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MORE PHILOSOPHISING ON THE ATONEMENT.

It is as natural for the logical faculty to analyze, to compare, to generalize, and to systematize, as it is for the blood to circulate, or for the lungs to play. And the training of this faculty to ease, effectiveness, and accuracy in these exercises, is one of the grand, indispensable elements of intellectual culture. But equally important to genuine Christian culture, is a recognition of the fact of certain limitations to the exercise of this faculty; of certain spheres to which it should be confined; of certain departments of knowledge where at most it may properly appear as hypothesis and where to insist upon its authoritative application is to turn it into a dogmatizing, rationalism or into an instrument of persecuting bigotry.

The plain statements of Scripture and the broad facts of Revelation, must necessarily come within the purview of the logical and rationalizing faculty. Indeed, it would be nothing less than calamitous to allow its range everywhere else, and exclude it from the noblest possible objects of human thought. And the fact is, that these very truths of Revelation, from the beginning, proved the greatest stimulus to the exercise of the thinking faculty—the great educators of the human mind. And any view of the nature of Revelation which would hinder or discourage the speculative interest which the human mind has always taken in it, must be set down as unfriendly to culture and unfriendly to the truth itself. Let the whole force of thought be directed upon the Bible and upon the truth it contains; let it be discussed, analyzed, and systematized from every point of view; but let us ever be modest enough to put the facts of the Bible above our speculations, and to avoid thrusting our speculations as authority upon those who, while manifestly receiving the facts of Revelation, deny our speculative views of them, or refuse to speculate upon them at all.

We repeat, it is not speculation, or system making, or philosophic explanation to which any friend of the Bible, of Christianity, or of liberal and tolerant forms of belief, or any one who has subscribed to the Westminster Standards, can object; it is making an authority on religious matters of what is purely human; it is claiming exclusive orthodoxy for one set of opinions which are only opinions, and setting them up as a standard of Church order, and perhaps of division; among those who have never differed as to the plain statements and great facts of Revelation, and as to the essential features of the Calvinistic creed. Prof. A. A. Hodge's late book on the Atonement is one of the least objectionable of any issued in defence of what are called "Old School" views of the doctrine. It renders admirable service against recent erroneous treatises on the same subject. We welcome it as a vigorous and able exposure of the unscripturalness of the Moral Influence Theory of Bushnell, Young, and the Socinians, as well as of those weak points in the Governmental Theory which arise from its connection with the Happiness Theory in Morals. But the great fault of the book, as of all written from the author's position, is its dialectic tone; its claim for the necessity of distinct, rational views of the Atonement to orthodoxy; not to mention its modest assumption that the only possible orthodox view is precisely that enunciated in this volume. According to the preface, it is a matter of even greater solicitude with him than repelling open heresies on the doctrine, to guard against "that latitudinarian indifference to exact conceptions and careful statements of doctrine which tend secretly, yet not less certainly, to destroy the truth, and which in the present age, is our chief source of danger." And again, on page 21, he complains of one of the theories of the Atonement, which he opposes, that it cannot render "a strict account of what is meant by a substitute for a penalty; or as to the connection between the unpenal sufferings of an innocent person and the unpunished sins of the guilty subjects of divine government." Again, he triumphantly says of the same class of thinkers: "Their views as to the connection between his death and our deliverance are most vague and unsatisfactory," p. 63. Again he asks, page 333, with even a greater air of triumph, as if admitted mystery and difficulty were sufficient to annihilate the position of his adversaries; "How, in the name of reason, is it possible that the undeserved sufferings of Christ, which were not the penalty which the law demanded, should make it consistent with God's rectoral justice, to relax the law and remit the penalty altogether in the case of

repentant sinners?" And yet, when it suits our author, he can make as frank admissions of the principles for which we contend as any one. On page 190, he speaks of the doctrine of the Trinity as "a truth clearly revealed in Scripture, yet one which no man can clearly explain in his own mind." And in fact, incredible though it might seem beforehand, in regard to the turning point of the whole question of the Nature of the Atonement between himself and the most important class of his opponents, viz: "how God's justice can be satisfied by the vicarious suffering of another than the sinful agent," Prof. Hodge admits "that this is the precise point in which the Scriptural doctrine of the Atonement differs from human reason." Page 332. And yet Prof. Hodge's whole book, as against these opponents, is nothing if it be not a rationale of this very point; orthodoxy and heresy are made to hinge just here; and men are to be read out of the Calvinistic and Reformed Churches for not agreeing with Hodge's interpretation of a point confessedly involved in mystery, confessedly left in mystery by Scripture. The truth is, Prof. Hodge's explanation carries the analysis one step further back, but does not remove the mystery in the matter at all, while his opponents, seeing that all his theorizing fails to clear up the subject, prefer to stay by the simple declarations of Scripture and the undeviated experience of the believer towards his Saviour.

We claim that it is of the very spirit of rationalism to insist on explanations where Scripture is silent; to insist on a specific scientific view where the meaning of Scripture is doubtful. The professed rationalist demands that the facts accord with his reason; the believing rationalist requires that the facts be systematized and explained in a way to satisfy his reason. The really safe thinker is he who, accepting the facts, is tolerant of a variety of theories, as each and all experiments, approximating to, but perhaps in no case fully expressing, the truth. We think we detect rationalistic tendencies in Prof. Hodge, for example, when he asks in language above quoted, "How in the name of reason is it possible?" &c. And it seems to us, that there is quite as much rationalism in this saying of Hodge, page 81: "The ultimate incursions of right are themselves a direct revelation from God, and when legitimately interpreted and applied, they are of as high authority as any dogma of theology;" as there is in this, of Barnes, quoted as "rational speculation and analogical reasoning" on page 342: "Apart from any Revelation and back of any Revelation, we form our conceptions of God and we cannot think otherwise of him than we do." And we think the whole Princetonian system, as he exhibits it, beginning with the federal headship of Adam and continuing with the federal headship of Christ over his elect people, implicated and involved with the doctrine of the decrees and the inability of man, as a dark and remorseless system as ever was brooded in the soul of the most pitiless Hegelian. Nor can any thing which he says or admits or argues, relieve it of that offense to God and to man, that contradiction of reason and of Scripture, that grief to the tender heart of the Christian, and that scandal of high Calvinism, a LIMITED ATONEMENT. We think we may justly charge such theorists with rationalism, even though they clothe their theories with a complete garniture of Scripture passages.

But there is in Prof. Hodge a tendency equally active with this dialectical one; viz: that of profound deference to what he calls orthodoxy; the opinions of the Church; the sentiments of the accepted creeds and confessions of the past. He indeed thinks there has been progress in theological opinion on the doctrine of the Atonement, but the progress which he chooses to recognize is that in the direction of increased logical exactness, i. e. rationalism. In the disposition which has sprung up since the Reformation, in the Calvinist Churches of Europe and this country, under Amyraldus and Placensis in France; Baxter and Fuller in England; the marrow men and Dr. John Brown of Scotland, and the great constellation of New England theologians from the elder Edwards to the younger, coming down to Gardiner Spring, Barnes, Beman, Duffield, and J. W. Alexander in our day, the disposition to recognize various shades of opinion as equally valid, and to restrict the rampant spirit of logical speculation within narrower limits, he does not recognize a legitimate Church movement, but styles it heresy or a symptom of the presence of the germs of heresy. To his own view of what is the current of legitimate thought on this subject he is thoroughly wedded; this he announces as a finality; this is the test of orthodoxy. The spirit with which he pursues this part of his investigations and the importance which he attaches to the results, appear from such a remark as that on page 398: "This much

at least in common honesty ought to be held as settled, that whatever may be the case as to the teachings of Scripture, it is not an open question what is the doctrine of the Reformed Churches, as to the design of the Atonement." The italics are his own. And if our author has thought it worth while (pp. 341, 2) to count the pages in Mr. Barnes' book on the Atonement, so as to be able to say that of three hundred and sixteen pages "two hundred and sixty-eight are occupied with rational speculation and analogical reasoning as to what an atonement need to be," &c., and "thirty-nine pages to the construction of these views with the concurrent testimony of Scripture;" we may remark, that of more than eighty pages of Prof. Hodge's book appropriated to the Design of the Atonement, about three-fourths are spent in showing what the fathers thought; what is the standard of Calvinism (which he says is "entirely independent of the personal views of Calvin"); and what the Church has always believed; and scarcely one-fourth to the teachings of Scripture, much of which latter being employed in the delectable work of showing that the "all" in the Scriptures, which the Gospel is freely offered to mankind, does not mean all; and that the broad statements of God's mercy in Christ recorded for man by inspired oracles to be battled and emptied of their meaning by the petty rationalism of men calling themselves the "orthodox." We submit whether Mr. Barnes' speculations are not the more Christian of the two.

ORGANIZATION OF CHURCHES ON THE FOREIGN FIELD.

DEAR BROTHER:—My attention has just been drawn to an article in the supplement accompanying the last number of your paper, which I had failed to look at; and I am requested from the Missionary House, Boston, to make a fitting response to your call on the Secretaries of the American Board for information. Your anonymous correspondent, "H. A. Heathen City," states that he has no objection to make against his associates, or the officers of the Board; in regard to the subject on which he writes. He may be assured that an open admission to "Christian spirit" of his opinions and wishes on that subject, will receive no other than a kind consideration from those who are charged with the Executive administration of the Board.

The question of policy to be pursued by the Board in respect to the ecclesiastical arrangements on the fields of its missions, has been repeatedly considered; at the annual meeting held in Newark, N. J., in 1866, the Board declared that "on the whole subject of ecclesiastical relations and organizations, the policy of the Board is that of entire non-interference on the part of the Board and its officers; that missionaries are free to organize themselves into, or connect themselves with such ecclesiastical bodies or churches as they may choose, either on missionary ground or in this country, and that in organizing churches, provided the principles held in common by the constituencies of this Board be not violated, the persons to be thus organized are free to adopt such forms of organization as they may prefer." The principle thus set forth, has been honestly carried out. No interference with the perfect freedom of Missionaries on the points specified, has been made by the officers of the Board; nor has there been, as I believe, any least design to influence the missions in favor of Congregationalism; rather than Presbyterianism in their intercourse with the missionaries, or by sending men of one denomination, or the other, to particular fields.

What may be expected from the officers of the Board, in the case of an organization of a Presbyterian church in one of its missionary fields is precisely the same action, or non-action, which would be demanded in an instance of the formation of a Congregational church under analogous circumstances. The approval, or disapproval, would be one and the same in the two cases, unless for other reasons than the denominational form of the churches.

As a matter of fact, a considerable number of churches have been organized by missionaries of the American Board, and now exist, as Presbyterian. Others are distinctively Congregational. Of the churches formed among the Armenians in Turkey, now sixty in number, Rev. Dr. Riggs, (an O. S. Presbyterian), of Constantinople, has affirmed that the plan on which they are organized and governed, comprises, in his opinion, "the best features of Presbyterianism, and of Congregationalism too;" and this, not as the result of a compromise; but by the hearty approval of the Presbyterian and Congregational missionaries alike. I enclose to you an interesting letter from his pen on "Foreign Missions and the

Presbyterian Church," which was published in the *Evangelist* of May 10, 1860, and contains statements that deserve careful consideration.

Very respectfully yours,
GEO. W. WOOD, Sec'y.

NOTICE.

The Annual Concert of Prayer for Colleges and other institutions of learning, will be held on Thursday, Feb. 27th, in the Calvary Presbyterian Church at 11 o'clock A. M. and in the First Presbyterian Church, N. L. (Rev. Dr. Shepherd's) at 3 o'clock P. M.

The members of all our Churches are earnestly invited to attend; and prevent if possible a repetition of the almost failures of years past.

AFFAIRS AT THE CAPITAL.

Washington, Feb. 17th.

The promised letter from the President with its accompanying documents came before the House considerably toned down, and produced little impression. The friends of the President seem to feel satisfied with his way of putting the matter; but Seward's and Browning's careful and circumstantial letters give them no comfort, and the wrath of the Blairs and the *Intelligencer* seems to have turned from Grant to Seward. The letter from the Polonus of the Navy Department, who could easily see "a camel" or "wassel" or "whals" in any cloud towards which the President might direct his gaze, was too much for the gravity of the House. But the whole affair this time seemed stale; it was a week behind its time and everybody was sick of it.

The President started another scheme this week, aimed apparently at Grant, viz: nominating Gen. Sherman to the same rank, by brevet, and putting him in command of the Department of the Atlantic. His purpose is thought to have been to antagonize the two, if Sherman were confirmed by the Senate, or to set Sherman against Congress, if they rejected him; but this little plot has been foiled by Gen. Sherman himself, who declines the honor of becoming the President's champion against either Grant or Congress. Impeachment has again been killed, this time in the Reconstruction Committee, where Mr. Stevens' proposition to bring in a bill commanded but three out of nine votes. It must be very dead now, and ought to be, for the sufficient reason, that weightier matters require the full time of the present Congress. The President has been so entirely stripped of power by Congress and has so lost his influence upon the community, that he need not absorb any more consideration. He has in the past served a good purpose, rallying the people to the support of Congress; but his hostility is no longer of any use to anybody and may as well be suffered to act the part of a counter-irritant to the end of his term.

The Congregational Church here is discussing the subject of receiving colored people to its membership. Some time ago three colored persons presented themselves to be examined for admission, two of them graduates of Oberlin College. Their examination proved satisfactory, but the pastor took occasion to express himself in favor of separate church organizations for the blacks.

On the succeeding Sunday he preached an elaborate sermon, taking for his text Hebrews xi. 23: "By faith Moses when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." He most singularly treated this decision of Moses as one relating to race, that he chose to cling to the despised Israelite race, rather than ambitiously link himself to a higher but foreign people. He argued that the case of the blacks in this country was analogous, and that they should follow the example of Moses and work out their advancement by themselves. In consequence of this, the two young men alluded to withdrew their names. Since then, a meeting has been held in which, through the absence of many, a majority vote was secured to sustain the views of the pastor. The dissent of most of the leading men of the church, including Gen. Howard and the deacons, has been published in the form of a protest. The church is decidedly in advance of its pastor, and, aside from the difficulty of undertaking to settle how large a percentage of each candidate would belong to a white church, and how much to a black church; they think it more Christian to have a church where there is "neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all." This church has been prosperous, has a membership of about two hundred and fifty, and has a large edifice nearly ready for occupancy. Heretofore they have led the van in liberality towards the freedmen, and for the sake of a common Christianity we hope they will not disgrace themselves and injure the cause of truth by backward steps. FENWICK.

FROM OUR ROCHESTER CORRESPONDENT.

NARROW ESCAPE.—The congregation of the First Presbyterian Church of this city have reason to be very grateful, that forty or fifty of their number were not killed outright on a recent Sabbath, and as many more, maimed for life, by the falling of a considerable portion of the ceiling of their church edifice, together with timber and lath, and rubbish enough to crush, as it did, something like a dozen or twenty pews in the very centre of their audience room, rendering their house untenable. The crash did not occur on Sunday; but on Monday. Those tons of impending ruin did not fall upon the heads of the congregation, but upon the empty pews. But it makes one shudder to think in what peril that congregation has long been sitting, and what an almost Angola disaster it would have been; if the mass had fallen, only the day before in the time of church services.

The house was erected in 1824. It came near falling in 1830, when Mr. Finley was preaching here. A great congregation, filling every nook and corner, was assembled in the house one evening. The service had just begun. Some one was praying, when a portion of plastering fell upon the heads of the singers in the organ gallery. Immediately there was a fearful rush for the doors. Some also jumped out of the windows, and some dashed through without stopping to raise the windows, carrying sash and glass with them, and cutting themselves badly. All seemed to think that the house was coming down, and some came near being trodden to death in the door-ways.

It was found afterward that the walls had yielded some to the immense pressure upon them, and buttresses were afterward built to strengthen them. "But it is now thought that the roof has been unsafe for some time; and the house will probably never be occupied again. The congregation meet for the present in their ample Lecture Room, and are already laying their plans, we understand, to erect a new and handsome house of worship on the same site, as soon as it can be done. They need it, and are able to build it. Their old house has done good service, and it is time it gave place to something better.

ENLARGEMENT.—The First Presbyterian Church, of Utica, have completed the enlargement of their chapel and Sabbath-school rooms, which was begun last spring, and have added a pastor's study, church parlor, and the like, making all as commodious and comfortable as could well be imagined. The first floor contains the chapel proper, the parlor, the study, and kitchen. The parlor is very large and elegantly furnished, with Brussels carpet, sofas, pianos, pictures, and other articles. The chapel is also carpeted, and made every way comfortable and inviting. The chief Sunday-school room, on the second floor, is 117 feet long by 37 broad, and is furnished with admirable semi-circular seats. The infant school room is separated from this by sliding glass doors. All can be thrown together for general exercises, and few Sunday-schools are so well accommodated for all proper work as that of the First Presbyterian Church of Utica, and few churches are more enterprising and efficient in their working.

OTHERS MOVING.—The Ladies of the Presbyterian church of Le Roy have taken in hand the matter of providing a parsonage for their minister; and, we doubt not, he will now have a house to live in, as soon as it can conveniently be built.

PERSONAL.—Rev. G. C. Kimball, who has recently returned from the tour of Europe, is temporarily supplying the pulpit of the Presbyterian church of Irvington, in the absence of the pastor; and we learn that some tokens of special quickening are manifest under his preaching. Indeed, a number of conversions have already occurred, and others are inquiring after the way of life.

COMMISSIONERS.—At the recent meeting of the Presbytery of Chemung, Rev. Darwin Chichester, of Burdett, and Elder Stephen T. Owen, of Big Flats, were appointed Commissioners to the General Assembly. GENESSEE. Rochester, Feb. 15, 1868.

ANOTHER ADHERENT OF THE CANDID POLICY.

The fourth Presbytery of Philadelphia ranged itself fairly on the side of this policy, at its meeting last month. The following is the action taken at that time:—

Resolved, That this Presbytery regard the Plan of Re-union between the two branches of the Presbyterian church, reported by the Joint Committee of the General Assemblies, as, in the main, judicious and acceptable, but Presbytery deem it indispensable to the organic unity, and continued peace of the two branches, that the acceptance of the Confession of Faith "as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures," be clearly and definitely understood as allowing that diversity of doctrinal interpretation which from the first has obtained in the Reformed Churches, and which is not inconsistent with the integrity of the Calvinistic System.

Our readers may have noticed in the papers of Monday, a statement that one of the European steamers had brought word of the defection of the Bishop of Oxford to the Church of Rome. We were inclined to give the statement no credit until we noticed that the London *Weekly Review* of Feb. 1st, which probably came by the same steamship, intimates that this may be the fact.