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I. ST. JOHN'S ARGUMENT FROM MIRACLES.

1. WE are so accustomed to regard John's Gospel as a sweet, tender evangel, that we are apt to leave out of view its argumentative character. John himself, however, in his twentieth chapter, teaches us to avoid this mistake: "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

If we understand this passage, John does not mean that the preceding part of his book is wholly occupied with an account of various miracles. They have their place along with other things—other things, and, it may be, better things; for our Lord is represented as saying (xiv. 11), "Believe ME, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake." What emphasis is to be placed on that pronoun ME, what unfathomable depths of meaning are involved in it, no finite intellect can know. They who are most spiritually minded see in Christ, more than others do, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, and beholding it as in a glass, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. Perhaps no one ever apprehended this divine glory more fully than did the beloved disciple; but he was preserved from the narrowness of depreciating, much more of despising the argument from miracles; in which, indeed, he would have been untrue to the ancient and sacred beliefs of his race. Hence, in addition to other things, we find in the first twenty chapters of his Gospel

IV. THE SPOILING OF DOCTOR DRYASDUST.

WE purpose to write an article upon "the homiletic study of the English Bible." We wish to preface this, however, with some brief observations, biographical and otherwise, upon our lamented brother, Dryasdust. The main outlines of this distinguished brother's career are too well known to the readers of this periodical to require any extended notice here. Nor do his personal characteristics need any but the briefest mention. It is well known that his theological erudition is prodigious, and his decision on a nice problem of exegesis is final, and he is thought to know more of the early history of the church than did the Fathers themselves. And there is another thing well known about this brother, but not so often spoken of, and that is, *nobody likes to hear him preach*. We notice that he is not sent for to assist in special services at neighboring churches; nor is he even put up to preach at Presbytery, if there is any way of getting around it. We have accounted for our brother's lack of pulpit popularity—he is not in his dotage, by the way; he could hardly be called middle-aged—by supposing that nature had denied him those oratorical gifts which she has lavished upon others. Having always had this impression, we were surprised to learn recently that he was once quite an orator. An elder of the church which sent him as a candidate for the ministry to college and the seminary, told us a few months ago that Dryasdust was the brightest young speaker he ever knew. "But," said this good elder, "the theological seminary spoiled him." "You know," he continued, "Dryasdust has been for several years pastor of that big church over in —, and I had not heard him preach since he entered the seminary. Last week he was on a visit home and preached for us, and such a change! he gave us the driest sermon I have heard in many a day. Oh! he is such a dry preacher! and I believe it is the theological seminary that made him so." So much, then, for Dr. Dryasdust, an orator by nature, yet in the judgment of a reputable elder of our church so transformed by his theological training that we might well say of him,

“*Dryasdust* is his name,
And we will not deny,
With regard to the same,
What that name might imply.”

Now, beloved reader, we raise the question, Was this good elder correct in his views upon the spoiling of Dr. Dryasdust?

From his judgment on the merits of Dr. Dryasdust as a preacher we are not disposed to appeal. In a matter of this sort the voice of the pew is final. The question is, How did Dr. Dryasdust become a “dry” preacher, and therefore (we say it without hesitation) a comparatively useless one?

In discussing this question, we wish to say at the outset, that we believe most heartily in theological seminaries, and appreciate the value and commend the work of our existing theological institutions. And when any one asks us the question, “What advantage, then, hath theology, or what profit is there in seminary training?” we are prompt to answer, “Much every way;” chiefly because, by a theological course, most men are “spiked down” for all time to the bed-rock of a sturdy orthodoxy. When a man leaves the theological seminary, it is his own fault if he ever has any more theological perplexities. While in the seminary, he ought to have fully learned how to settle the religious problems which can be settled, and to leave those which cannot be settled alone. He has learned this most valuable lesson, to detect all the old heresies under their modern disguises. In every new controversy which he may meet in after years, he quickly recognizes the familiar visage of Socinus, Arminius, or some other old-time heretic, whom he dissected and laid on the shelf, in Dr. P.’s or Dr. G.’s class-room, five or ten years since. A man thus educated will go on quietly preaching the gospel, when the hottest cannonade of “advanced science” and “new theology” is roaring above his head. He knows that the noise he hears is that of blank cartridges; the balls were taken out of those guns for him, when he was in the seminary twenty years ago. We acknowledge ourselves a debtor to a seminary training on this very point, and that beyond calculation. For ten years we have been a Gallio who cared for none of these things, when the “higher critic,” the “modern scientist,” the “larger hope” man

has buzzed about our ears. And we owe it to a seminary training that we can say, not with blind, but, as we trust, with intelligent faith,

“Let all the forms which men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'll call them vanity and lies
And bind the gospel to my heart.”

Nor is this all the advantage of a seminary training. Why is a young man, who is to be a practical chemist and assayer, first given a course in one of our own colleges and then sent to the School of Mines at Freiburg, Germany? Why does a young lawyer take the law course at Vanderbilt University, Johns Hopkins, or the University of Virginia? In like manner, why should not a young man who is going to preach be sent to those institutions where the religion he is to enforce on men is studied in orderly, scientific form? We venture the assertion, that your young assayer will learn more in the two years at Freiburg than in seven years of “piddling” in his own laboratory. And may we not expect that the young preacher will get a fuller, clearer mental perception of divine truth in two years of theological training than in twice that time spent in his own study? There should be—and if our personal testimony goes for anything, there is—large profit in a course of seminary training; and we are firm in our belief, that nowhere is larger advantage to be gained from a theological course than in the seminaries of our Southern Presbyterian Church.

The question, then, comes up again, How did the spoiling of Dr. Dryasdust occur? If there be this undeniable advantage in seminary training, how could the good elder above be in anywise correct when he said, “The theological seminary spoiled him”? You may think us paradoxical, beloved reader, when we answer that while we stoutly maintain the great advantage of a seminary course, yet we think that, to a large extent, the spoiling of Dr. Dryasdust is to be laid at its door. Have you never seen a complicated machine which was theoretically perfect, yet had a weak spot in its practical operation, a rusty joint, or a loose screw, that caused it to turn out now and then a faulty piece of work? This is just our opinion of our theological seminaries: the ideal is

well-nigh perfect; we are ourselves under lasting obligations to our own seminary training, yet there is, we fear, more than one loose screw in these most excellent preacher-making machines. We have already made the effort in these pages¹ to put our finger on one of these weak spots, and are glad to note a recent tightening of the machinery just at that point. In the present article we call attention to another loose screw. This is done, it need hardly be said, only in a spirit of friendly suggestion. The seminaries already produce good fruit; our desire is that they may bring forth more fruit. And we take up the line of suggested improvement the more boldly, because, in this instance, we are following a path broadly marked out for us by the action of three of our most important church courts at their meetings in the fall of 1889. The Synods of Virginia, South Carolina and Alabama, at those meetings, each took action looking towards making the study of the English Bible a special feature of the curriculum in Union and Columbia Seminaries. While, in its general direction, the action taken by the three synods was the same, we naturally prefer the shape in which that action was formulated by the Synod of Alabama: "instructing her directors to urge before the board the expansion of the chair of Pastoral Theology, so as to include *the homiletic study of the English Bible. . .*" We shall, we think, justify our preference when we explain just what is meant by this somewhat peculiar phraseology, "the homiletic study of the English Bible"; and we will make this explanation very simple, by saying, that when you study Scripture for your spiritual nourishment, that is the devotional study of the Bible; when it is studied to put its truth in scientific form, that is theological study of the Bible; when it is studied with the intention of preaching it to others, that is the homiletic study of the Bible. A little thought will show the reader that no two of these ways of studying the Bible are the same. For here is an humble Christian, who feeds upon the word and grows thereby, yet who is utterly incompetent to preach it; and here is Dr. Dryasdust, profound theologian and accomplished exegete, whom nobody cares to hear preach; and here is D. L. Moody, ignorant of theology, and oftentimes faulty

¹ Article, "Pastoral Theology," April, 1889.

in exegesis, but mighty in the Scriptures, and him the common people hear gladly. Or, to take another view: the learned reader will understand our explanation still more clearly, when we say, that the devotional study of Scripture is *nature*, theological study of Scripture is *science*, and homiletic study of Scripture is *art*. Nature furnishes the facts, science groups these facts together and interprets their laws, art takes the natural facts with the scientific laws and applies them to some practical use. So, by devotional study of Scripture the precious facts of God's word are impressed on the mind; theology takes those facts and gives them systematic form; then comes homiletics and teaches how to take that same Bible, thus experimentally and scientifically known, and use it as the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe. Now, just as it would be a great blunder to give lectures on anatomy and physiology, and yet not teach your young surgeon the use of the lancet and the probe; so our church is beginning to feel that a similar blunder has, to some extent, been committed among us. Our young preachers have been taught the *science* of theology, which ought to have been done; they have not been taught the *art* of preaching, which ought never to have been left undone. It was right here that the spoiling of Dr. Dryasdust was accomplished. That learned brother left the seminary fully qualified to write a volume upon justification by faith, yet not capable of giving an acceptable exposition of the fifth chapter of Romans. We do not charge the entire responsibility of this upon his theological *alma mater*. We know that the same institution has sent out scores of other men who are excellent preachers; but that seminary certainly did give to Dryasdust that "crystallizing tendency" which has developed him into a theological fossil, instead of a preacher of the living word. We ourselves heard in that same institution a student deliver as a sermon the fifty-second chapter of Dabney's *Syllabus and Notes on Theology*, with slight alterations of the wording, and some small condensations here and amplifications there; and this he did without rebuke by the faculty, who criticised him in the presence of the students for numerous other things. The faculty might have suggested to him with great propriety, that we are directed in the Scriptures to feed the

people upon milk, and also upon strong meat, but nowhere are we commanded to set before them a dinner of *bones*!

Now, should there not be in the seminary curriculum something to counterbalance this fossilizing tendency? Ought not the Bible to be studied there with a view to preaching it, as well as to constructing systematic theology out of it? This is what the homiletic study of the English Bible means; it has in view the making of a preacher out of the man, who is becoming at the same time a theologian. We think this will appear still more distinctly as we now go on to give our ideas as to what sort of teaching a course of homiletic study of the Scriptures would embrace. We would say, that it is not intended to furnish by this chair in the seminary a course of instruction in the English Bible parallel to that in Greek and Hebrew furnished by other chairs in the same institution. This was objected to in the course of debate on this subject in the Synod of Alabama, and we think properly. We hope the student will have taken already the Bible course at Davidson, Clarksville, or Hampden-Sidney, and will not need any more of this specific teaching. And this would be our objection to the shape this matter is taking at Union Seminary, where it proposed to annex to the Fifth Professorship—now, we are glad to say, so nearly an accomplished fact—the department of Biblical Theology. We see in this proposed alliance of biblical with pastoral theology, just another step towards the continued manufacture of Dryasdusts. Biblical theology and homiletic study of the English Bible are as distinct as are a lecture on anatomy and the practical manipulation of splints and bandages. Let the reader bear in mind that we are commending such study of the Bible as is an adjunct to the art of preaching, and not a department of the science of theology. We believe that a preacher should know his English Bible as a mason knows his trowel, or as a fencer knows his sword. He should have a practical familiarity with the very copy before him when he preaches, such as shall enable him to handle it, hold it up, lay it down, turn easily from page to page, from verse to verse—make that very Bible which is before the people's eyes an instrument of power in his hands; and all the lectures which ever were heard in a theological seminary on "the author-

ship, period and contents of each book in the Bible, the central thought in each book, its relation to the other books in the development of doctrine,"¹ while valuable in themselves, would be of little worth in imparting this special power.

And again, it is not supposed that a three-years' training in a seminary, even on the plan which we commend, would give a young preacher that ease in the pulpit manipulation of the Scriptures which ten or twenty or thirty years of preaching hardly suffice to impart. But we do think that he could be given such hints even in a brief seminary course, and have such principles of the art of preaching instilled into him as should guard him against becoming a theological or exegetical lecturer, and start him on the road towards being a real preacher of the word.

Now let us indicate what sort of hints we would give and what sort of principles we would lay down. And, in the first place, the occupant of the chair of pastoral theology and English Bible study should not disdain to give a hint which can be found in most Sunday-school or Young Men's Christian Association manuals, but which, so far as we know, has not yet appeared in any work on homiletics; and that is, let the very first book purchased as the nucleus of the young preacher's library, be a serviceable edition of the English Bible. This should be bound so as to stand wear and tear, should have good paper, clear print, and *reasonably wide margins*. We emphasize this last, inasmuch as we believe in making that very Bible a store-house of your theological and exegetical studies, your illustrative reading, your pulpit preparation, and even your own spiritual history; and the larger part of these treasures must be tucked away on those "reasonably wide margins." We know that objections have been raised to "marking up" your Bible, and to the practice of adorning its margin with "neat nuggets of exegesis"; we leave these objections to those who make them, except to say for ourselves, that having made several manuscript volumes of Scripture annotations, and worked the Bible over and over again with the help of commentators, about all that remains in our dull brain is that which we have put down on the margins of our working Bible. There it is before

¹ See action of the Synod of Virginia, 1889.

our eyes, and whenever we open that Bible for daily use, we cannot help seeing it, and after awhile cannot help remembering it.

Having, then, a good Bible, with clear paper and ample margin, we would have our theological student taught to make a daily business of referencing his Bible for himself. Let the margin of his Bible bear daily witness to the habit of "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." This habit will soon teach the student how true is that declaration of the Confession, that "the infallible rule of the interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself. . . . And the true and full sense of any Scripture may be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly." And this business of hunting up parallel scriptures will soon become the most delightful in the world. If the reader would see what a passion this searching of the Scriptures can become, let him look at the pretty picture of that ardent Bible student, as well as sweet singer of Israel, Frances Ridley Havergal, given on page 259 of her *Memoir*. Sitting off at her desk on a bitter winter morning, marking references on the margin of the Bible before her, she is urged by her sister to come to the fire and warm, and makes this half-playful, half-serious reply: "But then, Marie, I can't rule my lines neatly; just see what a find I've got! If one only searches, there are such extraordinary things in the Bible!"

The reader will see that, by pursuing this plan of Bible study any length of time, the student will soon have the key-words and phrases of the Scriptures, such as *grace, salvation, kingdom of God*, etc., interpreted by the word of God itself, and every instance of their occurrence in the Bible noted and compared, and the results of this study put away on the margin of his own Bible. The same will be true of every leading fact of redemption as portrayed in the Scriptures. For example, the passages where the incarnation, atonement and resurrection of the Lord Jesus are described, will be lit up by the marginal references in the student's own hand, to the parallel type and symbol and prophecy of the Old Testament, and sermonie and doctrinal discussions of the New. Nor is it only the more important words or doctrinal topics of the Bible which will furnish basis for references. The reader, if he has never tried this for himself, will be surprised and

delighted to see how a comparatively trivial scriptural expression, an adjective, or even a preposition or conjunction, will furnish the line and plummet for deep soundings in the ocean of divine truth. We wish we had space for extended illustration of this. We give just one example. Let the reader take his Bible and concordance and see how two such insignificant words as "*one thing*" bring before him a striking Bible study. "One thing is needful," (Luke x. 42); "One thing I know," (John ix. 25); "One thing I desire and seek," (Psa. xxvii. 4); "One thing I do," (Phil. iii. 13);—could you ask a better sermon on single-hearted religion than this?

We would also have the student put in the margin of his working Bible brief analyses of more prominent scriptures. Let him transfer to the margin of his Bible his own or others' expository outlines of familiar scriptures. Take the following, for example, on Isaiah xlii. 1-4, which we condense from Spurgeon's *Sermon Notes*. "Messiah's character: (1,) Servant; (2,) Elect; (3,) Well-pleasing to God; (4,) Endowed with the Spirit, conf. John iii. 34; (5,) Gentle, conf. Matt. xi. 29; (6,) Tender, conf. Isa. xl. 11; (7,) Resolute." We have this set down on the margin of a small Bagster Bible, with the numbers ⁽¹⁾, ⁽²⁾, ⁽³⁾, etc., put in the text over the word to which they apply. All the *loci classici* of Scripture should be thus analyzed, such as Isaiah liii. and lv.; Psalms xxii. and xxiv.; the Conversion of Zacchæus, the Healing of Bartimeus, the Ten Virgins, etc. And the same sort of analysis should be made of individual verses. Take for example, a little analysis of 1 John v. 4; you can easily put opposite this verse on the margin of an Oxford or Bagster Bible the following: "(1,) *The believer born of God*; (2,) *Proves his divine parentage by overcoming the world*; (3,) *Overcomes the world by faith*."

And along the same line we would have the student taught to read back into his Bible that which his theological text-books have gotten out of it. The margin of his Bible may be made a compendium of many a theological lecture and critical commentary. And even where the results of theological and exegetical study cannot be put in such brief compass, the ever ready margin can bear references to a whole library of theological lore. (Every student of Columbia Seminary will remember that Bible of Dr. Smyth's on the library table, with the results of a quarter century

of study on its margins, constituting a biblical index to a library of over twenty thousand volumes.)

The reader may now be tempted to exclaim, "How can you put all this on the margin of one Bible?" To this we answer, try it, and you will be surprised to see how elastic even a small Bible may become. And suppose you do fill out the margins of one Bible, buy another and use it up. We ourselves have pretty well used up one small Bagster, and are beginning to work up another and much wider margined edition, and we are only a beginner in the art of Bible study. And better Bible students have done far more. Take the following from Rev. G. F. Pentecost:

"The Bible I most use is a wide margined Bagster, the gift of a friend. When it was first given to me it was beautiful and clean; now, its edges are worn, its margins covered with notes, its pages lined, its lines underscored. I have put the results of five blessed years of study into that Bible with pen and ink—here a little, there a little, a thousand precious things are stored up in that book; with it in my hand I am never at a loss for a sermon or a word of instruction and help. The best thoughts of many Bible students are tucked away on half blank pages; the outlines of scores of sermons, the indicated analysis of many books, the testimony and comments of saints upon many passages." (*In the Volume of the Book*, p. 147.)

And now let us suppose a student has been made to spend a half-hour of each day in his seminary life in Bible study, as above roughly outlined, with frequent blackboard exercises, Bible in hand, on "Bible readings," "expository outlines of familiar passages," "scriptural outlines on prominent texts," etc., does the reader need to be told the effect on his future ministry? If, along with this, he is given some training as a speaker, and has any grace of God and love to men in his heart, can you suppose him "evolved" into a Dryasdust when he emerges from seminary walls? or, can you suppose him, after twenty years of preaching and studying the Bible thus, making the astounding statement, which a brother who had been several years the occupant of one pulpit once made to us, that he "had used up nearly every good text in the Bible"? This last statement impressed us very much as if some one had told us that good Mrs. Partington had not only turned back the waves with her celebrated mop, but she had actually used up the Atlantic ocean in scouring her front piazza!

But the professor of pastoral theology and English Bible study should not only give such hints on Bible study as the above, but

he should also lay down certain principles of the art of preaching, upon which those hints are based. And we find these principles ready made to our hand, in such scriptures as these: "Preach *the word*;" "This day is *this scripture* fulfilled in your ears;" "He opened to us *the scriptures*;" "They read in *the book of the law* distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused the people to understand the reading." Do not these scriptures embody the uncompromising principle that preaching must largely consist of the very words of the Bible, with simple comment thereon, or else, according to Bible standards, be no preaching worthy of the name? and as a corollary to the above, that the highest, if not the only form of preaching, is that popularly known as the expository style? The reader will perceive that the above methods of Bible study go directly to this end, so that when a preacher thus taught to study the Scriptures begins to preach, he goes to his Bible for the sermon as well as the text. His outline is already on the margin of his Bible, taken from the text and kindred scriptures, or drawn directly from an analysis of the context. His argument is suggested to him in the way inspired writers have handled the same theme. His illustrations are from inspired history; "his speech bewrayeth him," for the very wording of his discourse is in the diction of the sacred book. His "telling points" are apt quotations of Scripture; his "sublimest perorations" are nothing more than some fitting extract from the same inspired source. This is what all that referencing and analyzing above described means. It is to have a young preacher so taken up with studying the Bible itself, that he will not know how to preach anything else. It is to have, so far as practicable, all his theology, philosophy, exegesis and church history, put away on the margin of that Bible of his, so that they cannot but seem secondary to the inspired text, and useful only so far as they serve to elucidate the sacred page. We do not know how far the readers of the *QUARTERLY* will agree with us in our advocacy of this rigid principle, but we are glad to find confirmation of our view in that stirring little book of Dr. Pier-son's, *Evangelistic Work in Principle and Practice*, p. 82:

"If the sermon is the unfolding of a scripture *germ*, it will naturally take largely even a scripture *form*. As to the sprouting grain, so to the seed of his own truth God giveth its own body; hence Paul says, 'Which things also we speak, not

in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.' He conceived of the gospel as having a dialect of its own. Effective preaching gets not only its idea, but its form of speech, from above."

And, we have as we believe, greater attestation of our view than that of Dr. Pierson. Let the reader take his Bible and turn successively to Acts ii. and Acts xiii., where he will find recorded two model sermons, one by the Apostle Peter and one by the Apostle Paul. He will note that these two sermons are of the "epoch making" kind. The first is on the day of Pentecost; the second is Paul's first recorded discourse as he begins his first missionary journey. Each may be taken as a fair sample of what Peter and Paul would preach during all their subsequent ministry. Now give to each a brief examination. You see that Peter's sermon, Acts ii. 14-36, twenty-three verses in all, consists of twelve verses of Scripture quotations and five verses in direct exposition of these quotations, leaving six verses of original matter. The same noticeable feature is seen in Paul's sermon, Acts xiii. 16-41, twenty-six verses. You notice an introduction of seven verses which is strictly scriptural, being an epitome of Bible history from Abraham to David. You note six verses of quotation and exposition (vs. 32-37), and the conclusion, two verses of quotation from the prophet Habakkuk (vs. 40, 41); a scriptural beginning, middle and end, fifteen verses scripture, eleven verses original with Paul. And these eleven original verses might be still further reduced when it is seen that they largely consist of references to matters of New Testament history. Here, then, are two sermons preached at the outset of two eras in apostolic history, recorded in the inspired word for our learning, and presenting the same remarkable feature of sermonic method. Each is the "unfolding of a scripture germ largely in scriptural form;" each of them embodies that principle of the art of preaching on which our ideas of homiletic Bible study are based. And we are presumptuous enough to affirm that were the preachers of these two sermons to return to earth on a special mission, and that to occupy homiletic professorships in the theological seminaries of the Southern Presbyterian Church, they would there inculcate some such homiletic principles and methods of Bible study as are herein set forth. There would be inscribed over their class-room

doors these words, which one of them uttered while still in the flesh, "*Preach the Word.*" The Bible in the vernacular would be the text-book, and such methods of referencing and analyzing it, preparing expository outlines and Bible readings, would be taught, as would give each student a preaching acquaintance with its every page.

We do not think that these apostolic colleagues would make light of the work done in the other professorial chairs. We certainly do not think they would decry the study of those languages in which the Holy Ghost inspired holy men to put on record the oracles of God. Nor do we imagine that they would belittle the presentation of divine truth in systematic form, and the scholarly defence of it from its ancient and modern foes. Still less can we suppose them speaking against the study of God's providence as seen in the history of his church. But while they would belittle none of these things, we are persuaded that they would magnify a practical study of the English Bible preparatory to preaching it, which, in our judgment, has been too much and too long neglected.

Alas for Dr. Dryasdust! the day of apostolic occupancy of homiletic professorships had not yet dawned when he set foot in theological halls. In his day and generation a theological student might, without let or hindrance, indulge the notion that the word of God is the scaffolding, and theology, exegesis and church history are the house. No wonder that his career as a fisher of men has been so far a dismal failure. We say, *so far*, for we are not without hope that in the brighter day now dawning, even Dr. Dryasdust may be made over again. If we could just whisper in his ear this suggestion: Dear brother, the common people do not hear gladly theological profundities and exegetical niceties; but they hunger and thirst to hear you "read in that English Bible distinctly, and give the sense, and cause the people to understand the reading,"—if he would only hear this whispered warning, all might still be well. We would not then have to read this epitaph, which, we fear, a sorrowing but truth-telling church may one day inscribe above his mortal remains: "HERE LIES ECCLESIASTICUS DRYASDUST, A LEARNED THEOLOGIAN, AN ABLE AND WELL-MEANING MAN, BUT OH! SUCH A DRY PREACHER!!"

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V. THE UNION FOR WHICH JESUS PRAYS.

THE interpretation which the Romish Church puts upon John xvii. 20-23 is that all the children of men are to be gathered into one grand visible church organization, with one form of government and one order of worship, under one so-called infallible head. And to accomplish this end, she goes forth with thumb-screw and fagot to make disciples of those whom she regards as recalcitrant; or when these violent means cannot be employed, she resorts to the pleasing ways of flattery and intrigue for the accomplishment of her set purpose.

But so far as history gives us light on this subject, we may justly conclude that the Author of this prayer is not on her side, else this consummate union would have been established long ago. Not only has Rome hitherto failed to bring about this state of affairs within the ranks of the visible church, but now that her temporal power is broken, never again to be welded, her chances for doing so become less and less probable as the years pass by and the masses of the people become more and more enlightened. Evidently, therefore, there is a mistake along the line of the Roman Catholic Church's interpretation of this passage. A failure on her part to accomplish her self-imposed task is inevitable. Upon the walls of her temples everywhere "the fingers of a hand," tracing in letters of blood her defeat, in this particular at least, are clearly to be seen. This prayer will not be answered in her way.

This, too—not so much, however, from the external forms of worship as from a doctrinal standpoint—is the view maintained by Alexander Campbell and his disciples. They tell us that this prayer can be answered only by the gathering of all the followers of Jesus into one visible body. This was the avowed purpose of Mr. Campbell, and is the rallying cry of those in his church to-day. They preach and pray against "creeds and confessions as bonds of union and communion," because these, in their judgment, delay

and hinder, and even constitute an insuperable barrier, to the fulfilment of this prayer. They tell us that this outward, visible union must be accomplished; that anything short of this is a very grievous sin; and since all can never be united on "mere opinion," that is, on what *others* believe, therefore all others must unite with them on *their opinion* as to what the word of God teaches. And as an evidence of their willingness to accommodate other parties who may desire to come into this compact, they assume as their corporate title the name common to all the followers of the once meek and lowly Nazarene, "Christian." But here, again, guided by the facts as they have come to light in the history of the church since the "Reformation" of the nineteenth century began, we have no foundation upon which to base the conclusion that all professing Christians will ever be brought into the Campbellite fold. To make the statement yet more comprehensive, I would say that we find nothing in either the word of God or in the march of events, to warrant even the shadow of the belief that the time will ever come when all the followers of Jesus in this world will be united in one organic body. But, without controversy, if this were the true interpretation of our Saviour's prayer, this condition of affairs in his church would most certainly be brought about, for his prayers are always heard and do prevail. Such an outward compact is not even referred to in this passage of Scripture, and those who interpret it in that way make a grievous blunder.

Another view of this subject, and it is the one usually maintained by those who do not claim a monopoly for their own particular branch of the church, is, that Jesus here prays, not for an outward, but an *inward, spiritual union*; that all his children, by whatever name they are known among men, may be united upon *the fundamental doctrines* of his word, and thus possess and enjoy a *spiritual oneness*. This interpretation of this prayer has been held up by some of our ablest church papers in answer to the individuals who have pointed us to this passage as the ground of their demands for organic union between the two branches of the great Presbyterian family in the United States. But how, I ask, can this be the object of our Lord's prayer, since there *now is*, and *always has been*, this *spiritual union*, not only between the

several divisions of the Presbyterian Church, but likewise between them and all other true Christians? So far as the Lord's people have been gathered out from the world, in whatever age or clime they have lived, or do now live; by whatever name they have been known, or whether they have been in a visible church organization at all, *they are an unit*. The fact is here plainly declared, that true believers are in Christ, and Christ is in them. Now, as the Son is in the Father, and is one with him, so each individual believer is in the Son, and is one with him; they are, therefore, one with each other. The Holy Spirit does not tell us *what* this union, in either of its relations, is, nor yet *how* it can subsist. By reason of our own weakness, perhaps any such attempt would have been fruitless. The thought is too high for the human intellect to grasp it. We stand with uncovered heads in the presence of the mysterious, yet blessed, fact here plainly declared. As is the union between the Father and the Son, such is the relation sustained by believers to the elder brother and to each other. All the saints, therefore, whether in heaven or in earth, are united with each other in one body. Hence Paul says, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Evidently, then, this spiritual oneness, which is already firmly and indissolubly established, cannot be the true interpretation of our Lord's thought in this part of his prayer. He could not pray for that which has been truly present in every period of the church's existence.

Another interpretation of this passage is, that our Lord here prays that his people, comprehended in the various denominations of his church on earth, may live in peace and harmony with each other.

This, at first glance, appears quite plausible; but let us examine this interpretation in the light of the facts given us in the passage itself, and see whether it will bear the test. Evidently certain characteristic results will follow the union for which Jesus prays.

(a,) The world will believe in the divine mission of the Messiah; that the Father has sent the Son. "That the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (Vs. 21.)

(b,) The world will not only *believe*, but *know*, that the Father has sent the Son. "That the world may know that thou hast sent me." (Vs. 23.)

(c,) The world will know that the Father loves those for whom Jesus prays, just as he loves the Son. "That the world may know that thou . . . hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." (Vs. 23.)

These results do not necessarily flow from a state of peace between the different branches of Christ's family here on earth.

While an unholy contention among them is sinful, and often is to the enemies of the cross an occasion of stumbling, yet the plain truth is, the world is not specially attracted to the Saviour and to the church by reason of the harmony within her pale when it actually does prevail. Many a community has, for long years, enjoyed undisturbed freedom from strife between the particular churches within its bounds, and yet very many individuals within the sound of the Sabbath bells have walked blindly on in their own chosen course, neither thinking of nor caring for the beauties of peace and holiness as they have shone forth from the sanctuary.

What is true of individual communities may safely be applied to more extended circles, until the whole world is encompassed.

Without entering fully into the discussion of this point, it is evidently clear that this view of the passage cannot meet the conditions embraced in it. The Master would have all his servants to "be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves;" but this is not that for which he here makes request of the Father.

These four interpretations of this passage are the only ones with which the writer is familiar. To his mind they are very unsatisfactory. He believes this petition in the prayer of our High-priest reaches far beyond either one of these views.

In entering upon the further examination of this subject, let it be distinctly noted that the question here involved is not as to *the kind* of union to be attained between Jesus and believers, or between believers themselves. Whatever it may be, that relationship is already determined. It is the same as that which subsists

between the Father and the Son. In this all are agreed. The prayer of the Son here, then, is that *all those who have been given him by the Father in the covenant of redemption may be gathered into his fold, and thus be made one with him and one in him.* That these are they of whom he is speaking, and this is the end for which he is praying, it seems to me, there can be no doubt; for no less than seven times in this intercessory prayer does he refer to them as those given him by the Father. That the thought may stand out in a clearer light, let us draw upon the Scriptures for an illustration here. The church is held up to our view under the figure of the human body, with Christ, her King, as the Head thereof. The Head is now complete. His resurrection was the seal to his perfect Headship. That point is settled. This body of which Christ is the Head is made up of all those chosen in the council of the Trinity before the foundation of the world, "according to the election of grace." That body is not yet complete, but is being perfected as the souls who have been purchased by the blood of the Lamb are, one by one, brought in.

A little while ago Jesus said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." And here he says, "Neither pray I for these alone," those already gathered into the fold, "but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, *that they all may be one; . . . that they also may be one in us.*" "I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one."

This, then, is the true scope of the prayer. It is not lost in the dead past, but comes with mighty power and sweetness down through the ages. It is that those parts of Christ's body, scattered here and there throughout the generations that come and go between the hour of his passion and the final consummation of his redemptive glory, may be gathered, each to its place, that this body may be perfected in symmetry and beauty.

This view of the passage before us, as I conceive, is not only in perfect harmony with all the scriptures bearing upon this subject, but is the only one that fulfils the conditions laid down by

the Saviour himself as the *necessary fruits* of this union. Look at the facts. Since "the world" is without the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, by which alone they can see and know spiritual things (1 Cor. ii. 14), what more convincing evidence can they have of the fact, (1), That the Father has sent the Son, than that given them in the regeneration of these chosen ones, especially when they are the notoriously wicked; and (2), Of his love for them, in that they are adopted into his own family and are treated as his own sons? Wherever the gospel goes the world has this evidence of the divine mission of the Son and of the Father's love. Almost every community has its own demonstration of the divine power and love, in the effectual calling of some Manasseh, or Saul of Tarsus, or Colonel Gardiner, or John Newton, or John Bunyan, or Jerry McAuley. They are found in every decade and in every land; and thus from generation to generation the world is receiving multiplied evidences of the divine mission of Jesus, and of the Father's love for sinners; and when the redemptive work is completed, these facts, standing forth then in all their fulness and clearness, will be seen and known throughout the intelligent universe to the praise and glory of the eternal King: "And every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

With this light of truth shining upon us, we can hear with more distinctness than before the angel notes of joy over the sinner born again. That holy company before the throne strike their harps anew, not only because they love the soul now saved, but especially because one more ray of glory shines forth from the diadem of the dear Redeemer.

The truth as set forth in this discussion is consistent with the entire Scriptures, and in full accord with that form of doctrine which we, as Calvinists, assuredly believe is taught in this word. It holds up to our wondering view something of the sweetness and grandeur of God's electing love. Even the darkening shadows that gathered about the King in that night of his awful sorrow did not shut out from his heart those given to him in the covenant of redemption, nor lead him to forget or to neglect their interests at his Father's throne. Well may we, in wonder and praise, exclaim,

“Oh! for a shout of joy,
Worthy the theme we sing;
To this divine employ
Our hearts and voices bring;
Sound, sound, through all the earth abroad,
The love, the eternal love, of God.”

And then, too, what encouragement it brings us in our labors for the Master as we go forth to gather in the sheaves from the great harvest-field about us, to hear our Great Highpriest offering up this prayer right along the line of our work towards this blessed consummation! The blood he presents before the mercy-seat is *his own*. How can *we* fail?

In the light of these truths, what a grand perspective, like an enchanting vision, rises up before the Christian worker of to-day! How it lifts the clouds from his horizon and lets in the cheering rays of the approaching noon-day! And with God's inspired poet he begins to sing, “Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth. . . . At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits.”

A. W. MILSTER.