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I. THE CHRISTO-CENTRIC PRINCIPLE OF THEOLOGY.¹

THE work to which special reference is here made is the product of an able and distinguished scholar, who is a theological professor in the Reformed (German) Church. He is the author of an article in the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopædia* which clearly foreshadowed the distinctive principle of the work before us, and the moulding influence of that principle, as a constructive one, upon the whole system of theology. This assists us, in view of the fact that only the first volume of the "Institutes" has as yet been issued, in estimating the comprehensive sweep and the modifying effect of Dr. Gerhart's fundamental assumption, in relation to his theology as a whole.

It is not intended in these remarks to attempt an articulate examination of the doctrines maintained in the author's theological system, but to devote particular attention to its constructive principle. The whole system is based upon what is denominated the

¹INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. *By Emanuel V. Gerhart, D. D., LL. D., Professor of Systematic and Practical Theology in the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church, Lancaster, Pa.* With an Introduction by Philip Schaff, D. D., LL. D., Professor of Church History in Union Theological Seminary, New York. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 51 East Tenth street, near Broadway. 1891. 8vo., pp. 754.

“Christo-centric principle.” Proceeding upon the supposition—and it is acknowledged to be valid—that the human mind is impelled as by the force of an irresistible instinct to seek for unity in every department of knowledge, whether scientific, philosophical or theological, Dr. Gerhart professes to find the unifying principle of theology in what he terms the “Christ-idea.” If we understand him, it is the doctrine concerning Christ, the “Christological” doctrine, which is fundamental to theology, and imparts to all its truths their bond of unity. This is the “central” theological principle. It pervades, shapes, controls the whole theological system. “Governed by this fundamental truth,” the author says, “a system may begin by presenting the import of this truth, and setting forth its regulative force for the construction of all Christian doctrines; then pass on to treat the manifold parts of the Christian religion in its light and under its guidance.” This is the method which he avowedly pursues.

He claims for it novelty so far as this country is concerned. Upon this point he makes the following remarks, which savor of a condemnatory criticism of all previous and existing systems of theology :

“Thus far no system of theology, developed from the Christ-idea as its standpoint, of American or English authorship, has greeted the church. Works of this class have been fashioned after the Augustinian or Arminian type. As a consequence there is in many circles a sense of the lack of harmony, perhaps it may be said a sense of dissonance, not only between a large proportion of influential pulpits, but also between much of the soundest Christian thought of our times and regnant theological systems. And from many directions has come the expression of a desire for a construction of all Christian doctrines proceeding from what is now generally felt and acknowledged to be the central truth of Christianity.

“The scientific labors of all Christian thinkers from Clement and Origen onward through the middle ages. I appreciate and honor, especially the great ideas of Augustine, which, as reproduced and matured by John Calvin, mark a mighty epoch of progress in evangelical theology and practical religion. But the Reformation did not propose to break the bondage of Romanism in order to replace it by a Calvinistic yoke.” [!]

Upon these utterances, in which a charge in general is made against previous systems of theology, and in particular against the Calvinistic, of inadequacy and of inconsistency with the soundest Christian thought of our times, we cannot forbear pausing to

make a few comments. While we steadfastly maintain that there is no legitimate development of the contents of the Scriptures by substantive addition, subtraction or substitution, inasmuch as they are a fixed and unchanging quantity, and that they can only be developed by logical inference which explicitly evolves what they implicitly contain; we do not deny that there may be a legitimate development of the church's knowledge of the doctrines of Scripture. This development may be conceived to be actualized in one or other of three ways: either by a more thorough-going and enlightened exploration of some doctrinal field, or by a fuller expansion of the logical contents of some doctrine or doctrines, or by a correction of some doctrinal statement which has been discovered to be wrong, and the substitution of a more scriptural one in its place. The results, if any, thus attained may in a proper way, a way provided for in the constitutions of ecclesiastical bodies be, with due deliberation and caution and with much prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, formally incorporated into the doctrinal symbols of the church.

It is obvious that any theologian who undertakes to formulate such results, and to advocate their adoption, assumes a most responsible office. The presumption is against him, and it is incumbent on him to rebut it by reasons of the most convincing character. In the case before us the changes proposed are radical, because corrective and substitutionary. We advert to one or two eminent examples. By the acceptance of a central and ruling principle it is claimed that theologies hitherto constructed after the Augustinian or Arminian type may be brought into harmony with each other, if not reduced to unity. Of course, this could only be effected by the elimination of the distinctive features of Augustinianism and Arminianism, and the substitution of others in their place. And we here only suggest that a central principle which will be potent enough to achieve this office will succeed in bringing fire and water into harmony and reducing contradictions to identity. It is as hopeless as it is too late to expect, by the adoption of any generic principle, to accomplish such a result.

A special instance of such a change which the author signalizes is in connection with the Calvinistic theology, which, he remarks,

reproduces and matures the Augustinian. To any one who has studied the Calvinistic system it is evident that it rests upon two main pillars: Unconditional Election and Federal Representation. Take away either, you mutilate it; take away both, you destroy it. Rejecting the regulative—we say not central and unifying—force of these two great principles of Calvinism, Dr. Gerhart would enthrone in their place a principle, in accordance with which God's love subjugates to itself every other attribute of his character, stamps its controlling influence upon his moral government and absolutely dominates theology. The supremacy of this principle, it is contended, renders it impossible that God should be sovereign to the exclusion of man's sovereignty, or that man should be sovereign to the exclusion of God's sovereignty. It reduces the two sovereignties to unity. This is an extraordinary feat of logical unification. What can the unit be? We confess that it passes our ability to imagine it, unless it be a verbal creation styled "divine-human" sovereignty. And what meaning could be extracted from those terms we cannot possibly conceive. To our humble minds it seems clear that either God is sovereign or man. To affirm the latter is to be untrue alike to Scripture and to fact. It remains that God alone is sovereign. Now, this is one of the main contentions of the Calvinistic theology, and to deny its tenableness is not to modify that system, not to improve upon it and better it; it is to break down one of its principal supports. A similar course of remark would hold in regard to the federal and representative principle—the complement of unconditional election on the one hand, and of particular atonement on the other. Deny both these principles, absolutely sovereign election and federal representation, and you wipe out Calvinism as a distinctive system. The same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of Arminianism. Take away its two leading principles, first, conditional election involving the sovereignty of the human will in the matter of appropriating salvation, and, secondly, universal atonement, and the system is not modified; it is, as distinctive, blotted out.

To bring, therefore, these two contradictory systems, hoary with age and scarred by blows mutually inflicted in a conflict of

centuries' duration, into unity under the moulding influences of a unifying principle is simply impossible. The attempt would suppose the destruction of both. Nothing could be effected but the substitution in their room of a system radically new and radically different. This is the end to which Professor Gerhart seems to be directing his splendid powers, and nothing is risked in predicting failure as the result.

It may be observed, further, that it is difficult to see how the author's positions hang together. On the one hand, he magnifies the Augustinian and Calvinistic systems as epoch-making, and as producing signal benefits in the past. On the other, he rejects both, so far as they are distinctive, and impeaches them as productive of dissonance in Christian communities, and as conflicting with the Christian thought of our times. Was what is now false in theology once true in theology? Is the "*Homo Mensura* theory" tenable in asserting that there is no invariable standard of truth, that truth is as it appears to each man to be? Is theological truth determined by circumstances and environment? Augustine was once right, Calvin was once right, but now they are both wrong! One is reminded of Mr. Herbert Spencer's position that every past religion as a necessary product of evolution was absolutely right, but as compared with the last and climactic result of the same wondrous law, relatively wrong. Fetichism is right for the Tasmanian, but wrong for the Englishman. Christianity is to be commended for the ignorant fanatic, but to be despised by the enlightened agnostic. If he repudiate these analogies and would be consistent, Dr. Gerhart must hold that what is now wrong in Augustinianism and Calvinism was wrong when Augustine and Calvin wrote; and then he would prove himself the greatest theological reformer that the Reformed Church ever saw.

As it is to be presumed that the pious author would not decline to wear the yoke of Scripture, his splenetic fling at "a Calvinistic yoke" must be construed as indicating his contempt for the Calvinistic theology; and it is only adverted to now, as a remark emanating somewhat strangely and significantly from a learned professor in a church of which Ursinus and Olevianus were illustrious ornaments.

It will be perceived that the author's Christo-centric principle is not treated by him as a mere principle of classification, upon which to collect the various truths of theology into logical unity; it is a genetic principle which exerts a moulding and determinative influence upon theological doctrine. It is a positive force dynamically operating in the recast of the theological system. Were it used as simply a basis of classification, the question concerning its validity would certainly be possessed of no little logical interest. But it rises into something more than logical value when it is regarded as a constructive, an "architectonic" principle, creating the type of doctrine and stamping the genius of theology. It is especially as considered from this point of view, and as wielded by the learned author, that the Christo-centric principle of theology justifies and invites examination.

Let us, at the outset, settle the question, What are the requirements which a central principle of theology must meet? It must be: (1.) A principle of Unity. It must discharge the office of collecting together all the diversified elements of theology, and logically reducing them to unity upon itself. There must be no exceptions. (2.) A Generic and All-comprehending principle. As generic its essence must pass into all the specific doctrines of theology, and constitute their common because essential attribute. As all-comprehending it must include every single element of theology under its scope. Were there one excluded from its sweep the integrity of the professed central principle would be invalidated. (3.) A Universally Regulative principle. It is not sufficient that it be regulative of a certain section or department of theological truth. It would be easy to show that there are several such regulative principles. This one ruling principle must regulate subordinate regulative principles themselves. It must dominate the whole of theology in all its parts. We understand Dr. Gerhart to claim for the Christo-centric principle that it meets all these demands. The question is, Can this claim be verified?

1. Let us inquire into the scope of the alleged Christo-centric principle. Is it claimed for it that it is the central principle of *all* theology? A few citations will settle this question in the affirmative:

“Thus far no system of theology developed from the Christ-idea as its standpoint, of American or English authorship, has greeted the church.”¹ “This work is in sympathy with the Christological trend of the Christian sentiment and scholarship of our age. It is an earnest effort to make answer to the call for a doctrinal system in which Jesus Christ stands as the central truth; not only as the instrument of redemption and salvation, but also as the beginning and end of revelation.”² “Governed by this fundamental truth, a system may begin by presenting the import of this truth, and setting forth its regulative influence for the construction of all Christian doctrines.”³ “It may be safely said that there is not a sentiment or thought expressed by any writer [inspired] on any one of the innumerable questions concerning things in heaven and things on earth, concerning the past or the future, that does not derive its import from the person of the God-man. Events, doctrines and duties are distinctive because his personality, his history and his kingdom are unique . . . The Messianic principle underlies and permeates the entire history of pre-Christian revelation.”⁴ “I shall, therefore, limit the discussion of the Christ-idea, taken as the fundamental law of theological science, to three general subjects: God, the Cosmos, and Jesus Christ.”⁵

Quotations to the same effect might be multiplied, but these are sufficient to indicate that the author intends his central principle to embrace all theology, in all its possible extension. He does not limit it to the scheme of redemption. He often, it is true, speaks of Christian theology and Christian doctrines, but he obviously means, not the theology of redemption as ordinarily understood, but the whole science of theology as contemplated by a Christian man. In fact, he makes redemption the primordial element of all theology.

The central principle is narrower than the scope assigned to it.

(1.) It cannot bring into unity the theology of natural religion and the theology of redemption. By natural religion we mean the religion of man in innocence; by redemption, or redemptive religion, we mean what everybody except the advocates of the Christo-centric principle and a few Arminians mean—the religion which proposes to save man from sin. Adam, in innocence, knew nothing of an incarnate Redeemer. He needed no incarnate Redeemer, and as God does nothing superfluously, he did not reveal an incarnate Redeemer to Adam unfallen. He offered to justify Adam upon a totally different principle from that of redemption, upon the principle of conscious legal obedience. We speak not

¹ Pref., p. viii.

² *Ibid.*, p. ix.

³ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

⁴ P. 129.

⁵ P. 188.

now of Adam's descendants. Adam himself might have won justification by the works of the law, a principle exactly opposite to that by which a sinner may be justified. To say that the Christo-centric principle permeated and controlled Adam's religion is to say that Christ, the incarnate Son of God, made justification possible to him; which would be absurd.

Adam's theology was not a redemptive theology before the Fall. It was, it is true, a federal theology, but it was essentially legal. Had he stood he would not have been justified *by* Christ; he would have been justified *without* Christ. The principle of justification was common between his theology and that of the sinner, but not the Christian principle of justification. In this regard justification would seem to discharge the office of a central, a regulative, principle more perfectly than the Christo-centric principle. Further, had Adam maintained his integrity, the whole race would have been justified in him, that is, would have been confirmed in holiness and happiness forever; and then there would have been no necessity for the Son of God to become incarnate, for redemption would not have been needed. If it be said that this reasoning is based on the untenable supposition of a federal relation between God, on the one hand, and on the other Adam and his posterity, we reply, that one who does not recognize that relation has no true theology, and the question of a central principle would lose all significance. And, moreover, if the Christo-centric principle rules out a federal theology, it would be on that account convicted of being unscriptural.

Dr. Gerhart occupies the position of the Supralapsarian, redemption being substituted for predestination in the order of the divine decrees. Redemption having been the primordial conception, the creation and the fall of man had to take place, in order to its actual realization. The start was given to a "process of becoming" in accordance with the law of evolution, which was destined to reach its climax of development in the actual redemption of sinners. Indeed, we understand him to enunciate this view. But if this be so, Dr. Gerhart must, in logical consistency, be a Universal Restorationist; otherwise his fundamental germ of redemption would expand partly into the actual redemption

and partly into the actual destruction of human beings. The evolution would concurrently conduct to heaven and to hell.

It may be replied, that, even supposing that all which has been said were true, the Christo-centric principle would not be invalidated. For, it was the Son of God who created the world and placed Adam upon it; it was the Son of God who instituted Adam's religion, who dispensed its measures, who administered its sanctions. Christ must still be regarded as having been the fundamental principle. We rejoin: in the first place, Christ and the Son of God are not altogether convertible terms, notwithstanding the fact that Dr. Gerhart so conceives and uses them. The Son of God, the Second Person of the Godhead, although eternal was not eternally incarnate. There are some things in Scripture which are referred to the eternal Son of God which are not referred to him as incarnate. He was not eternally anointed, nor was it eternally said to his parents, "Call his name Jesus." Although, therefore, we admit that the Son of God was the creator of the world and of Adam, we do not admit that he was creator as Christ Jesus the Redeemer. In the second place, we are not prepared to concede what the author's view demands—that the Son of God was Creator to the exclusion of the Father and the Holy Ghost, or that in the discharge of the creative office he was even superior to the other Persons of the Godhead. Certainly, the Father as Creator was not subordinate to the Son as Creator. To this consideration it may be added that the general doctrine of the church has been that, in some ineffable sense, the Father is the representative of the supreme authority of the Godhead, and to substitute the Son for him in that august relation is to break with the *consensus* of Christendom. In the third place, there is nothing in the Scriptures to necessitate *our* believing that Adam recognized or sustained a peculiar and emphatic relation to the Second Person of the Godhead. There is some ground in the record in Genesis for the belief that he knew his relation to the Triune God as his God. Most certainly he did not know Christ Jesus in his capacity of Redeemer as his God. It behooves Dr. Gerhart to change the name of his central principle from *Christo-centric*. We see already that he meets insuperable diffi-

culty in pushing that principle beyond the limits of redemption.

(2.) This naturally leads to the observation, that the Christo-centric principle is not broad enough to cover the doctrine of the Trinity, a doctrine not only of redemptive, but also of natural, religion. For it is not supposable that angels do not know God as Triune, or that Adam was destitute of that knowledge. If God makes himself known to his creatures, he must reveal himself in his true nature. He could not have communicated to our first parents a Mohammedan and Unitarian conception of himself. Now, ever since the settlement of the Arian controversy the church has constantly maintained the consubstantiality of the Persons of the Godhead. But admitting that they are identical as to essence, what room is there for a Christo-centric principle which, if conceded, must make the Son fundamental in the essential relation of the Trinity? Nor is it less difficult to see how that principle could be asserted with reference to the personal relations of the Godhead. The church has always held—Dr. Gerhart himself holds—the “priority” of the Father, so far as those relations are concerned. How, then, can the Son, not to say Christ, be considered the primordial principle in those relations? Even so far as the economy of redemption is concerned, it is universally held that the scheme of salvation sprang from the bosom of the Father, that it had its origin in his infinite wisdom and mercy, that he called the Son to its discharge and sent him on his redeeming mission to earth. Might it not, therefore, with some color of plausibility be urged that the Father is the primordial principle of redemption?

If it be said that for the *knowledge* of the Father we are indebted to the Son, since Jesus himself declares: “Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him;” and that here the Christo-centric principle holds good; we might ask in return, How is the Son himself revealed? The answer must be, By the Holy Spirit through the Word. And it might, in the last analysis, be exceedingly difficult to say whether we know more of God, of the Trinity, of the Father, by the revelation of the Son, or by the communion of the

Holy Ghost. When it comes to a comparison, in this matter, between the Persons of the Godhead, and the exaltation of the office of one above that of another, we confess that we shrink back from instituting the dread equation.

(3.) The decrees of God would also seem to lie beyond the scope of the Christo-centric principle. They transcend its regulative influence. Unless the maintainers of this principle are prepared to revolutionize the common doctrine of the whole nominal church, they must admit that it is peculiarly the office of God the Father to decree. He decreed creation, he decreed redemption. The office of decreeing is not peculiarly attributed to the Son. If there be, in this matter, any will which is a fundamental, primordial, regulative principle, it is not especially the will of the Son, but that of the Father. We cannot, therefore, regard the divine decrees as embraced within the sweep of the Christo-centric principle.

(4.) It is hard to perceive how the attributes of God are reducible under the regulative potency of this principle. The pure extravagance is maintained by our author that "the essence of God is love." It is true that the Scriptures declare that "God is love." They also declare that "God is light." If the declaration that he is love justifies the assertion that his essence is love, the declaration that he is light would warrant the affirmation that his essence is light. We would, then, have two divine essences, and the *intrinsic* unity of God would be sacrificed. But let it be admitted that, in some eminent and ineffable sense, love characterizes the divine nature, and the question arises, How can the love of the Son be regarded as fundamental and primordial in the internal relations of the Godhead? Did his love to the Father antecede, in the order of thought, the love of the Father to the Son? Would that consist with the Christian doctrine of the personal relations of the Trinity? Further, the love of God for that infinite righteousness which is the perfect and eternal norm of rectitude in his nature, an infinite love which may be fitly characterized as his holiness, and which, in the event of a conflict with his love for the happiness of the creature, must infinitely take precedence of it—a view which to our mind is the fundamental and unan-

swerable argument for the necessity of the atonement—this love, it must be supposed, is equally shared by all the Persons of the Godhead. But if so, one fails to comprehend how the love of the Son for the infinite righteousness of the divine nature can be regarded as primordial, and as regulative of the same infinite love as belonging to the other divine Persons. How can the love of the Son be a principle which reduces to unity upon itself the love of the Father and that of the Holy Spirit?

Turning now from the love of God, contemplated as intrinsic to the Godhead, and looking at that love which was extrinsically exercised towards mankind, we must reach a similar result. It was the love of the Father for guilty, ruined sinners of the human race which *initiated* redemption. It was the love of the Father which induced the call of the Son to undertake the work of redemption: "And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee." The love of the Son for sinners, therefore, free and infinite as it was, cannot be considered as the primordial principle of redemption. But even if, as to their nature, the love of the Father and the love of the Son for sinners be contemplated as equal, that very equality would preclude the supposition that the love of the Son was regulative of the Father's love. Unutterable, infinite, everlastingly adorable as was the love of the Son for perishing sinners, it is not competent to any theologian to say that it *originated* redemption, or that it surpassed that love of the Father which led him to send his only-begotten and well-beloved Son to humiliation, shame and death in order to its achievement.

A like course of argument might be pursued in relation to other divine attributes, especially that of justice, but we have no room for its presentation. Enough has been said to show that the divine attributes cannot be marshalled within the scope of the Christo-centric principle.

(5.) The providential government of God, viewed as to its whole duration, cannot be adjusted to the claims of this principle. We cheerfully confess, we strenuously contend, that, until the

redemption of the church is completed, the administration of the providential government of God, in all its extent, is committed to the hands of Christ as Mediatorial Sovereign. It is a glorious truth, and cannot be too frequently or too earnestly enforced. But when the end shall come, when the Son shall have subdued all opposition to himself and his church and finished the redemption of his people, he shall deliver up his extra-ecclesiastical kingdom to the Father from whom he received it. "Then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that *God may be all in all.*" The peculiar relation of the Son to a delegated and temporary dominion over the universe outside of his church will cease, and God the Father, as representative of the Trinity, will resume the reins of universal empire. Here, again, we discover a theological truth which refuses to be reduced under the Christo-centric principle. If there be a central principle indicated in this relation, it would seem to be the authority of the Triune God.

(6.) This principle is too narrow, in that, logically developed, it necessitates the exclusion of the validity of any knowledge of God which is not concerned about him as manifested in Christ, of every element of theology which is not Christological. This is logically required, because, as we have seen, this Christo-centric principle is the fundamental, primordial, pervading, regulative and unifying principle of all theological truth, and consequently of that great section of theological truth which specially treats of the knowledge of God. Of course, we admit that there can be no adequate knowledge, especially no saving knowledge, of God except as he is manifested in Christ. But the fallacy growing out of the enforcement of the Christo-centric principle consists in a failure to attach sufficient consequence to the distinction between a partial and inadequate knowledge on the one hand, and a full and adequate knowledge on the other. Because some men have no knowledge of God in Christ, it hardly follows that they have no knowledge of God whatsoever.

The Mohammedan maintains the intrinsic or essential unity of God. He is grievously wrong in not also holding to a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead; but so far as he goes he is right. The

Deist acknowledges the existence of God. He is in deplorable error in rejecting Christianity; but as far as *he* goes he is right. Even to the heathen, who know nothing of the gospel, and, therefore, nothing of Christ, the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork, the irrepressible voice of conscience testifies of the moral government of God by which they will be judged, and the fundamental laws of belief, the native instincts of the soul, when elicited into expression by experience, conduct to the affirmation of an infinite Being. It is these testimonies of nature, internal and external, which, according to the declaration of an inspired apostle, render them utterly nexcusable. They reject a knowledge of God which they might attain. And were they to hearken to these natural instructions and confess the existence and government of God, they would possess a knowledge which, although lamentably incomplete, would be, as far as it would go, a true and valid knowledge. The principle under consideration, if pressed to its logical extreme, would rule out, as gratuitous and useless, all the arguments of philosophy and theology for the existence of God, which are not immediately derived from the Christian Scriptures. Our author himself expresses his appreciation of the value of the great, basal pre-suppositions of nature. He concedes that "the God-idea of natural intuition includes truths of fundamental and unchangeable worth."¹ It would appear to be obvious that the fundamental convictions of mankind, although not regulated by the genetic force of the Christo-centric principle, are preparatives for the clearer and fuller revelation of the Scriptures, and the supreme manifestation of God in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The examination of the author's central principle of theology, from the point of view of its scope, has occupied so much of the space allotted to us, that only one or two other considerations can be submitted, and that but very briefly, while others still will have to be entirely omitted. The arguments already presented constitute a *direct* impeachment of the validity of the author's Christo-centric principle. What remains to be said will furnish

¹ P. 180.

an *indirect* argument against that principle derived from some of the consequences to which the author's own mind has been led as the result of its adoption.

2. Obedience to his central principle constrains the author to take what we cannot but regard as the extravagant position that the Son of God, as Redeemer, is "the Archetype, the Organ and the End" of the whole created system. This makes him, as has already been intimated, a Supralapsarian, with redemption substituted for predestination, and with justice left out. This follows from the position that the Son as Redeemer is the archetype and the end of the created universe; redemption was the ruling idea of creation. No doubt the Son of God is the Creator of the universe, and it was designed to subserve his glory. But that is, we conceive, a different thing from affirming that as Redeemer he was Creator, and that the universe was created in order to celebrate his redemptive glory. When Paul encountered teachers who disparaged the Lord Jesus Christ, and prated of angelic hierarchies and governments as objects of worship, he guarded the church against this frenzy by exalting Christ as the eternal Son of God who made the worlds, and upholds them by the word of his power; as in all things having the pre-eminence and as being entitled to universal adoration. But we are slow to believe that Paul meant to say that the Son of God was Creator as Redeemer. True, he created the universe; so did the Father, and so did the Holy Ghost. In the act of creation, did the Son create as Redeemer, and the Father and the Spirit not? No doubt, the universe is, as a fact, a magnificent theatre for unfolding the glories of redemption. But was the universe created *in order to be* a scaffolding for redemption? Was Adam created in order to sin that he might be redeemed? Is this true of the human race? Are lost human beings magnifying the glories of redemption? Were the fallen angels created in order to be redeemed? If redemption was the end of creation, what of damnation?

When the author affirms that the Son was the "Organ" of creation, if he mean by the organ, the immediate executor of creation, he seems to forget that by the Scriptures that office is expressly assigned to the Holy Spirit. The Son of God has glory

enough—is it not infinite?—without detracting from the glory of the other persons in the ever-blessed Trinity. Nor does it magnify his own glory to say that he created the world to be redeemed, and suffered a part of it to be damned. The author rejects Sublapsarian Calvinism, but its difficulties are nothing compared with those of this Redemptive Supralapsarianism.

This criticism is relieved of the charge of captiousness, and is positively confirmed by the author's views in regard to evolution. He expresses his inability to endorse evolutionism in some of its aspects. We suppose that he meant his rejection of it, so far as it is atheistic or tends to atheism. But he does signify his approval of the law of evolution. He says :

“If Jesus, who is no less truly corporeal than psychic, be the perfection of mankind, then this unique Man is, in either case, the microcosm, the end and crown of all inorganic and organic forces of the lower kingdoms of nature. He reveals the final cause which from chaos onward has been active in producing and shaping the innumerable formation of the universe. The Christ-idea accordingly becomes the law for Christian thought concerning the cosmos. Christ is the *end* no less than the beginning. The end or final cause of the universe is the controlling motive, which works in all its kingdoms, in all its *genera* and species, shaping their development from within toward consummation. Darwin's theory concerning the evolution of man from the lower kingdoms, is, if theistically interpreted, scriptural and Christological.”¹

The author elsewhere says:

“As of the natural creation so of the spiritual creation of the Son is the Principle,”² “He at the same time, in contradistinction from the Father, is the principle of the universe, being immediately connected with finite things.”³

“As of the natural creation so of the spiritual creation the Son is the Principle.”² “He at the same time, in contradistinction from the Father, is the principle of the universe, being immediately connected with finite things.”³

We are not sure enough of the author's meaning in affirming that the Son of God is the principle of the universe, to speak dogmatically. If he mean merely that he is the final cause of the universe in the sense that he is the end contemplated in the whole “process of becoming,” by which the universe is evolved to its consummation, he inconsistently confounds final cause with

¹ P. 193. ² P. 303. ³ P. 304.

efficient cause in saying that the former "has been active in producing and shaping the innumerable formations of the universe." If he mean what this language implies, namely, that Christ is the working principle immanent in the evolutionary process, he out-Schleiermachers Schleiermacher. If we do not misunderstand that powerful but erratic speculator, he held that into the world, as created, there was infused a divine, a theistic, principle by which its organic development was effected; but that in consequence of the incarnation of the Son of God there was infused into the world, as redeemed, a Christic principle of organic development. Our author appears to go beyond this, in holding that the Christic principle of development characterized the old creation as well as the new, the pre-incarnation as well as the post-incarnation world.

But passing from this construction of his meaning, which we admit to be too doubtful to allow of its being pressed, we are perfectly sure of his doctrine, first, that the incarnate Son of God, as "corporeal and psychic," was the product of Darwinian Evolution theistically and Christologically interpreted (!); and, secondly, that Christ was the end, the designed "crown and climax" of the evolution of the universe. And it is clear that this justifies our assignment to him of the position that creation was in order to redemption, and our insistence upon the insuperable difficulties which oppose that view.

3. Another doctrine which plays a conspicuous part in this work, and which appears to be regulated by the Cristo-centric principle, is that God is absolute love. A single citation must suffice:

"Love is his essence or being. His sovereign will, his wisdom and power, His holiness and righteousness are qualities of love."

Without stopping to note the fact that this extraordinary doctrine violates the analogy of our own constitution, for if anything be clear it is that the justice which demands the execution of the criminal is, to him, not the manifestation of love, we ask, What is the connection between the view that the essence of God is love and the author's central principle of theology? Is it that he starts with the assumption that God's essence is love, and infers

that Christ, as love, is the only revelation of that fact? That can hardly be, for upon that supposition what the author, with a touch of German irreverence, calls the God-idea would be determinative of the Christ-idea, and his central principle would be abandoned. Is it that because Christ is love, and as such is the manifestation of God, it is inferred that the divine essence is love? That would make the doctrine as to the manifestation of God's essence superior to and regulative of the doctrine as to his essence itself. So far as we have observed, Dr. Gerhart does not indicate the *nexus* between his Christo-centric principle and his equally unphilosophical and untheological position that the essence of God is love, qualified by the attributes of intelligence, justice and will. He was bound to show the connection, or consent to the sacrifice of the logical coherence of his system.

But if there be a connection which our limited faculties fail to recognize, then his Christo-centric principle is responsible for some very serious results. It would necessitate, first, the denial of the sovereign, unconditional election of sinners to salvation, and of the vicarious atonement of Christ as the substitute of his people; and, secondly, the affirmation of the indiscriminate love of God for all individuals of mankind, the universality of the atonement, and the ability of the sinner, without enabling and constraining grace, to accept the provisions of redemption. In brief, the fundamental principles of Calvinism are denied, and those of Arminianism affirmed. True, all these results are not in this volume explicitly avowed, and we have no right to predict whether they will be in the next volume. But the author has admitted into the present volume an Introduction by Dr. Philip Schaff, in which they are boldly and distinctly enounced, and it is fair to conclude that he approves them. Let us look squarely in the face the end proposed to be accomplished by this central principle, which will make "the theology of the future" "a theology of love,"—"a theology," it is contended, which "will give new life to the church, and prepare the way for the reunion of Christendom." It is that whatsoever is peculiar to and characteristic of Calvinism shall be destroyed, and whatsoever of it is left shall be swallowed up in the omnivorous maw of Arminianism. This Dr. Schaff will not

achieve within the Presbyterian Church. Whether Dr. Gerhart will have better success in the Reformed (German) Church, we have no means of determining. One would, however, suppose that the Heidelberg Catechism, to which he declares his adhesion, would be difficult of digestion by an Arminian stomach, even though sweetened with the sugar of universal atonement.

If, as Dr. Gerhart holds, love is the divine motive which controls and overshadows every other; if "humanity," redeemed in Christ, is made in him "personally one" with God, and Christ assumed not impersonal, but personal, human nature, and thus identified it with divine personality; if redemption was the end aimed at in the creation of the universe; if there be a Christic principle inserted into the world-process of becoming, and Christ, as Incarnate Redeemer, is the final product, the crown and climax of a universal evolution,—then we can conceive no logical escape from Universal Restorationism as the ultimate conclusion. The system, by an inexorable logic, conducts to the final elimination of the very principle of sin from the universe, and the restoration of all rebellious creatures to the favor and to the service of God. Sin and hell will ultimately become merely matters of history. The Devil himself will at last prostrate himself in repentance at Jesus' feet, and confess himself his saved and willing subject. No doctrine as to the "autonomy" of the creature can avert this logical conclusion. For God, and God alone, must be sovereign. The Lord God omnipotent must reign.

As it has been our purpose to confine these remarks to the Christo-centric principle, considered in itself and the consequences attributed to it, we will not discuss the author's subordination of the Scriptures, as an objective standard, to the revelation of God concretely made in the person of Christ; nor his too sharply-drawn distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic theology; nor his denial that the Trinity was revealed in the Old Testament; nor his affirmation that man's love to God conditions God's love to man; nor his approval of some of the results of the Higher Criticism; nor his Dornerian hypothesis of the divine-human *personality* of Christ.

Viewing the work as a whole, we cannot but regard it as one

of dangerous tendency, the more dangerous because of the scholarly elegance with which it is written. It professes to honor the Son of man, but betrays him with a kiss. It is one of the causes which will coöperate in bringing on a defection of the Church from the truth for which martyrs have died—a defection, the dark prospect of which is only relieved by the conviction that the closing days of this painful period are near at hand, and the glorious Star of the millennial morning is not far from its rise.

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