

Correspondence.

THOUGHTS ON THE ATONEMENT. III.

The Federal headship scheme of Cocceius, which the Westminster Divines have embodied in our Confession, is but another illustration of Tennyson's words:

Our little systems have their day:  
They have their day and cease to be:  
They are but broken lights of Thee;  
And Thou art greater, Lord, than they.

The system contained in itself the seeds of death and decay from the first, for whatever is not of God and not conformable to the divine order, is mortal and must perish, when the good which its temporary existence was meant to effect, has been effected.

Now the merits of the system had always been in its form and its method, rather than in its essence and its results. But with the successors of Cocceius, the system itself and its results were everything. The method—free investigation of the Word of God—was quietly dropped out of sight, lest it should lead to results inconsistent with the system. For that method another was substituted,—the elaboration of details of the system itself with wire-drawn exactness. Now no system, unless it be the absolute truth expressed in absolutely correct language, will admit of this. But the Federal headship theory was only an approximation to the truth expressed in imperfect terms, and inferences from approximations are more likely to be divergences from the truth than new approximations.

This new form of the Federalist theology (as it is generally called) is found in a very common book by a Dutch professor who died in 1708:—Witsius's "Economy of the Covenants" (pub. 1694), in which the contrast between the "Covenant of Works" with Adam and the "Covenant of Grace" with Christ is defined very elaborately, as are the minor differences between the three dispensations of the latter. Witsius even complains of the earlier theologians and Reformers for the freedom with which they interpreted the Word of God, as inconsistent with the Federalist system; and it must be remembered that it is to Witsius that our British and American Federalist Theologians look as their great theological authority. One of them, an English high Calvinist, speaks of this book, which they have repeatedly republished in translations, with praise which might be thought strong enough for the Gospel and Epistles of John, and the late J. A. Alexander, of Princeton, mentions Witsius with Turretin as the two writers of the xvith century who he regarded as of prime authority as to what "the Reformed or Calvinistic system" was. These two in fact represent Calvinism in its decay; they differ from its nobler and simpler forms, as set forth by the Reformers, as Mr. Ruskin tells us the debased perpendicular Gothic architecture of Henry viith's chapel (which is all *undrawing*), differs from the noble Gothic of York Minster.

Besides this, while Witsius has been made into a Pope with English-speaking Calvinists, he never was an authority in his own Church, but only the leader of a theological faction. The Federalist theories were never put into any continental Church's creed, and what they had lived their day and served their purpose, they were suffered to drop out of existence. They are only thought of on the continent now as old theories that did very well for the time, but are now obsolete.

With the Presbyterian Churches the case is different. The Westminster Divines, whose heads were full of Splanm Leagues and Covenants, were so delighted with a theology that so closely resembled their Covenanter politics, that they gave the Federalist theology a place in their standards, and in 1694 the Scottish Church wished to "put the screws on" the Episcopalian clergy who were left in the national Church by "the Revolution Settlement," and so prescribed, as a sort of "iron-clad oath," that every Presbyterian clergyman should sign the Westminster Confession. In this way the Federalist theology, though dead elsewhere, has kept up a sort of galvanized life in our Churches, through that Confession being made a more or less rigid test of ministerial standing.

But even with them has not the system been galvanized rather than living? Has it not been the dead bound to the living, and often chilling the living into death? Has it not been an obstacle to true theological progress and development? Is there not evinced in the later history of these Churches the want of a fruitful theology, which will evoke thought rather than stifle it under penalties, which will encourage free exegesis and not lay it under the ban? Is not our later Calvinism strong only when it has something to fight, comparatively powerless for the work of moulding society? Who shall deliver us from the body of this death? Who shall teach us to speak in the English of the Nineteenth Century, rather than the Dutch of the Seventeenth? Who shall once more find a place for *hope* among the saving graces?

To proceed to some remarks on specific points in the Federalist theology:

I. The Headship theory is scriptural only in its form and not in its doctrinal content. The antitheses or contrasts, upon which special emphasis is laid in any system, are the points by which its general scope may be most fairly tested. Now both in the Pauline and in the Federalist theology there is an emphatic contrast between two Covenants, and yet the contrast is not the same. There are in Paul's Epistles (including that to the Hebrews) many passages in which the Old Covenant is contrasted with the New. To three of these, and to one in the Gospel of Luke, (Heb. vii. 22, ix. 15-17, 1. Cor. xi. 25, Luke xxi. 20), the Westminster Divines appeal in vindication of their Federalist theology. A reference to these passages, especially the first, will show the reader, what every impartial commentator of our day admits, viz. that Paul's contrast is not between a Covenant of Works made with Adam, and a Covenant of Grace made with Christ, but between the formal covenant of Judaism and the spiritual covenant which we call the Christian dispensation. Besides these, there are many other passages which no human ingenuity could twist into conformity

with the Federalist theology, and which plainly show what is meant in the Word of God by "the Old and New Covenants." The names, too, of the two parts into which the Scriptures are divided—the Old and New Testaments (or Covenants, for the word is the same in the Greek—*διαθηκαι*)—show in what sense Paul's distinction has been universally taken.

Nor is this a mere verbal difference. These two contrasts are the central points of two theological systems. The contrast of Paul is that of the Church of all ages, of Augustine, of Luther, of Calvin, of Bunyan, of the human heart. It is the key to all Luther's agonizing experience; it was burnt into Bunyan's soul during that terrible time, when he was being led to experience "grace abounding to the chief of sinners." It is not a mere speculative but an intensely practical distinction. It is not, like the Federal contrast, theoretic, but experimental; it finds a more or less prominent place in every normal Christian experience. The Federalist antithesis is not practical, it reflects "no needs" of the human heart; it exercises no power over life, it brings forth no fruit—"why cumbereth it the ground?" It is the out-growth of controversy between man and man, not of the great controversy between man and God.

II. The same mis-application of Scripture passages has led to the ascribing a character to the Covenant with Adam which it could never have possessed. We are told that it is a Covenant of Works as distinguished from a Covenant of Grace. In what sense is this true? Was Adam, before his fall, self-righteous? Did he stand in his own strength and obey in his own goodness, or did he owe all to the righteousness of God imparted to him, through that intimate communion with God which he enjoyed? If the latter, then his works were as much of grace, as our justification without works must be, for the unfallen creature has no more claim on the Creator than the fallen. Had Adam never sinned, it would still be true as Tennyson sings:

For merit lives from man to man  
And not from man, O Lord, to Thee.

The Old Covenant, then, assuming its existence, must have been as really a Covenant of grace as any could be, and it is only by transferring to it what Paul says of Judaism; that such a distinction has found place.

III. The exceptional and arbitrary position assigned to Adam in the Federalist system is unwarranted and unreasonable. This has always been the weak point of the system, as it is assumed that the representative responsibility under which Adam came, was created and produced by the Covenant made with him, and that this responsibility is absolutely different in kind from that of any of his descendants. That there is a difference will doubtless be admitted on all hands; but that the difference is the effect of an artificial agreement between God and Adam, it is not so easy to see. Adam's responsibility differs in degree from ours, in that he is historically the first of men and the first of sinners, "by whom" "sin entered into the world and death by sin." But this is not enough for our dogmatists. The Covenant of works is added, and the most factitious and arbitrary character assigned to it, to give him a new and stranger position, thereby adding to the moral difficulties connected with the subject of original sin, merely for the sake of getting rid of intellectual difficulties.

The discussions which led to the disruption of 1837-8, brought out this objection in strong relief, and the third of the false doctrines complained of in the memorial of 1837 is that:

"We have no more to do with the first sin of Adam, than with the sine of any other parent."

Such a statement is most probably an inference from the unguarded utterance of some ultraist, but it serves our purpose. The rebutting statement of the Auburn Convention's Protest avoids the artificial difficulties of the subject. They say:

"By a divine constitution, Adam was so the head and representative of the race that, as a consequence of his transgressions, all mankind became morally corrupt, and liable to death, temporal and eternal."

Recent indications are that the same difficulty is being felt in other quarters, and in a work on "Representative Responsibility," by Prof. Wallace of Belfast, the question is approached on the positive side, and the effort made to raise other men to the level of Adam in the matter of responsibility, rather than to bring him down to others. He says:

"The covenant relation between Adam and his posterity is not to be regarded, therefore, as an exceptional or singular case." It is singular as being the first, and as involving consequences more momentous and vaster in extent than any similar case. But the moral principle which underlies it is not singular, but familiar to man antecedent to revelation, and apart from its teaching."

Of course Mr. Wallace does not write up to that principle throughout his book, or the Princeton Review would have fewer praises for him. But he has made a beginning and "will keep watching." How fortunate that there is one good Princetonian heresy-hunter in the Belfast Faculty to keep an eye on him!

For if Mr. Wallace, as above quoted, is right, what becomes of the vast importance of the Covenant of works? The Federal headship resolves itself into a mere natural headship, differing somewhat from the common conception of natural headship, but still ordinary and not extraordinary. The representative responsibility of Adam is made to rest, not on an artificial agreement, but on the great principle of the divine order and of immutable morality—"No man liveth to himself." Such a responsibility is not peculiar to Adam, but belongs, in differing degrees, to every member of the human family. As recent French philosophers are fond of declaring, there is a moral solidarity of the race; the consequences of no man's acts ceases with himself, for their moral results pass over to those who are united with him by any tie of nature or of grace, and especially by the parental bond. Holmes, in his "Guardian Angel," presents this last truth with a Princetonian exaggeration.

Such a statement of course we cannot accept as covering the whole ground, but it probably goes as far into the definition of the subject as the limits of human knowledge and divine Revelation admit. But neither this nor any statement is exhaustive of this most mysterious subject of the connection between Adam and his offspring, a real connection which even Hodge of Alleghany admits to be inexplicable, while he

and other Cocceians patch up a supplementary legal connection to get rid of the difficulties of the subject.

LECTURE AND SUNDAY SCHOOL ROOMS.

Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises, when thrust into the innermost prison, their feet made fast in the stocks, and God heard their prayers and delivered them. The early Christians of Rome worshipped in the catacombs; the Vaudois in the caves and among almost inaccessible mountains; the Covenanters upon the heaths and among the fastnesses of the hills; and their worship was accepted; God heard and blessed them. It was a necessity with them, for they were persecuted, poor, and hunted by the enemies of the Church. But, in this enlightened day and land, when men need not seek a secret or out-of-the-way place to worship, but may do it anywhere and at all times; when God has given to the Church wealth and influence; there is no excuse for seeking such places as these; no reason for holding prayer-meetings and Sunday-schools in dark, damp, and dingy underground apartments, badly ventilated, gloomy, dispiriting and unhealthy. A large amount of grace will be necessary to make a meeting, held in such a place, anything but cold, formal, and uninteresting. There is no doubt, we, too, a certain extent, become used to such places and seem to forget their oppressive effects, but transfer the congregation to a "roofed, bright, clean, well-ventilated and cheerful" and a different spirit will animate them. The effect upon children is much greater than upon those more advanced in life, inasmuch as they are more susceptible and more easily influenced by surroundings. It is only necessary to go from a Sabbath-school kept in one of these dark caverns, under a church, to one above ground, where the sun can shine, and where the ceiling is high and the air pure, and the most careless observer will at once be convinced of the value of cheerful, sunlit Sunday-school rooms.

How much more buoyant and joyous are the children; how much more melodious are their sweet songs, when the sound has space, than when reflected from a ceiling close to the head. It is not only the spirits that are affected by these underground apartments; frequently the health of old and young is undermined. Many a teacher has been forced to give up a class, not on account of the fatigue of teaching, (it can never be *fatiguing* to one whose heart is in the work,) but the close, damp and dingy room is the cause of languor, and headache, if not of worse ailments. The reason that scholars often object to going to school, and are listless, uneasy and inactive, is the same, and not want of love for the teacher, interest in the lessons or delight in the exercises. There is nothing that children so much enjoy as a well-regulated Sunday-school, with proper appointments. There are very few cases where the use of a basement is a necessity; if other accommodations cannot be provided, let the audience-chamber of the church be used for all the meetings; the week-day meetings are fully as important as the regular Sabbath services. With regard to the comparative importance of the Sunday-school, one of our leading clergymen well remarked that he did not know whether the Sunday-school belonged to the church or the church to the Sunday-school, and it is well understood, that no church can succeed without one. The prayer-meeting and Sunday-school indicate the condition of the church, and from them come those who fill up her ranks. In many cases the want of comfort in such rooms is the result of a lack of interest in the Sunday-school and in the week-day meetings, not a want of means. Many a church, contemplating the improvement of the audience-chamber, or the building of a more attractive edifice, had better expend the money in providing an ample room for these meetings. They need not be afraid of making it too attractive, or too pleasant; the new church, or the improvements to the old will follow, as a natural sequence.

Two instances from the better class of churches, in our connection, will perhaps serve to illustrate the subject; they are stately edifices; built of brick with stone dressings; with tower and spire, upholstered pews, carpeted floors, fine organs, everything indeed, that refined taste or comfort can command, in the audience-chambers. One of these buildings has the lecture and Sunday-school rooms under the church, accessible by descending seven steps below the street pavement, poorly ventilated and uncomfortable, the walls of a color and finish to represent stone, but with huge discolored spots caused by dampness; the lecture room furnished with straight-backed pews, no doubt, taken from an old church, and the cushions faded and worn; both of these apartments are indeed, to one not used to them, almost repulsive. Need it be said that the meetings held in such a room are unattractive and poorly attended? Your spirits sink as you descend into them. In the Sunday-school room scarcely half of the space is occupied by seats to accommodate a hundred and fifty scholars. The fine and imposing facade of the church, its grand entrance and vestibule, the truly beautiful audience-chamber, with high vaulted and groined ceilings, present a striking contrast to these *living-rooms* of the church. The upper-room has a soul-inspiring, heart-cheering effect; the other causes a painful, oppressive feeling, heightened, no doubt, by the contrast.

The second church is not so truly beautiful, externally, but with a larger audience-chamber, is less imposing; but the Sunday-school and lecture-rooms are in a building attached to the rear of the church and projecting beyond it on either side, the first floor of which is occupied by ample vestibules, and stairways, under which, at one end, is a trustees' room, in the other a pastor's study; and the lecture-room, furnished with comfortable settees, carpeted, pleasant and ample in all its appointments, occupies the remainder of the first floor. The Sunday-school room occupies the entire second floor, has a high ceiling, is well-lighted by a number of stained glass windows; the walls are frescoed and adorned with pictures, mottoes, and maps; an Italian marble tablet in the wall immortalizes the names of the members of the school who fell in defence of humanity in the late rebellion. A raised platform at one end accommodates the organ, more advanced classes and officers, and at the other end is the infant school, separated by sliding glass doors; the body of the room is filled with comfortable circular

forms. This room accommodates six hundred scholars, and it is always well filled. Instances might be adduced of much more repulsive church *living-rooms* and also of more elegantly arranged ones, but these are fair specimens.

How long shall Christian congregations in this land and in this age, be forced to go down into such places to enjoy the pleasure of the week-day meeting, where tired nature, after a day of toil, must struggle with such depressing surroundings, and many delicate persons be denied the privilege of assembling with God's people in these social and most precious seasons; and the Sabbath-school teacher and scholars be subject to like privations? Why not lift them to the light of day, to the glorious sunlight? There is no doubt but that in the majority of cases it might be done, and well done, did the church only consider the importance of the subject and put forth the required energy; the other appointments of the church evince that it is not from want of means. It simply requires a will. No estimate placed upon the stated preaching of the Word can be too high; it is the fountain from which we drink, from which we are taught and have the precious Word expounded to us; next to the Bible, it is the magazine from which we draw the materials with which to carry on the warfare of life. In the Sabbath-school we impart that which we learn, simplified to meet the requirements of the young, and in the week-day meeting we are further prepared by instruction from the pastor, by comparing experience, by uniting our prayers in one petition, and by the influence of the Spirit, more frequently and more powerfully granted in such meetings. Without lowering our estimate of the importance of the Word preached, let us exalt the social gatherings, and prepare for them cheerful and comfortable meeting-places, *living-rooms*, around which, like those of our homes, cluster some of the most hallowed recollections of our lives, of endeared teachers, of Christian fellowship and communion, of blessed visitations of the Holy Spirit; make them such, that none need stay away; so attractive, that none will be willing to stay away. P. M.

SABBATH SCHOOLS IN GERMANY.

Although it is not five years since the first Sabbath-school was organized in connection with the Lutheran church in Berlin, they are now to be found in almost all parts of Prussia, and to some extent through Central Germany. Articles like the subjoined, which Mr. Brockelman translates and sends to us, are now appearing in the German papers, and begetting a wide-spread movement, full of precious promise to that nation, which is now second to none in Europe. So far as human agency in a missionary form is involved, the labor of a single man is sufficient to keep a school moving forward; and, even, he is obliged to pay a good share of his own expenses; for as yet it is only the English-speaking Christian, who has well learned to give money for the advance of Christ's spiritual kingdom.

If Heaven continues to bless the work, as hitherto, it will, not be long before Germany will stand shoulder to shoulder with Great Britain and the United States, in all the moral enterprises of the day. We have articles just received, which, when translated, will do something to enrich the Sabbath-school literature of our own country. What, too, may we not expect from the improved character of our immigration, when Sabbath-schools shall thus become general? Any one wishing to accelerate a movement so auspiciously commenced, may do much, by sending contributions of any amount to Mr. A. S. Barnes, the well-known book publisher, No. 111 William street, New York. If the donor will send his address, he will be informed through a committee of ladies and gentlemen, in just what way his contribution has been applied, and there will be no per centage off for home or incidental expenses.

FREE SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

Free Sunday-schools can only have a blessed result because they are an institution by which spiritual care is taken of the children. They are beneficially disciplined by instructing them in the word of God, by praying and singing with them, by making them acquainted with holy history and by telling them stories. So they accustom themselves to fear the Lord and to be obedient.

As soon as the obligatory Sunday-school is over, which I must hold every Sunday, the voluntary one begins, and all my scholars remain. After singing and praying, biographies of believing men are told and explained and impressed upon the children's mind. These stories may not be lost, but take root in their hearts, and that at the same time, the parental house may be brought into connection with the Sunday-school, I make the children write down on slates at home what they have heard in the Sunday-school, and examine it the next morning in the day-school. This gives at once opportunity to make farther remarks about it; though not religious, but practical and orthographical ones.

It is not worth while to collect children during one half hour on the day of the Lord, which is made to be a blessing for us? To do "entreat all believing school-masters to come forward and help to prepare the youth for the kingdom of God. Dear parents and school-masters, prayer is beautiful and necessary for salvation, but we must also work upon the souls of our children if Christian society is ever to be reformed and improved. Our first task must be to save the children from perdition, and to teach them how to keep the Sunday. If we assemble our school children on Sundays around us with love and patience, with faithful and persevering prayer, our labor will be blessed, because Satan's empire will be shaken in its foundation, if the lambs are torn out of his hands and conducted to the Saviour's lap.

How lovely to look at a free Sunday-school! I do not sit before them in my every day's coat but in my Sunday clothes. I have not to punish them, but I treat them as a father treats his children. Joy and delight is on their faces, when they listen to my stories. This encourages me to undergo the fatigue of the school. Whoever does something for his Saviour, will feel a great joy.

No one may say that he is too tired. The Lord gives strength and enables the weak to do

the work. Whoever has established Sunday-schools, will praise the Lord who considers him worthy to feed the lambs of Jesus, but whoever has not yet done so, may begin in the name of Jesus, and must not mind the world's derision. The children will come. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The precious Saviour sends them and conducts them himself to us. Wee to us, if we offend them by not keeping the Sunday with them, but blessed are we, if we exert ourselves that none of them may be lost."

THE BUFFALO CONVENTION.

LETTER FROM REV. MR. RANKIN, (O. S.)  
Editor American Presbyterian:—My attention has been called to your report of the proceedings of the Buffalo Presbyterian Convention. Let me correct an error or two into which you have fallen, in regard to my speech delivered on that occasion. I suppose you wrote from memory, and therefore could not be very accurate.

The case I cited from the Digest to prove that ministers holding the Governmental theory of the Atonement should be regarded as in good standing in the church, was not that of Ezekiah Balch. Mr. Balch was condemned for alleged errors and required to renounce them. The decision I mentioned was in regard to the Synod of Philadelphia. In the fall of 1816, that Synod condemned the Hopkinsian doctrines, one of which was the Governmental theory. The Assembly of 1817, reviewed their proceedings and censured them in strong terms. I argued that subsequently the standing of those holding that view of the subject had never been questioned, and accounted for the action in the case of Mr. Balch on the ground that it was taken early in the discussion of the subject, in this country—that at a later day, when more light was gained, that theory was not considered inconsistent with a sincere adoption of the Confession of Faith—that at the division of the church in 1838, a number of ministers who held that view of the atonement remained with the Old School, and were never molested—others returned and were received without objection.

It was no part of my design in that "argument" to show that "wide differences of doctrinal views were plainly allowed by the highest authorities." What I attempted to prove was, that difference of interpretation of doctrine was allowed, &c.—that if a man held that our connection with Adam was of such a nature that all mankind descending from him, by natural generation are born in sin and condemnation, his standing in the church ought not to be questioned—that he had a right to explain that connection in his own way—he might, as in the confession, do it by the word *covenant*—or by the word *constitution* or *law*—his interpretation might be true or not true—if he held the fact he held one of the doctrines taught in that symbol,—that men might differ as to what constituted the *penalty* of the law, and yet agree in the fact that Christ suffered in the stead of sinners,—that some Old School men defined the *penalty* very unscripturally,—that liberty of interpretation should be accorded to all—here is debatable ground—here men of good character may differ—within this wide territory, individuals and societies have ample room to exercise forbearance. To prove this, I cited the language of the Confession of Faith, Form of Government, Chap. 1, Sec. 5, and the action of the Assembly of 1824 in the case of Craighead.

The Old School never regarded the New as holding heresy, or as being heretics. In prosecuting Mr. Barnes, Dr. Junkin disclaimed in the strongest terms, that he charged him with heresy; and in the trial of Dr. Beecher, Dr. Wilson made the same disclaimer. The most that has been alleged against them is error in doctrine. In my argument before the Convention, I expressed surprise that New-School brethren should now admit the truth of this charge and contend that there are such doctrinal "differences" as to preclude the reunion of the two bodies. At the time of the separation it was stoutly denied. The catalogue of errors condemned by the Assembly of 1837 was indignantly denied in  *toto* by the minority; and if it had not declared that those errors prevailed extensively in the Presbyterian church, and impugned former Assemblies, it would have passed unanimously. As it was the vote was 109 to 7, with 11 *non liquet*.

This much I judged was due from me in explanation of your notice of my argument in the Convention. Yours fraternally, A. T. RANKIN.

Items.—"An assistant or a horse, he did not care which," was recently the subject of an application by a clergyman of Rochester, New York, to his parishioners.—The American Sunday-school Union held its annual meeting in New York recently. The report states that within the last ten years, 20,000 schools, containing 1,000,000 children, have been established. During the past year 10,000 teachers have been employed in teaching 70,000 pupils, and \$115,000 have been expended.—At the last meeting of the American Bible Society three new auxiliaries were recognized, and grants of books made, amounting to 26,256 volumes, besides others to the value of \$2,080. The Rev. H. Dyer, D. D., and Rev. P. H. Fowler, D. D., were elected delegates to represent the Society at the annual meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society.—In New York there are 222 churches and 119 missions of the British and Foreign Bible Society.—6 Jewish synagogues, 7 Spiritualists and 9 other denominations, making a total of 419 churches of all kinds, with accommodations for 290,000 persons. The average attendance is about 150,000.

Colleges.—John A. Brown, Esq., of Philadelphia, has subscribed the very liberal sum of \$20,000 to the endowment of Lafayette College, at Easton, Pa. Also the Hon. William A. Dodge, \$10,000.—The Board of Trustees of Princeton College, week before last elected to the Presidency of the Institution, (vacant by the resignation of the Rev. D. D. MacLean, D. D.), the Rev. William Henry Green, D. D., Professor in the Theological Seminary. Dr. Green is a graduate of Lafayette College and of Princeton Seminary, and was for some years pastor of the Central church, Philadelphia. He is the author of a Hebrew Grammar, and has been a contributor to the Princeton, and probably other Reviews. At the same meeting John C. Green, Esq., of New York, proposed to add to the endowment of the College, upon certain specified conditions, the sum of \$100,000, and also to give real estate in Princeton, contiguous to the College, valued at from \$20,000 to \$25,000.