKING NEWSPAPERS UNNECESSARY.

We are thankful for the aid our New York City contemporaries are lending us in our movements to maintain the Sabbath-keeping character of our city. The *N. Y. Observer* says:—

There is no more necessity for having newspapers published and circulated on the Sabbath than there is of having all other kinds of business carried on as on other days. England, so far, has resisted the temptation to issue Sunday papers. If the *London Times*, the greatest newspaper establishment in the world, can get along without a Sunday paper, it is difficult to understand why the newspapers of this city, and of Philadelphia, and of other American cities, should not be able to flourish without violating the Sabbath day.

There are many who desire to have the news on the Sabbath, and there are many who would like to have everything else going on upon the Sabbath just as on other days. But the question is one of morals. The Sunday press is exerting a very pernicious influence upon the public mind, because it is insidiously, but efficiently, breaking down one of the greatest barriers against immorality. It is destroying, in the minds of those who regularly read them, all regard for the day as a sacred day. It is placing itself in direct antagonism to the pulpit, God's appointed means of conserving and extending religious influence; it unites the reader for the services of the sanctuary; it increases the current of mammonism and secularism already so fearfully strong and debasing; and it opens a floodgate for the influx of demoralizing influences. Even the late Theodore Parker, who had labored all his life to break down the Puritan Sabbath, in one of his last letters from Italy, made the memorable confession that rather than be cursed with the fearful desecration of an Italian or Parisian Sunday he would have the old-fashioned Puritan Sabbath, with all its excesses. It is impossible to violate the fourth commandment without at the same time undermining the whole Decalogue.

If anything distinguishes the Christianity of Great Britain and America from the Christianity of the Continent, it is the strict observance of the Sabbath as a Divinely-appointed day of holy rest. Every earnest Christian traveler and observer admits the superior practical advantages of the Anglo-American Sabbath, however he may differ from our theory. Even the zealous Roman Catholic Count Montalembert derives the constitutional freedom and national prosperity of England from her sacred regard for the day which God gave to man as a training-school of piety, virtue and self-government. Freedom is impossible without law and discipline. The best men in Switzerland and Germany are now laboring to introduce a better observance of the Lord's Day after the English and American example. Should we retrograde and degenerate?

The *Christian Intelligencer* quotes from the *Journal of Commerce* the declaration that:—

Since the foundation of the paper in 1827, no person in its employ has been permitted to do any work on Sunday, and the doors of the entire building are locked from Saturday night till Monday morning.

The *Journal* argues for the Sabbath as follows:—

It is so beneficent, so pure, and so calming in its effects on the entire stream of life, that the human race have the most profound interest in preserving, cherishing, and widening its powerful influences. Whoever invented it, whoever opened the spring from which this current flows, it is, beyond dispute, the greatest of blessings now. Did the Philadelphia editors never observe this notable fact? If not, they are lamentably ignorant of all history. They dare not deny that it is fact. If they know it, and yet seek deliberately, and with such unseemly anger, to throw filth into the

TERMS.
Per annum, in advance, \$5.00.
By Mail, \$7.00.
By Carriage, \$8.00.
Fifty cents additional, after three months.
Clubs.—Ten or more papers, sent to one address, payable strictly in advance and in one remittance.
By Mail, \$2.50 per annum. By Carriage, \$3.50 per annum.
Ministers and Ministers' Widows, \$2.50 in advance.
Foreign Missionaries, \$2.00 in advance.
Fifty cents additional after three months.
Remittances by mail are at our risk.
Postage.—Five cents quarterly, in advance, paid by subscribers at the office of delivery.
Advertisements.—12½ cents per line for the first, and 10 cents for the second insertion.
One square (one month).....\$3.00
" two months.....5.50
" three.....7.50
" six.....12.00
" one year.....18.00
The following discounts on long advertisements, inserted for three months and upwards, is allowed:—
Over 20 lines, 10 per cent off; over 50 lines, 20 per cent; over 100 lines, 32½ per cent off.

stream out of which this nation derives such life-giving benefits, then we leave them to their own judgment, retorting none of their senseless clamor against us.

DR. MARCH'S PASSAGLIA.

Perhaps the best article of the many very good ones contributed to our paper by Dr. March, was one on Passaglia, which appeared in our columns some time last fall. In the November number of *Christian Work*, it appeared exactly as printed in our columns, without the slightest intimation of the source from which it was derived. Nay, worse, it was placed among "Letters from Correspondents of *Christian Work*," without a sign of distinction, immediately following a letter purporting to come from Milan, Italy. The running title "Letters from Correspondents," is immediately above the commencement of the article, at the top of the page.

This singular sort of "Christian work" would have scarcely seemed worthy of notice, but for the fact that several of our American contemporaries, aided in their judgment by an English approval of the article, are republishing and quoting from it, as original in the English journal. The author was as much surprised to see it in that position in the journal as we were. It is about as cool and as inexcusable an act of literary pilfering as we have almost ever met with.

THE AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN AND THEOLOGICAL REVIEW.

The number for January has just been laid on our table. It appears in a new dress, showing the genuine Presbyterian color. From a glance at the contents, we should pronounce them timely and valuable. They include: Maxims for Sermonizing, by Prof. Shedd; Relations of the Old Testament to the New, by Prof. Harbaugh, of Mercersburg; an Essay on Induction, by Prof. H. N. Day, of New Haven; The War for Independence and the War for Secession, by Dr. Adams; Patriotic Doctrine of the Sacraments, by Dr. Schaff; The Westminster Confession in England and Ireland, by Dr. Gillett; Mill's Examination of Hamilton's Philosophy, by Prof. H. B. Smith, D.D.; Bushnell on the Atonement; Critical Notes on Recent Books; Theological and Literary Intelligence. The reviews of Mill and of Bushnell must command attention. The conductors of the journal could not have done a better service to the Church than in spreading these documents upon their pages.

It is claimed that the *Review* is, in circulation, the second among theological reviews in the country, yet in need of further patronage for its complete establishment. We heartily commend it to our readers.

THE CONGREGATIONAL OR FATHERS' FUND.

The last Independent says that the fund attempted to be raised December 20th, or about that date, by the Congregational churches of the country, was designed to reach \$200,000, for church building purposes. It figures up about ninety thousand dollars reported to that office, and supposes the total collections thus far reported will amount to one hundred thousand. Some disappointment at the result pervades the following sentences which we cut from that paper:—

It is greatly to be regretted that some of the more wealthy and liberal of our churches failed to enter into the spirit of this noble undertaking, which promised to meet so effectually one of the greatest wants of our cause in the West and South. We hope the trustees of the Union, on taking a survey of the ground, will be encouraged to make such a vigorous and fresh appeal to the Congregationalists of the country as will bring into the treasury the entire sum recommended by the Council, of two hundred thousand dollars. There can be no doubt that the whole will be wanted, and much more, as the work of religious reconstruction goes on in the South, and if that of expansion shall keep up in any tolerable measure with the advance of population in the West.

"The times of triumph of sin are only when the Church strikes hands with it."—AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN, December 7.

List of orthodox Churches advertising in Saturday's Press:—

- 15th Presbyterian, 15th and Lombard.
- Arch Street Lutheran, Arch and Broad.
- 1st Ref. Dutch, 7th and Spring Garden.
- Church of the Nativity, 11th and Mount Vernon.
- 2d Presbyterian, 7th below Arch.
- 3d Reformed Dutch, 10th and Filbert.
- St. Philip's, Vine below 8th.
- Central Congregational, 18th and Mount Vernon.

Besides these, we find Swedenborgian, Universalist, and Second Advent meetings, advertised, but no New School, United or Reformed Presbyterians, no Methodists and no Baptists.