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## American Presbyterian.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1868.

### ENLARGEMENT OF THE EDITORIAL CORPS.

Among the measures designed to increase the efficiency and attractiveness of our paper at this time, our readers will welcome the new arrangement by which a large and distinguished corps of writers is added to the Editorial Department. As the designation of these brethren has met the cordial approval of the Pastors' Association of this city, they will be known as

#### THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE.

Their contributions will be generally accompanied with the initials of the writers. Their names are as follows:—

Rev. Z. M. Humphrey, D.D., Pastor of Calvary Church.  
Rev. Herriek Johnson, D.D., Pastor of the First Church.  
Rev. Danl. March, D.D., Pastor of Clinton St. Church.  
Rev. Peter Stryker, D.D., Pastor of N. Broad St. Church.  
Rev. George F. Wiswell, D.D., Pastor of Green Hill Church.  
Rev. E. E. Adams, D. D., Prof. in Lincoln University.  
Rev. Samuel W. Duffield, Special Correspondent.

Mr. Robert E. Thompson will continue to act as Editor of the News Department.

Correspondents in every Presbytery and Synod will promptly furnish us with fresh items of news from their respective fields.

### A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

BY REV. PETER STRYKER, D.D.

Sweet carols let us sing  
Rich offerings let us bring  
To our Redeemer King  
Who reigns in glory,  
From Heaven to earth He came  
Praise to His holy name!  
Let all redeemed from shame  
Release the story.

Above angelic lays  
Our Christmas hymns we raise;  
With heart and voice we praise  
The infant Jesus.  
The song ascends on high,  
It soars above the sky,  
And echoes give reply  
"From sin he frees us."

For He, the humble born  
In poverty forlorn  
Subject to bitter scorn  
And vile behavior;  
The great and holy One  
Was God's anointed Son  
Who by His deeds hath won  
The name of Saviour.

Then on this natal day  
Our tribute let us pay,  
And in a joyful lay  
Unite our voices.  
Loud will we raise the song,  
Still the sweet strain prolong,  
Thy Church in one vast throng  
O Lord, rejoice.

### THE GREAT MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

The century long disputes of critics and theologians over the exact reading in 1 Tim. iii. 16, "Great is the mystery of godliness; God [who, which] was manifest in the flesh" are pretty much ended by the verdict of the Sinaitic Manuscript. In that, the relative masculine  $\delta\varsigma$  is the plain unquestioned reading, and even orthodox critics agree that  $\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ , God, is an alteration of the original text. So Ellicott, so Van Oosterzee in *Language*. But whether we read "God," who, or which, the force of the passage as a statement of the incarnation is not impaired. The abrupt commencement, Who was manifest in the flesh, at once takes us back to John i. 14, "And the Word was made flesh," of which it seems to be the echo. And if we seek for an antecedent to the relative, which in its masculine gender is plainly personal, we find the person last named, and twice named in the immediately preceding context, to be God, the living God: "The house of God," "the church of the living God." It is in immediate connection with God, and the living God, that mention is made of the mystery of godliness, who was manifest in the flesh. It is as if Paul had said: Great is the mystery of godliness, since He of whom and of whose Church I have been speaking—God, the living God—was manifest in the flesh. Van Oosterzee, indeed, proposes to alter the pointing, so that "the living God" may appear the direct antecedent of "who." Putting a dash or parenthesis after the words, he would read "Church of the living God—a pillar and ground of the truth and confessedly great, is the mystery of godliness—who was manifest in the flesh." But this is not a natural construction, and it is sufficient, we think, to regard  $\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$  as present in the mind of Paul, as involved in the preceding propositions, and as the only word corresponding to the gender of the relative "who," and so, plainly; if not in strict grammar, explaining the significance of the relative. At least this much is clear, the direct antecedent of the relative cannot be found either in "mystery" or "godliness," one of which is neuter and the other feminine; the relative being masculine; it is not the mys-

tery, nor the godliness which the Apostle wishes to say was manifest in the flesh; but a being, a person, and that in the immediate context is God.

So we retain our old understanding of the passage, as the only one appropriate and the most nearly grammatical: Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh. It is not that the mystery is taken away or disclosed in the Incarnation; that itself is the mystery; the great mystery, and remains such to this day. That the infinite God should link Himself to humanity, and identify Himself with a single individual of our race, that He should be born a poor babe in a manger, is one of the amazing mysteries of religion, of godliness. All whose spiritual natures are not sufficiently unfolded to feel their need of just such an act of divine condescension, are offended by it, and class the story among fables. It was "seen of angels," they desired to look into these things, and by their glorious presence on the Night of the Nativity testified to the blessed reality of the event, as well as their own sense of its extraordinary character.

"Justified (or vindicated) in the Spirit; preached unto the Gentiles; believed on in the world." Yes, in spite of the impenetrable depth of the mystery, no fact is more heartily believed, no memory more fondly cherished, no event is more gladly commemorated among the most advanced intelligent nations of the world, than this of the Incarnation—the Nativity. It is the turning point of history, the mark on the dial-plate of time from which all eras and all the flight of time is calculated. The times of superstition have gone by. No one now believes in the adventures of a Thor, of a Jupiter, of a Hercules, of a Zeus or an Apollo among men. The avatars or incarnations of Vishnu belong to the effete faith of a semi-barbarian people; but the idea of the true God becoming flesh for man's redemption is grasped by men with such an eagerness, and made so much of in their social lives, even in the most advanced stages of civilization, as to show how radical is the need of it, how near to the core of our hearts that great mystery of godliness can come.

God has come near to man; as near as any man or poet ever dreamed or fabled of His coming; as near as He could come. Near to the child, near to the poor, near to the lowliest and most neglected classes. And once in the year, man breaks out into rejoicing, often scarcely conscious of the meaning of his joy, yet with some sense, more or less clear, of the great foundation fact of Christianity: the Incarnation. A fact so glorious that it should overspread the whole round year with joy, and yet which we may not inappropriately make the occasion of a special annual festival. There can be no higher spiritual emotions than those which should mingle with the festivities of Christmas week. Let our celebration be a devout, grateful and happy welcome to God manifest in the flesh, who, having as such, been received up into heaven, continues to be glorified, but yet the incarnate, personal, living Saviour, having never laid aside the nature He had newly taken on Him, as He lay the Babe of Bethlehem, and who, therefore, can receive our adoration to-day, as literally as He received that of the shepherds or of the magi nearly nineteen hundred years ago. And let us sing our Christmas hymn and make our profession of faith in language which probably served that double purpose among the primitive confessors of Christianity as early as the days of Paul.

"Who—great is the mystery—  
Was manifested in the flesh,  
Justified in the Spirit,  
Seen of angels,  
Preached to the Gentiles,  
Believed on in the world,  
Received up into glory."

THE SUNDAY AFTERNOON recitations at Princeton College of three chapters in the Bible, which have been customary since the days of President Ashbel Green, have been discontinued by President McCosh, who, in place of them, is giving a series of lectures on the life of Christ, the students being required to take notes and submit to a subsequent examination. These lectures are quite popular, and are attended by the Theological Seminary students also, who crowd the college chapel every Sunday afternoon. Among them came recently an intelligent black man, who is preparing for the ministry in the South. To remedy this outrage upon Caucasian honor, some sixty or seventy students drew up and signed a petition to the Faculty, asking his exclusion for all time to come. The paper originated with some who fought in the rebel army. Some of the signers have had the wisdom to withdraw their names. Dr. McCosh will now have a chance to carry out, the high purpose, and impartially, avowed in his Inaugural Address, and quoted in our columns last week.

### THE LEGITIMACY OF PRESBYTERIAN LIBERALITY.

The Presbyterian Church in America is in the midst of a crisis fraught with the most momentous consequences to her future. Our own branch has entered into negotiations for union with the other principal branch, after a thirty years' separation. Acknowledged to be soundly Calvinistic in all these negotiations, and holding fast with steady constancy in all her independent history to the fundamentals of the Confession, she has refused to be bound by the unwholesome and unscriptural rigour which makes the dictum of a single school of theology the rule for the whole Church, or which guards with a jealous eye every part of the system of Calvinism as essential to orthodoxy. This spirit of liberty-in-orthodoxy, like the spirit of liberty-in-law, is the more precious and the more worthy of honour, because it is the inheritance of the fathers, the legitimate spirit of American Presbyterianism, the spirit which brightly links us in historic succession to the wise and large-minded Calvinists who founded the Presbyterian Church in America, in 1729. The rigour, the tenacity and the jealousy in doctrine which mark so many in the other branch, and which may be considered characteristic, are an innovation, a modernising of our American Zion. They are a wrong and a violence done to its liberal-orthodox spirit, which was never meant to run in old-world ruts, to perpetuate the stiffness, the sombre hue, and the want of sympathy with humanity which were all chargeable upon the older Calvinism.

Legitimacy and historic continuity are always of vastly more consequence to High-Churchmen than to liberals, simply because their life is in the past, and it is one of their axioms that children can never become wiser than their fathers, even after they are grown. But when the beginnings of history are like living fountains, bubbling up with the freshness of a Scriptural liberality; when they are themselves a rebuke to the "lazy," formal slaves, in which a later generation would confine the whole work of the theological mind; when they have been forsaken for artificial cisterns, broken at that, and holding no water; when the effort is actually made to choke them up, or to represent them as shallow channels of no account in themselves, but serving only as connections with the past, then liberal-minded men have a duty to perform, of far greater importance than usually pertains to these questions of legitimacy, from their own point of view.

Was our American Presbyterian Church founded in such a wise, Scriptural and liberal spirit as to distinguish it from all other truly Calvinistic and Presbyterian organizations; and is not a very large portion of the body gone astray from this intention; and are not their leaders guilty of a grave mistake in claiming legitimacy, and in styling themselves "Old" School?

The diligent researches of Dr. Gillett on this subject, and his luminous vindication of the facts, as we have been used to view them, printed in advance of their appearance in the forthcoming number of the AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW, are worthy of general notice. They are like the digging out and restoring of a limpid spring which narrow-minded men had been trying to fill up and efface as a blemish, and a reproach to themselves. Dr. Baird, of the other branch, who assails Dr. Gillett's positions, in a recent number of the *Princeton Review*, says frankly, that if Dr. Gillett is correct, "we of the Old School must confess our position to be an innovation on the established principles of our Church." And so, to save the legitimacy of his church, and the "Old" in its name, Dr. Baird attempts to prove that "the liberal principles of Dr. Gillett find no shadow of countenance in the Adopting Act of 1729, nor the reunion of 1758, nor anywhere else in the history of our fathers."

Dr. Gillett makes good his own position, as to the liberality of the Adopting Act, in various ways. He shows that Jonathan Dickinson, the leading spirit, the first moderator of the Synod that passed it, and a member of the Committee that framed it, was, both before and after its passage, a man of the most positive liberal views, teaching among other things, that "the enjoining terms of communion which God has not enjoined, and the imposing any terms of communion by penal sanctions, is teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." He shows that the Old side, as it assumed to call itself, in the early days of the Church, suspected and impeached the orthodoxy of the others, on the score of their adherence to the liberal terms of subscription, as provided in the Adopting Act, and that these terms of subscription were made the pretext for most of the secessions from the Church which occurred subsequently. He shows that the reference of the clause about scruples in subscribing was plainly to doctrines of the Confession, and

not merely to articles which might not have had a doctrinal bearing.

But most interesting is the view given by Dr. Gillett, of the state of parties in the Irish Presbyterian Church at that day, from which the rigidly inclined members of the nascent Church in America, if any such there were, must have come. The New England element is conceded to have been liberal. Three parties divided the Irish Church at that day: First, Extremists who contended against subscription to any human formula, on any terms, even if they agreed with it in the main; and were allowed to express some measure of dissent; Second, An opposing party, who required subscription to the Westminster Confession, but allowed subscribers who scrupled any phrase or phrases in it, to state their views in their own language, and Presbytery should accept them; if they judged the explanations agreeable to the substance of the doctrine explained. This was the position of the rigid party in the Irish Synod of 1720. The third, or moderate party, represented by the Dublin ministers, to which Mr. Dickinson belonged, desired the admission not only of ministers and candidates who would subscribe, but also of such as scrupled to sign on any terms, provided they would make an oral profession of their faith which should prove satisfactory. If the more rigid elements going to form the American Presbyterian Church came from one or the other of these parties—most probably, thinks Dr. Gillett, from that of the Dublin ministers,—how could there fall to be incorporated in the terms of subscription some clause, abating the stringency of the act, and allowing a liberty which "the standards pure and simple," do not contemplate, and cannot guarantee? Such a clause there is, introduced four times over in the Adopting Act, in the well known phrase "essential and necessary articles," as distinguished from non-essential and unnecessary, "in doctrine, worship or government," and the attempt to explain away their meaning, and make the Adopting Act an Old School Document becomes simply desperate in view of the antecedents and associations of its framers. It would lead us to infer, in the language of Dr. Gillett, "that this American Synod—composed of Irish ministers who according to Woodrow, scarcely came up to the standard of Scotch subscription, and of ministers from New England, some of whom come near rejecting subscription altogether, at once went beyond all the precedents of the mother Church, beyond anything which, as far as we know, any member of the Synod desired. *Credat Judaeus Apella!*"

The natural interpretation of the Adopting Act as a liberal-orthodox document, is in accordance with the actual sentiment of large portions of the Church at that day and afterwards. Among the members of New Castle Presbytery in 1749 was Samuel Delap, who vigorously defended the liberal principles and policy of the Synod of the Irish Church, and whose sentiments, Dr. Gillett tells us, were expressly approved by the New Castle Presbytery. And that body took action upon an errorist in 1754, in words so guarded that they are a testimony alike to the liberality and the orthodoxy of the body. We cannot forbear a quotation:

"If they are for holding fast every truth and duty, let them hold these among the rest, viz, that every truth and duty is not equally great, and may not be made equal terms of communion; that brotherly love and the communion of saints are more excellent than many other duties in religion; that we ought to bear with some mistakes and weaknesses in our brethren, and not unchurch them for some different sentiments and practices. Now if such great things as these are cast out of religion for the sake of purity, what kind of purity is it? It is a kind of strictness beyond what our Lord and his apostles taught, therefore let it be *Anathema*."

"The Presbytery of New Castle" pronouncing an official Anathema on doctrinal rigour! Who could have believed it? The venerable body which now bears that name, and which is one of the strongholds of Old School doctrine and spirit, ought, as an act of charity, to be tenderly prepared, before this astounding piece of news is broken to them. For news it will be to most of the members; and we think after hearing it they will speak of historical continuity and "Old" Schoolism, with bated breath.

Seen through the strict Calvinistic spectacles of the Scotch Woodrow, the language of our Adopting Act was puzzling: We know not well what to make of it, says he. Seen through the O. S. glasses of Ashbel Green, it "gave and took, bound and loosed in the same breath." Seen in the Constitutional reflections of Dr. Hodge, "its language leaves the intention of its authors a matter of doubt." Only Dr. Baird is reckless enough to assert that there is no shadow of countenance for the liberal principles of Dr. Gillett in the Adopting Act of 1729. While common sense, the laws of language, the verdict of cotemporary and subsequent history, no less than the antecedents of its authors combine to establish Dr.

Gillett's position and that of our own branch generally, as to the liberality of its spirit and intention.

Our own branch of the Church claims to represent the policy of the fathers as embodied in the plain meaning of this Act. So precious do we regard this policy, that rather than abandon it, we have undergone no small amount of hardship, from those portions of the Church who question, suspect or repudiate this policy. For this they cast us out. And now they ask us to reunite with them. In the proposed reunion shall this wise, generous, safe, liberal-orthodox policy be quite ignored? Is there to be no honorable mention or recognition of it, in the terms of the new union? If not, the reason for it should be fully understood and frankly stated.

### TO YOUR ALTARS, O ISRAEL.

We are close upon the Week of Prayer. It has come to be an event in the Christian world. It has been the inaugural of great works of God. But, alas, in what countless instances, churches and Christians have come to its close with disappointed expectation; they have thought seven successive days of petition could not fail of bringing rain to their barrenness; but Saturday has found their spiritual sky with not a cloud in it even as big as a man's hand.

It is the old story. "Surely the Lord will bless me; seeing I have a Levite to my priest." Surely the Lord will bless our Church, seeing we hold this protracted Prayer Meeting. Not so. In all probability; the Lord will do no such thing. As long as that view of the matter is held, he cannot. The trouble is just here. Christians too often look at the "Week," and not at themselves. They wait for the "Week," as if there were a kind of heavenly magic in it, and meanwhile make no preparation for it. They expect the "Week" to do for them, what ought to be done of themselves before they cross the week's threshold. They are hoping to go through the further door of the "Week" with an awakened spiritual life and a clinging grasp of the promises, and an obtained power with God, when that life and that grasp and that power should be theirs before they step through the Week's opening morning gates.

There is a preparation to be had for the Week of Prayer. There is a baptism to be baptized with. There is a discovery of God and a discovery of ourselves to be made. There are stays and helps to be gotten. If we are to do any Jacob-like wrestling in those seven successive days of petition we must get ready for it. What athlete ever won laurels who gave no heed to his condition till he entered the arena? Tenacity, fixedness, energy, importunity, the fervor and ardor of most intense desire, a great want pressing us to our altars and keeping us there, an I-will-not-let-thee-go-except-thou-bless-me spirit—these are not born in a day. And very little effectual praying is done without them.

It is true, we ought always to be in condition for prevailing petition. The lamentable fact is, we are not. Our spiritual muscles get relaxed. We lose the wrestling energy that makes our altars thrones of power. We come to be satisfied with tame and spiritless prayers. We repeat the "huge indecency" of the Pharisee who "went up to the temple to pray," when he had nothing to pray for. He wanted nothing, and got it. And here is the secret of our emptiness.

Now to get out of this state of formality and spiritual lassitude, to take on the vigor of the practiced athlete, and to condition ourselves in something of the energy and the importunity of those holy, courageous pleaders who have wrestled with God and prevailed, is the very business unto which we should be resolutely set in the few days that remain to us before the Week of Prayer. The man or the church expecting to go fresh from the whirl of the holidays into the solemnities of that week, with no thoughtful preparation for it, will be very likely to go down from the seventh day's praying, wondering if God has forgotten to be gracious; or, like the phylacteried Pharisee and the church of the Laodiceans, thanking God that they are not as other.

To your altars, then, Christians! To your hearts and Bibles and altars! Look to your hearts, study your Bibles, frequent your altars. Arm yourselves with better and better weapons. Fill your mouths with arguments. Walk out on the promises. Stir yourselves up to take hold on God. "Enter into thy closet and shut thy door." Take time to get ready for the World's Prayer Meeting. Attend at once to the personal, private, closet, "secret" duties. And when we all come together on the first week of the new year, we may be sure the God who seeth in "secret" will reward us openly.

H. J.