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I.

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE TRUTHFULNESS OF BIBLE HISTORY.*

IT will be generally agreed that the above subject has the merit of timeliness. For some time past the assertion has been made, and it is being made in our own day with greater confidence and insistence than ever, that our Christian faith and historical facts have very little or nothing to do with each other. Most frequently this assertion is made with reference to some one particular event of Sacred History, which has for the time being become the subject of debate from the point of view of its historicity. Those who incline to doubt the historical truthfulness of some such narrative as, *e.g.*, that of the supernatural birth or the resurrection of the Saviour, or at least incline to consider it an open question, are, when their skepticism awakens remonstrance from the conservative side, ever ready with the answer that Christianity is something too great and too deep, too inward, ideal and vital to be dependent in its essence on this or that single occurrence in the world of history. They protest that their own faith lives far superior to the level where such questions are discussed and decided, as to whether Christ was supernaturally conceived by the Virgin Mary or rose bodily from the grave on the third day. And they are not slow to make their own subjective faith in this matter the standard of

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II.

BROAD CHURCHISM AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.*

BROAD Churchism is the tendency to regard Church union as more important than Church distinctions. This tendency will, of course, vary greatly in degree. At first disposed to give up only the minor distinctions of polity in favor of union, it is eager at last to set aside fundamental doctrines and even to unite organically Churches whose regulative principles are contradictory. In every one of its forms, however, it differs from the tendency toward federation. The two are radically unlike. Federation is animated by love of the truth. For the sake of the truths which the Churches agree in holding it would have them coöperate in work, while for the sake of the truths which are distinctive of them it would have them retain their individuality. Broad Churchism, on the contrary, in all of its forms, is characterized by more or less of indifference to truth. It is ecclesiastical utilitarianism. Distinctions in polity and in doctrine it would overlook or ignore or deny because of the greater efficiency which it is supposed that organic union would secure. Hence, federation approves of creeds; and while it recognizes that, in the last analysis, each individual, because an individual, must have a creed of his own and so must form with the Lord Jesus a Church of his own, it would make the sincere acceptance of a less minute creed—but still the more precise the better—the basis of those larger associations of believers which we call the denominations. Broad Churchism, on the other hand, cares little for creeds; it would regard unity of purpose and character the ground of Church union; it adopts the words of the poet:

“For forms of faith let graceless bigots fight;
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right.”

Broad Churchism prevails widely and is increasing. It is one of the chief characteristics of the Christianity of our day. That this

* A paper read before the Religious Conference in Princeton Theological Seminary, October 10, 1905.

is so, appears in the passion for denominational union. This passion is the more conspicuous and the more significant because we now find it alongside of the tendency toward federation. Not to multiply illustrations, we have only to refer, on the one hand, to the Evangelical Alliance, to the Alliance of the Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian System, and to the Inter-Church Federation Congress to be held by the representatives of twenty-seven denominations on November 15 in New York; and, on the other hand, to the movement for Church unity by the Episcopal Church, to the proposed union now under deliberation between the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and to the numerous other Church unions advocated from time to time with more or less of seriousness, as, for example, that between the Congregationalists and the Methodists, movements which are all alike in this, that, if not always avowedly, still really, they would sacrifice denominational distinctions to organic union. That this latter tendency, so contradictory, as we have seen, of the one toward federation, should exist and increase directly alongside of that indicates how vigorous, how deeply rooted, it itself must be. All this is explained and reaffirmed when we consider the soil in which Broad Churchism is growing. Indifference to religious truth is well-nigh universal, and as pervasive as it is extensive. Theology is the least popular department of our literature, and in theology it is on Christian doctrine that the fewest books are now being read or issued. The preaching of to-day is anything and everything but doctrinal: let it be known that a minister is given to preaching doctrinal sermons, and few are the congregations that will think it safe to call him. Creeds are commonly laid on the shelf as having only an historical interest. When they are still allowed some present and practical importance, as by our own Church, it is "the brief" and so very partial, as well as unauthoritative, "statement" that is usually given the preference. Even among us it is not generally thought worth while to teach our children our matchless "Shorter Catechism." Of our eight thousand six hundred and eighty-one Sabbath-schools, in only three thousand three hundred and twenty-six was the Catechism taught last year. Year before last, however, though our schools numbered eighty less, the Catechism was taught in two hundred and seventy-two more; and ten years ago, though our schools were eight hundred and twelve fewer than last year, those in which instruction in the Catechism was given were four hundred and ninety more numerous.

And this decline has gone on in spite of intelligent and persistent effort on the part of our Board of Publication and Sabbath-school Work to arrest it. With facts like these before us, it must be admitted that indifference to religious truth is a prominent characteristic of our day, and it is not difficult to account for the Broad Churchism which meets us everywhere. Did it not do so, it would be most strange. The wonder is rather that there should be also the movement for federation.

The question which it is proposed to discuss, and which, indeed, must be discussed, concerns the bearing of this Broad Church tendency on Christian life. Is it likely to issue in purer morals, in larger beneficence, in heartier consecration, in a fuller realization of "the life hid with Christ in God"?

I. We should grant that it might be presumed to do this. Such is at least its avowed aim; and until the contrary has been proved, it ought to be regarded as doing what it proposes. For we are bound to give the Broad Church movement credit for sincerity. It is indifferent to the truth of Christ, not because it is hostile to it, but only because it would emphasize what it regards as more important, viz., the life of Christ. Hence, it would not burden children with the Catechism. Doubtless this is true, but they need all their time to learn the application of Christianity to childhood. It would not discuss the differences between creeds: perhaps they are real, but they are unimportant when a lost world still waits for salvation. It would do away with doctrinal preaching: this may have been useful once, but that was before the days of slum work and of foreign missions. It would put theology under a ban: this is not to be disrespectful to Paul; it is only to go back to Christ Himself and to the ethical Gospel which He preached as well as lived. Surely, when such is its declared aim, we may not question that Broad Churchism means right. It would be loyal to our Lord. It would bring in His kingdom.

This it might be argued that it is doing. Never was the Church so organized or so aggressive as now. She would "go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation," and that "within the lifetime of the present generation." She has societies to meet almost every need of every social class. She plans for revivals of religion on a world-wide scale, and she prepares for a speedily coming day when at least the brotherhood of man shall attest the establishment of the kingdom of God. Nor is it otherwise as regards individual life and character. True, bad men abound and vice is rampant. To judge from the daily press, society would

seem to be rotten to the core. Yet look back two hundred years, or even much less, and it will be easy to discern the progress of Christian principles. Jonathan Edwards was expelled from his Northampton parish for presuming to protest against what would not be tolerated to-day in any Church. But there is not time for proof or illustration. If Broad Churchism declares its aim to be Christian living, and if the increase of Broad Churchism is being accompanied by the more general manifestation of the Christian life, is it not a just inference that the former is the cause of the latter? And does not this inference become necessary when we observe that there seems to be a sufficient reason for this causal relation between the two? In that Broad Churchism expressly puts the emphasis on Christian living rather than on Christian thinking, must it not tend to produce the former?

II. I believe not. I believe, on the contrary, that Broad Churchism is one of the great foes of Christian living; and for this conviction I would advance the following reasons:

1. The Broad Church attitude of mind is essentially sinful. Its sinfulness appears in at least two respects. First, it tends toward mental suicide. As has been remarked, it would secure the organic union of Churches by ignoring or denying the differences between them as regards polity and even as regards doctrine. Is it not, however, precisely through the recognition of differences that the mind is developed? Watch the little child. It is by distinguishing between this familiar object and that familiar object that his intellect begins to assert itself. Observe the scholar. In the last analysis his scholarship consists in his discernment and appreciation of distinctions. Nor may it be replied that there is another and higher process, that of generalization. There is; but this itself, when legitimate, depends on and is by means of the recognition of differences. You may say that because all men are religious they should, in spite of the numerous and striking differences between them, be put in one class and be treated as one class of beings. The suggestiveness of this generalization will, however, be in proportion to the clearness with which we see and the justice with which we estimate these differences. To one who does not perceive how unlike men are it will mean little to say that they are all alike in being religious. Indeed, one who ignores differences cannot generalize; for this consists in the recognition of a common element in those that have already been recognized as individuals, and therefore as different. The Broad Church attitude of mind must, consequently, in and of itself be opposed to mental clearness and

vigor. It must tend to arrest that discernment of differences by which the intellect is sharpened, and in so doing it must also impair that power of generalization in the exercise of which, more than in aught else, vigor is developed. Hence, the issue of Broad Churchism, if unchecked, must be the destruction of the mind. Though it be a mere tendency, it can be toward but one result, and that is intellectual suicide. It will, therefore, be essentially an immoral tendency. We have no more right to destroy the mind or to permit the destruction of the mind than we have to destroy the body or to permit the destruction of the body. Indeed, by as much as the mind is the higher because the animating and controlling factor of our life, by so much must mental suicide be a more grievous sin than physical suicide. Consequently, the influence of Broad Churchism cannot be favorable to morality. Purity of life cannot be the result of a tendency toward the destruction of the higher life. The spirit of intellectual suicide, whatever it may avow to the contrary, can neither originate nor foster the spirit of holiness. To think that it could would be to suppose that evil could produce good.

The other and the more significant aspect of the sinfulness of the Broad Church attitude is that it expresses indifference to God and thus is a direct insult to Him Himself. That any Broad Churchmen are deliberately guilty of this most serious sin is not asserted. That they are Broad Churchmen makes it impossible that they should be. Whoever counts himself a Churchman must mean to be loyal to the great Head of the Church. An insult, however, may be real though not intentional, and it is so in this case. As we have seen, Broad Churchism is rooted in indifference to truth. The Broad Churchman would secure the organic union of Churches because he appreciates the strength that comes from true union, and does not appreciate the importance of the distinctions in polity or doctrine which stand in the way of such union. His failure to appreciate the importance of these distinctions is due to his lack of discernment of what they are and involve. This lack of discernment is rooted in indifference to truth in general and to religious truth in particular. A lower value is put on it than on intention and conduct. Hence, ethics soon supplants dogmatics. What is the duty which God requires of man? becomes the question. The inquiry, What are we to believe concerning God? loses all but a merely academic interest. It is even urged that loyalty to God demands that it should be so. He would have us give our attention to the work which He wishes us to do rather than to Himself. Such is Broad Churchism when reduced to its lowest terms.

Now this attitude, however unintentionally, is a direct insult to God. Truth is the correspondence between what is thought and what is. It is the real conception of reality. Of such conception God is the author. He is the creator of reality which is its object. "By Him all things were made." He is the Maker of the faculties by which we perceive and conceive. "The inspiration of the Almighty giveth men understanding." He brings our faculties and their objects into relation. It is by His appointment and in this sense by His revelation that we see and hear and comprehend. He preserves all our powers in their integrity. It is in Him that we even "live and move and have our being." Thus in every sphere truth is God's work: He is its Author. Consequently, indifference to it is disrespect to Him and must be unfavorable to the life hid with Christ in Him. Especially is this so, however, in the sphere of religious truth. Here God is not only the author of truth; He is himself "the truth." That is, He himself is the object of our perception and conception. He is the reality before our minds and into agreement with which we try to bring our thoughts. The various doctrines, therefore, which result from this effort are just so many different views of God Himself. Whether absolutely correct or not, they are God as we see Him. Hence, to be indifferent to them is to be indifferent to Him. It is as though a child were deliberately to turn his back on what he took to be his father coming toward him. Could such a frame of mind be expected to issue in the higher life? Must not such disrespect cut the root of all morality? "Even as they refused," says the Apostle, "to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting." Such sin could not issue otherwise.

2. We see at once how this is when we inquire into the nature of truth and its relation to moral character and so to Christian life. There is a widely prevalent theory, that truth may be of the feelings as well as of the intellect; that it may not only come thus from two independent sources, but may be contradictory so that what is true to the feelings may be false to the intellect and *vice versa*; and that as moral character and so Christian life are rooted in the voluntary nature, of which the feelings are an expression, the Christian life may be developed and, some say, would better be developed, without reference to such intellectual conceptions as doctrinal statements. This theory in its less extreme form was brought into special prominence, so far as our own country was concerned, by a sermon on "The Theology of the Intellect and that of the Feelings,"

preached in Boston by Prof. Edwards A. Park in 1850, and profoundly reviewed and completely refuted soon afterward in three essays by Prof. Charles Hodge. It was quite recently developed to its logical conclusion and widely popularized by Prof. Auguste Sabatier. At the present time it has pervaded all our Churches, and few even of our ministers have altogether escaped its influence. You may hear them contrasting the theology of the head and the religion of the heart; affirming that there is a knowledge of the heart as well as of the head, and that the former is far superior to the latter; and even when insisting, as they have been taught, that the knowledge of the head is necessary, at least insinuating that that of the heart is quite independent of it.

This theory is radically false. There is no knowledge of the heart. Feeling can give knowledge no more than can excitement. As Prof. Bowen has well said, "Feeling is a state of mind consequent on the reception of some idea." That is, it does not give knowledge; it presupposes it. There must be knowledge by the head before there can be feeling with the heart. If you are even to feel pain in your finger, you must first know that it has been pricked. So long as you are unconscious of this you will feel no pain. You see the point. The religion of the heart, so far from being independent of the theology of the head, is impossible without it. Genuine religion can no more be creedless than pleasure or pain can be unconscious. Orthodoxy does not of itself insure piety; for the knowledge that your finger is being pricked will not cause pain, if your finger is callous: but without orthodoxy true piety is impossible.

Again, the head and the heart are not in opposition. They are not, as often represented, rival faculties. Strictly speaking, they are not even different faculties. Man is not a bunch of separate activities. He is an indivisible unit. His powers are but differing modes of one activity. Hence, for this reason, too, our faculties cannot be independent of each other. Stomach and lungs perform diverse functions, but the one depends on the other. An Apostle has written, "If one of our members suffer, all the members suffer with it." Once more you see the point. The religion of the heart and the theology of the head cannot be divorced. Unless the heart be disposed toward Christ, the head cannot, because it will not, discern the truth of Christ. As our Lord said, "It is only he who wills to obey God, whose heart is right toward Him, who shall know the doctrine whether it be of Him." On the other hand, zeal in Christ's cause will be strong and abiding in proportion as the faith from which it springs and by which it is nourished is in-

telligent. Zeal without knowledge is dangerous and short-lived. Hence, the destructive tendency of Broad Churchism is explained. It ought to be subversive of "the life hid with Christ in God" because the indifference to truth which it involves is itself a grievous sin, indeed, a direct insult to God; and how the penalty which it thus deserves is inflicted appears in this, that it inclines to ignore the intellect, which is one of the two indispensable factors in all right action and life. To do or to be right, one must at least know what is right. In this sense the intellectual element in conduct is even primary.

3. The argument is strengthened by what is often urged as an objection to it. It is claimed that while truth is thus the primary element in right conduct, it is not all truth that has reference to conduct; and that the truth to which Broad Churchism is indifferent is not truth of this practical kind. In a word, the doctrinal distinctions which it would ignore are too abstract to have any practical application. They do not suggest or enforce any duty or supply any motive. It will not follow from the fact, however, that these truths have thus no practical application, that they do not have either any practical relations. That the three angles of a triangle are together equal to two right angles neither prompts nor indicates any special course of conduct. It would seem to be a truth absolutely without practical application. Yet it is quite evident that it has practical relations. It cannot be presented to the mind and its comprehension not depend on the disposition and affect the character. The unwilling schoolboy will grasp it slowly because he is unwilling, and his imperfect grasp of it will only increase his unwillingness. The scientist can see no importance in metaphysics because of his prejudice against it; and his repudiation of it both deepens his prejudice, contracts his sympathies, and even vitiates his science. But this is not the main consideration. The truths of our religion are never mere abstract propositions. Every one of the doctrines of Christianity has practical applications as well as practical relations. Every one of them both indicates duty and inspires to its performance. What is duty? The obligation arising out of the rule of right. What is right? Conformity to law. What is law? The demand on us springing out of God's nature. What is God's nature? That which He in Himself is. It must be, then, that as every truth concerning God's will for us has direct application to our lives, so every truth regarding what He is in Himself is not without at least relation to our obedience to His will. Because in Himself He is the norm and ground and rea-

son of the Christian life, it cannot but be that that life should depend on and, other things being equal, should be in proportion to the fullness and clearness of our knowledge of God. Hence it is that our Lord teaches us that "life eternal is to know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent," and that John writes that "when Christ shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." So practical is all religious truth that Christian life may be said to consist in the apprehension of it, and that this apprehension cannot be so complete as that life requires until God shall have been known in the perfect vision of His Son. Only then shall we discern all that we ought to be or be inspired as we must be to realize it.

4. The argument is confirmed by the history of the Church. Whenever we succeed in reaching the real sequence of cause and effect we find, that life has been according to doctrine; that devotion to the truth of Christ has issued in effective activity in His cause; and that indifference to the truth as it is in Him has resulted in misdirected effort and at last in loss of energy itself. Our limits, of course, forbid even the least elaboration of this proof. Let it suffice to remind you of the Huguenots of France, of the Dutch Republic, of the Covenanters of Scotland, of the English Puritans. Their uniquely grand characters were the expression of their uniquely grand belief. As another has written, "It was their faith in God's direct rule over all human spirits and all social relations which made them the strong men they were," and as Emerson says of them, "weighted them with the weight of the universe!" It was because from earliest childhood they were taught that God was the gracious but absolute Sovereign of all, how this was and what it meant, that they came to understand that, this being so, there was no room for despotism in Church or State; and it was this intelligent devotion to the most elaborate as well as Scriptural of creeds that the Holy Spirit used to make them the great champions of both religious and civil liberty. Can Broad Churchism point to any like influence? It has given birth to many pleasant-spoken because complaisant men; but did it ever produce a moral hero such as John Calvin, or Hugh Latimer, or John Knox, or Johannes à Lasco? Nor may it be replied that the organization and missionary activity, both at home and in foreign lands, of the Church of to-day, broad and lax though it is, breaks the force of this reference. These most admirable characteristics are not due to Broad Churchism; they are rather in spite of it. Though found in connection with it, they are not because of it.

They are not the fruit of what the Church is, but of what it was. A strong man who has been well nourished will work on for some time after his nourishment has been withdrawn; and that Broad Churchism is not feeding the activity of the Church as it was fed and needs still to be fed, appears in such symptoms as the marked decline in the number of candidates for the ministry, and especially in the loss of power on the part of the Church to maintain its individuality in the midst of the world.

5. That Broad Churchism, or the indifference to religious truth out of which it grows and which it fosters, is directly opposed to the Christian life—such is the plain teaching of the Word of God. Its testimony in this respect cannot now be even outlined. I may only remind you, that the all-embracing purpose of the Bible is to teach the truth as to God and man's relation to Him; that the great duty which it enjoins is to go into all the world and preach this most glorious of all truths to the whole creation; and that so far from many aspects of this truth being too abstract to have any bearing on conduct, "every Scripture," in addition to being "inspired of God," is said to be "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." So long, therefore, as even one fact or doctrine of the Bible remains unappropriated or misunderstood by anyone, just so long must his life fall short of what God requires. Otherwise, the conclusion is forced on us that God has inspired the unnecessary. No less practical importance than this does the Word of Him who is Himself "the truth" attach both to the most profound and to the least of its truths. Could there be a more entire condemnation of Broad Churchism?

It will follow, then, in the first place, that the great business of the minister of Christ is to preach the truth of Christ in all its length and breadth and height and depth. He is so to lodge it in the minds of the people that it will permeate, and will need only to be vitalized to determine, all their thinking and acting. This it has been promised that the Holy Spirit will do. He is to give the spiritual discernment which will enable us to perceive the relations and to make the applications of the truth to ourselves. Yet how commonly do we reverse this divine order! The enforcement of duty we regard as our great work, whereas it is the Holy Spirit's! The clear and systematic presentation of the facts and truths which make duty and in which the Christian life is rooted, this we leave undone; and, as might have been expected,

little is done. Up-to-date pastors, and modern evangelists, and practical Sunday-school teachers, may cry unceasingly, "Come to Jesus!" but they will cry in vain. Only the Holy Spirit can draw to Christ those who are "dead through trespasses and sins"; but being the Spirit of truth, He has not covenanted to draw save in connection with and by means of the truth. He will not open the blind eyes and quicken the dead hearts and make the lost see and feel Christ to be their only and sufficient Saviour, unless we do the part which He has assigned to us and in which He has promised to give us the help which we need; and that part is clearly to set forth whatever He has revealed in his Word as to who Christ is, as to what Christ is, as to why Christ is. After all, of what use will spiritual discernment be, if the spiritually enlightened man is to have no more truth to discern than much of the preaching and teaching of our day set before him? Brethren, we may not look for a revival of religion until there has been a revival of doctrinal instruction. True religion is impossible when Broad Churchism is weaning us from its only nourishment.

Finally, just because of the importance of doctrinal distinctions must they be presented popularly and in relation to life. It was so that the inspired teachers of the Bible always did. It has been thus that the greatest preachers of the ages have ever done. Nothing was more characteristic of our own lamented Dr. Purves than that he was wont, as was his and our Master and Exemplar, so to preach even "the deep things of God" that "the common people would hear him gladly." It is such preaching that is demanded, if Broad Churchism is to be discredited. But such preaching will drive it from the field. A doctrine like that of the absolute sovereignty of God in the bestowal of grace it will be felt to be worth while to maintain even our own denominational individuality to testify to, when once this doctrine shall again, as in the heroic days of the older Calvinism, come to be set forth generally not as a mere scholastic proposition, but as the most precious of truths because the most vital and blessed of facts. In view of the universal prevalence of Broad Churchism, such simple and practical preaching of "the whole counsel of God" is the supreme need of the hour.

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