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A WORLD WITHOUT A MIRACLE.

A world under the government of merely natural law is the ideal, the Cosmos, of a large and influential class of scientific men in our day. In a few words, such as laws, forces, monads, development, they profess to give you the keys of the universe. Of course, to admit a miracle is to yield their whole ground. They deny and mock at such a thing. They resolve the gospel account into myths. No weight of evidence can convince them of the fact that the laws, which they consider a part of the very frame-work of nature, have ever been violated or suspended. And it is believed by some and feared by many, that the vastly developed scientific spirit of the age has diminished almost to a nullity, the faith which once was so readily accorded to miracles. It is claimed that this is a rationalistic age, and that science has dissipated the credit formerly given to the absurdities of witchcraft, astrology and alchemy, its cold, clear light has reached the very penetralia of the Christian faith, and that miracles, too, must share the fate of those superstitions, which once were as devoutly cherished in Christian countries, as the miracles themselves. It is said that high authorities in the Church itself have ceased to lay such great stress, as formerly, upon miracles, as proofs of the divinity of the Christian revelation; and that everything points to the final abandonment of the belief in miracles by all but the uncultivated and the superstitious.

Can we get along without a miracle, as philosophers, as scientific men, as moralists? to say nothing of Christian believers? No! For a world without a miracle would be (1.) a world that never was made. We can readily conceive of the world being carried on, without a miracle, by the operation of natural laws and forces; but no natural laws or forces will account for the beginning of nature, that is for their own beginning. Nature—the world—can only begin to be by something above nature, by miracle. The world's very commencement, therefore, is the greatest of miracles. The transition from nothing to existence is infinite. The idea of an infinite God is necessarily involved in it. Philosophy cannot comprehend it, and can give us no formula or rational statement of the transcendent reality. It is an absolute exercise of the divine will, before law, without law, making law. And the only way in which men can get rid of the miracle of creation, is to deny creation itself, and boldly to claim that the world is eternal and self-existent. There is no resting place for philosophy, that denies all miracles, this side of the atheistic conclusion of the eternity of matter.

2. A world without a miracle is a world very different from that which natural science itself reveals. We refer especially to geology. According to the teachings of that science, there have been, not one, but many beginnings to the orders of beings inhabiting the earth. Geology and Scripture agree in teaching that there was a time when man did not, and could not, exist on the earth, and that, therefore, this chief of races must have had a specific beginning. Not only just before man appeared, but many times previously was the earth *tohu wa-vohu*, without form and void, in a state of convulsion and chaos, destructive of animal life. "The earth's progress," says Dana, "has involved the occurrence, at intervals, of revolutions or devastations. Some of these devastations appear to have been nearly or quite universal over the globe, while others have been only partial. But, whether universal or not, they have often out of short, not only species, but genera, families and tribes; and yet the same genera, families, and tribes have had new species afterwards. Life has been introduced where it had been exterminated, as if the system were not at the mercy of temporary catastrophes, but owed its restoration and continued progress to a power that was independent of all causes of desolation and could even use desolation as a means of progress." In other words, this distinguished geologist finds, in the very teachings of his science, proofs of the frequent interposition of miraculous agency.

And even if the testimony for these vast destructive revolutions should be ruled out as insufficient, or likely to be amended by future discoveries, as Lyell and a whole school of naturalists would demand, still there remains the unquestioned introduction, from time to time, of entirely new and independent races, coincident with entirely different geological epochs, the only rational explanation of which is, the renewed miracle of creation. As to the unnatural theory of Darwin, that all races, by an unbroken and almost

infinitely prolonged process of development, have been produced from extremely simple germs, its acceptance by scientific men opposed to Christianity, is one of the most striking proofs ever given of the excessive credulity of unbelievers, and of the absurd and monstrous conclusions to which a denial of the miracles of Scripture will lead. If the theory of great and nearly universal catastrophes in the geological history of the globe be open to amendment, and therefore to be accepted with reserve, the theory of Darwin is absolutely waiting for its first tangible supports in that history. The whole weight of evidence, thus far, is for a miraculous commencement of each epoch of animal life and geological transformation, and if the alternative of a miracle is Darwinism, that is so much stronger reason for believing in the miracle.

3. A world without a miracle is a world without free will. Whether we call a miracle a violation or a suspension of the law of nature, or the interposition of a law superior to those in common operation, it is of the very essence of free will, if such a thing exists at all, to do these very things. All the acts of the free will upon the natural world are to produce results different from those which would follow from the regular operation of the laws of nature. By the action of the will we overcome the *inertia*, which is natural to our physical system, and give to limbs, members and the whole body motions which natural laws would never produce. By the universal law of gravitation falling bodies seek the lowest attainable spot. I interpose to catch the falling body and the operation of one of the greatest natural laws is arrested. I raise the stone from its bed and send it whirling through the air. Natural laws regulate its flight, but they are all against its starting. All these interferences of the free will with nature are, in a sense, miraculous. What we call miracles differ from them rather in the exalted degree of interference; in the vast measure of power exercised, than in the kind. Miracle is God's free will exercised in arresting the ordinary course of nature, in ways far above the ability or comprehension of men. His raising the dead, stilling the storm, multiplying the food, and so on, are outflowings from that transcendent source of power, the free intelligent will, from which the original creation and subsequent re-creations of the world and its inhabitants proceeded, and of which a veritable portion is committed to His creatures. It is only by denying, as consistent infidel philosophers are doing, the very idea of freedom in man and in God, and by consigning the whole world to the sway of a senseless, unrelenting, universal fatalism; it is only when one makes the convenient scientific fiction of *Blind Law* a world-wide, and exclusive fact, that one gets rid of the possibility of a miracle.

A world without a beginning, a world without providential interposition at its great geological catastrophes, and a world without free will in man or God, is a world without miracle. Eternity of matter, Darwinism, and fatalism—these are the alternatives of a belief in the historical truth of Christianity, which the unbeliever of the age is placing broadly before us and saying: "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."

VACANT MINISTERS AND VACANT CHURCHES.

The Third Presbytery of this city have recently adopted an elaborate paper, upon these difficult topics, among which they include also licentiate. By the appointment of a Committee to mediate between the unemployed men and the vacant churches, by insisting upon the responsibility of both to the Presbytery and by assuming a closer supervision of the whole subject, the Presbytery propose to abate some of the evils connected with the present loose condition of things. Their object is not merely to bring the parties named into Scriptural and Constitutional subjection to the Presbytery, but also into more satisfactory and useful relations to one another, so as to put an end, as far as possible, to the extraordinary phenomenon of a large surplus of unemployed ministers, existing simultaneously with numerous and sometimes prolonged vacancies in the churches.

Whether their action was the wisest for the purpose or not, the Church owes them thanks for boldly grappling with an evil of great proportions; especially in our own branch. There is almost no legislation reported in the Digest to guide in this matter. And we trust that every Presbytery that has not as yet acted, will be stirred up to such action by the example of the Philadelphia Third.

There are two points of importance in this delicate question of the relations of vacant churches and ministers,—almost as delicate as those involved in courtship and marriage—on which

Presbytery did not touch; they are, the payment of Supplies, and the general subject of the support of the ministry. Neither of these questions has been met by the American Churches with the thoroughness and conscientiousness which the subject demands. The pay of ministers of the gospel who are expected to live in some degree of respectability, is so inadequate to the necessities of their calling, that ordinary prudence in providing for one's own house, compels them to hesitate in forming connections with churches and turns their attention involuntarily to extramural fields of labor. And churches, with their high views of what constitutes ministerial fitness, and low views of compensation, necessarily remain vacant, and ought to remain vacant months and even years; and no mere enforcement of the authority of Presbytery can remedy the evil. A levelling up of salaries by stationation funds, and a general manse-building excitement throughout the Church, must take place, and greatly diminish these embarrassments, before Presbytery can hope to accomplish any important results by mediating between vacant ministers and vacant churches.

The pay of Supplies ought to be put at a minimum of ten dollars a sermon. Churches ought to be shamed out of the meanness of attempting to get occasional services without pay. The willingness of a faithful minister of Christ to preach the gospel wherever he can get an opportunity, is no measure of the church's duty to him. Ministers. And if a Presbytery send a licentiate or vacant minister to preach in a vacant church, the body should feel bound to use all proper means to see him paid at the above, or some reasonable minimum rate. If it is a missionary or feeble church, to which he is sent, arrangements should be made with the Home Missionary Committee, or a Home Mission Fund of Presbytery should be raised, to meet these deficiencies. They have no right to send him at his own risk, or charge.

We feel confident that a liberal financial policy is necessary to give the Presbytery's plan any great measure of success.

THE HEBREW CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD.

The society which bears this name and has its headquarters in New York city, is not of recent origin, though it has attracted more notice in its more recent operations. It was organized of Jews converted to Christianity during the Revival of 1857, and has been laboring for eleven years with more or less success for the conversion of the Jews of that city. It has published a monthly periodical entitled *The Israelite Indeed*, which is "devoted to the illustration and defence of Hebrew Christianity." More recently it has resolved at the request of some Jewish converts in Chicago, to establish a branch in that city—which some one has called "the Western Suburb of New York." It is not improbable that in the course of time a similar effort will be made among us.

The Jews of Philadelphia would furnish an especially promising field for missionary labor, because so largely under conservative influence. The Reform Party who reject all hopes of a Messiah and of a national restoration, and approximate to rationalistic views in regard to the Scriptures, have by no means the influence here that they possess in most of our great cities. The late R. Leiser through the columns of the *Occident* exercised an especially beneficial influence in this respect.

The Reform party, however, are "the party of movement" and their influence from various causes is manifestly on the rise. For one thing, it is computed that there are in this city 90,000 German Rationalists, who are in no connection with any religious organization. These meet and intermingle with the Jews—who are also for the most part Germans—on terms of equality. Social intercourse, clubs, balls, and places of public resort bring the two classes in contact, on the ground of common regard for "the Fatherland," without doing the Jews any spiritual benefit. These external influences tell only in one direction and in the course of a few decades of years, our may become a stronghold of Jewish unbelief city rather than of Jewish conservatism. As persecution has passed away, the fierce *esprit du corps* that once held these children of Israel together and shut out all external influences, has passed away also; and the external influences to which they are exposed among us are "only evil and that continually."

Do our churches owe nothing to these men, who are, after the flesh, our Lord's brethren? Can we see them drift into infidelity and put forth no hand to save them? Our city has ever been backward in this work of Jewish evangelization. For a while Rev. S. Bonhomme labored in the service of the R. P. Church among his brethren, but since he joined the O. S. Church

his services have been diverted to other fields. At present, we know only of Rev. L. Newmann engaged in the work. He is employed by an Episcopal Society to go from house to house and has already brought a goodly number to own Jesus as the Messiah. But the first thing needed is to gather a Jewish Christian congregation, as in New York, and thus to give the converts a prestige and a standing in the eyes of their own people. We trust that our churches will speedily awake to a sense of their duty at home, and with this view we have written. But should any reader wish to contribute to the work already undertaken in other cities, he may have the opportunity by calling on Rev. Amos Lewis, at 1018 Arch street.

REUNION ITEMS.

The New York *Evangelist* proposes to surrender [?] the parts of the First, or doctrinal Article, which are objected to, by the Old School, provided that the Tenth Article shall be stricken out of the Terms of Union. We do not believe that the swapping of articles, as we hope we may term it without offence, is a proper or dignified method of adjusting this important matter. Certainly, two great Churches can better construct a platform on which they may stand together as a United Church, than by bargaining that each shall put in so many planks, or that if one should be asked to shorten one of its planks, the other must take so many feet from one of its planks, or cast it out altogether. This is not seemly, and we do not believe that it is the purpose of either Church so to act. If there be any question as to what has been the course of the Church's judgment in the past, we respectfully suggest that the Tenth Article should stand to determine what is to be the law in the future.—*The Presbyterian*.

I should not think it necessary to make any reply to the communication of Dr. Reed, and the letter of Dr. Hickok, did I not suppose it possible that my silence might be construed into an implied admission that I had made an inaccurate statement in my article in the *Presbyterian* of June 27th. There is really no conflict between Dr. Hickok's statement and mine. He simply does not remember to have mentioned "Taylorism" at all. On the other hand, my remembrance of his mentioning it is perfectly distinct and decided.

It is, perhaps, not difficult to account for the fact, that this remark should have made a deeper impression, and found a more permanent lodgment in my mind than in his. On his part, it was but the passing illustration of a general principle, to which he was attached, and which he esteemed essential to the organic union of the two Churches; on my part, the principle itself was regarded as extremely objectionable as a part of the Basis of Union, and the particular illustration of it then given, was to me, and is to Old School men generally, particularly distasteful, so that the mention of it in that connection was even startling to my mind. The impression which it made was all the more deep, because it was set over against the doctrine of immediate imputation, which then, for the first time, I heard designated as an Old School doctrine. []

That the words "Taylorism" and "imputation" were used by that good brother, is just so far certain as it is certain that the sense of hearing is a trustworthy medium for the communication of sounds and their corresponding ideas to the human mind; and that they were used in the connection and in the sense which I have attributed to them, is uncertain only in so far as it may be affirmed that it is never absolutely certain that one man understands perfectly what another man says, or meant to say.

But as Dr. Hickok does "not choose to stand responsible as represented in the *Presbyterian*," I, of course, have no wish to hold him responsible; only I hold myself responsible for the accuracy of the statement there made.—*George Hill in The Presbyterian*.

I would like to have this [Xth] Article dropped for the following reasons: 1st. It is not in harmony with the fundamental principles of ecclesiastical associations. Presbyteries, like particular churches, are co-ordinate associations, and are bound together by mutual confidence. The members, therefore, of each ought to pass from one to the other on the ground of certificate, except where something special renders the applicant an object of suspicion.

2d. It is incompatible with the courtesy due to ministers in passing from one Presbytery to another, such as is conceded even by worldly associations.

3d. It will tend to produce evil surmising, and lead to alienation and strife.

4th. It is an inherent right of all associations to go back of a certificate, in cases where there is something special to excite suspicion. But this ought not to be done, unless there is something special to excite suspicion.

5th. Such an arrangement, so far as my knowledge goes, is unknown in all other branches of the Church of Christ.

6th. The dropping of this Article would allay suspicion.

7th. The Basis of Re union should be free from every vestige of former distrust and strife.

8th. The Presbytery which would examine according to this Article, would place itself in an attitude of superiority to, and independence of other Presbyteries, incompatible with the true doctrine of ministerial parity, and of Presbyterial equality. This would especially be the case

when Ministers \$2.50 H. Miss. \$2.00. an exam.

9th. The of be of no practical imperatively requiring

10th. The two to unite on terms of equality, will be found to equality.—*Dr. Eagleton in The Presbyterian Banner*.

Church ought

A young licentiate, a graduate and nary, was called to a church in the and Presbytery of St. Paul. On exami-

Presbytery refused to receive him, or call into his hands. Now, we know not on

points of doctrine he was considered unsound, but we do know, that on the ground of doctrinal unsoundness he was rejected, and that by a Presbytery whose leading members are quite favorable to the re-union. Within a few weeks afterwards he was received, ordained, and installed by a New School Presbytery, and without any dissent, of which we have ever heard. Suppose the union had already been an accomplished fact, would not the old controversies have been at once revived, and all the old difficulties have broken forth in a renewed flame? Would Lane Seminary remain quiet, and have her students rejected on account of unsoundness in the faith? Would the Presbytery of St. Paul have been content to have a rejected candidate of theirs received without question by another Presbytery in the same communion with themselves?—*A Member of the Assembly of 1838 in The Presbyterian*.

Some weeks ago you spoke of the majority in the late General Assembly as not having the advantage of good leadership. In some respects, this was perhaps true. . . . But it is believed the action of the majority was very much directed by a certain kind of leadership; it is credibly reported that a caucus meeting was repeatedly held, and that a certain speech, indicating that all amendments were to be laid on the table, was in accordance with the views of the caucus. It is further understood that the plan of holding public meetings all over the Church, and of obtaining prompt affirmative votes by the Presbyteries, thus rushing re-union through, was considered expedient by the brethren in caucus assembled. . . . It deserves consideration whether it is wise to introduce into our Church proceedings and methods of influencing the minds of the people of God, which are known among us as chiefly the methods of politicians, when they wish "to carry an election." Such methods seem to be needless in our Presbyterian system.—*A Presbyterian in The Presbyterian*.

[We are glad to see such a denunciation of the measures of 1837 from that side of the house.]

If the N. S. Church has really purged itself of the doctrinal errors for which Barnes was tried and condemned by the O. S. Synod, which errors were the main cause of the division, why do not the advocates of re-union try to show it? Why do they not try to show us either that Barnes & Co. have recanted their errors, or that they have been tried and turned out of the Church, and that those now holding such views cannot be ordained or tolerated in the N. S. Church?

They have not only not done this, but they try to goad us up to unite with the N. S., when they know very well that these men have not recanted their errors; that they hold and teach the same doctrines yet; that the very errors for which Barnes was tried and condemned by our fathers are not even at a discount in the N. S. Church; they go to par.—*E. in N. W. Pres.*

There seems to have been a gradual change, probably so gradual as scarcely to be noticed by themselves, as to the adoption of the Confession of Faith by the New School. It seems pretty certain that the great body of their ministers really receive the standards in their integrity, though there are evidently several mournful exceptions, and these represented by the *American Presbyterian*.—*Real Friend of Union in the N. W. Pres.*

But how they [the friends of Reunion who have signed the Pittsburgh Circular] can expect this paper to promote it does not appear. On the other hand, it is hard to suppose that [the opponents of Reunion who signed it] now desire to advance the cause, which they were so lately, and so strongly opposing—harder yet to believe, that they have ejected its friends into a method of doing it damage; for strategy—otherwise called overreaching—does not belong to fair Christian men like these. Plain, common-sense, straightforward people, are mystified by these good names on such a paper. . . . For it declares the signers to be friends of union with the New School, yet with no intimation of any change in anybody, since their open consent through that protest [at Albany] and otherwise, to the statements so often made, and never disproved, of the New School heresies—the statements, for example of Dr. Hodge in the last Assembly marvellously clear and so solemnly uttered, showing, while there was none to answer him, that the New School allows doctrines to be held and taught by its ministry, which make "not only a different theology, but a different religion." How could such men put their names to such a paper? . . . What can be more idle—not to call it a disingenuous trifling with the greatest subjects—than to insist on "the standards, in their simple and obvious sense, as the basis of union" and declare it sufficient, with people concerning whom you are fully persuaded, nay, you know perfectly, that many of them do take these standards in a different sense, and the whole of them agree to allow others to do so? Do the brethren hope that the New School will fly off on this, as some of them seem disposed to do? Would to God they may! But it is not easy to see how candid men could use such a method. This, therefore, does not explain the Circular. Mystified again.—*Rev. Prof. W. L. Breckenridge, D.D., in the West. Presbyterian*.