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I. AUTHORITY IN REVELATION AND MORALS.

FIVE FALLACIES AND ONE FIASCO CONVERGENT.

CURRENT literature, popular addresses and constantly recurring conversations in social intercourse, discover six convergent influences actively at work in society. Four are newer; two older. The aim of each is to shift the basis of authority in moral and religious life. The six forces differ widely in nature and in the character of those who direct the propagation and transmission of them through society. But, without collusion and moving along different, and sometimes antagonistic, lines, they tend to the same result, the annihilation of finality and authority in ethics and revelation. The convergence implies the superintendence of the same evil personality, shrewdly intruding himself into these different spheres of life and giving a common direction to their movements.

1. Blatant last century infidelity holds that miracles cannot be proven by testimony, and that, therefore, the claims of Christianity cannot be established because resting on them. It denies the relevancy or pertinency of what are called the evidences of Christianity, and in regard to Scripture would say: granted that a revelation has been made, it cannot be authenticated. It scoffs at religion as a superstition, and sneers at authoritative morals as the silly scruples of childhood and inexperience—greenness. Its ethics are utilitarian only. The best that it can say is, moral principles must be obeyed, because it is for the good of society. The evil of such a system was shown long ago in the famous passage about balances when held in the hands of self.—*David Hume, his confrères and followers.*

tive career for each. The prophecies of the Old Testament, which refer to the same subject are much more brief than this of the synoptics. This analysis can be easily shown to be in accord with the general tenor of the Scriptures. The interpretation seems both natural and conservative, and by being wrought out by further study would have a tendency to dissipate many of the unwarrantable conclusions drawn by many writers upon the apocalypses of the New Testament.

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THE UNIFYING DOCTRINE IN THEOLOGY.

On this subject in the *QUARTERLY* (Vol. iv. No. 2), Dr. Primrose claims for fellowship what Thornwell claimed for justification, as the unifying doctrine in theology. It might amount to but little, practically, that a learned divine should fail to establish this claim for any particular doctrine or element in the plan of salvation: but if, in the effort, he should make havoc of other doctrines, it becomes a serious matter. If we mistake not, this is the serious matter with this effort in the *QUARTERLY*. Certainly, the Scripture doctrine of fellowship is very seriously crippled if we exclude the idea of communion in the sense of "converse with God"—rational intercourse of spirit with spirit. Fellowship with God in this last sense, in the status of a son, is the consummation of human felicity. This is that "fruition of God" referred to in the Confession of Faith as having been provided for "by way of covenant." This idea of fellowship, therefore, which Dr. Primrose excludes altogether, would come much nearer unifying the doctrines of theology than that which he claims to be the only idea included in the word fellowship.

It is very true that the dominant idea of the word fellowship is partnership, or participation in something common to the parties participating; but the nature of the fellowship, communion or partnership depends upon the parties participating, and the objects or things participated in. Moreover, the word carries the idea of sympathy between the parties, and also the idea of association. The parties being Christ and his people, the association amounts to union—fellowship *with* Christ in the Spirit; or, fellowship *with* Christ by means of the fellowship *of* the Spirit. This last seems to be Dr. Primrose's exclusive sense of the word fellowship. His new doctrine of fellowship, therefore, simply amounts to the old doctrine of union with Christ, or union to Christ. This old doctrine of union with Christ, by the indwell-

ing of the Spirit and faith, does determine and give shape to much in theology. Hence the plausibility of Dr. Primrose's new idea. This plausibility is reached by narrowing down the word fellowship so as to include only what is generally meant by union with Christ, excluding the idea of communion in the sense of mutual, sympathetic interchange of thought and feeling between us and God. The Scriptures, indeed, do not distinguish the words fellowship and communion as common usage has, but if the Scriptures recognize the idea that God admits his people to converse with him, then the idea of this converse is properly expressed by the word communion, or fellowship. For the converse of God with his people, or of his people with God, involves the idea of partnership, or participation in something common to each, and this something common to each is the thought and feeling expressed and reciprocated, or mutually and sympathetically interchanged. So that when it is said that "our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ," who shall dare to say that the word fellowship in this connection excludes the idea of converse with God—partnership with God in thought and feeling? In what other sense have we fellowship with the Father? To what purpose is the communion of saints, except to exalt God's name together? And how exalt his name together except in the expression by us, and reciprocation by him, of the sentiment of praise? To what purpose shall we sit together in heavenly places with Christ, if we are to sit as Egyptian mummies, with no converse with him? We are to be holy as God is holy. The standard of right thought and feeling in us is the thought and feeling of God towards the same object. And the interchange of these thoughts and feelings between us and God in heaven is our highest ideal of human felicity; and the ordinances of worship are the divinely appointed means of carrying on this converse with God in this world. But we must pass on to touch another point.

To show how the doctrine of fellowship in his sense of the word marshals all the other doctrines of theology into line, Dr. Primrose instances the divinity of Christ. But, in order to make his theory work, he finds it necessary to make such destructive statements as, "Had it been possible for man to deserve God's favor, then God would not have resorted to the scheme of salvation by fellowship." This statement loses sight of the fact that the scheme of justification by fellowship had already been resorted to in the covenant with Adam in the garden of Eden and destroys Paul's parallel between the first and the second Adam. Further he says, "even though it were possible for a man to

ground eternal life for himself in a perfect righteousness, it were still inconceivable that others could be admitted to partnership therein with himself." If this statement were only true it would prove the necessity of the divinity of Christ. But if it be true, it makes shipwreck of the covenant with Adam in the garden of Eden. For that covenant puts Adam's posterity into partnership with himself in the moral status that should be won by him under that covenant. So that we all were and are admitted to partnership with a man in death, and if it is inconceivable that we should have been admitted to partnership with him in eternal life, had he grounded eternal life for himself, then it is inconceivable that the covenant, in its nature (in consequence of its head being a man), admitted of anything but death. The necessity of the divinity of Christ, as the second head of the covenant, is not to ground the possibility of partnership in his righteousness, but to ground the possibility of working out the righteousness demanded for the justification of a human *sinner*.

Still further, Dr. Primrose applies his new-found key to the unlocking of the difficulty of the sufferings and sorrows even unto the temporal death of God's justified believers in this world. The key says "that Christ suffered as a partner." Verily, this is poor consolation. If Christ only shared with us in our sufferings, without taking them away, that is, without taking away our obligation to bear them, then the help afforded is summed up in sympathy. But even supposing that Christ's *suffering* and *death* were not vicarious, but only the *merit* of them, this leaves the old difficulty of our suffering in this world unexplained. For the merit is certainly applicable as soon as our partnership with Christ takes place by the indwelling of the Spirit and faith, but the fact that it is not applied to the full until the death of the body, is certainly not explained by saying that Christ was only a partner with us in these sufferings. If he was only a partner in our sufferings in this world, how do we know he is to be anything more in the world to come? For this difficulty, the old key that we had before was much better. The old key says that the atonement is of such a nature as to admit of the exercise of sovereignty in the application of its benefits. So that, if God sees fit, he may delay our full deliverance from sin and suffering to the death of the body. This leaves room for prayer for deliverance, subject to God's wisdom and goodness. So also the old explanation of the use of our good works is consistent with the analogy of faith. But to say that good works are binding upon us because Jesus did not take away our obligation to fulfil all

righteousness, but only shared it with us, is poor indeed—ghastly poor. If Christ only shared our obedience, then was his obedience only in fulfilment of a rule of duty for himself, and not as a condition of life for us? The old explanation here is simple and satisfactory, and opens no flood-gate to error. The other new positions are subject to similar criticism, especially in regard to the indwelling of the Spirit and regeneration, and the distinction between the Spirit *with* us and the Spirit *in* us, but this may suffice to put us on our guard.

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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 1891.

It might have been wiser on the part of the management of the QUARTERLY to have selected some one who was not a member of the Assembly to write its history, as it is difficult for those who take part in affairs to write impartially concerning them. This difficulty is increased when the writer is unfortunate enough to have been generally found with the minority on most questions where there was serious division of opinion. But if such a person gives his testimony to the high character and earnestness of purpose of the members, and to the general excellence of the work done, his testimony will have more weight, perhaps, than that either of a mere spectator or of a member of the majority.

Many eyes were turned anxiously to this Assembly. It was composed largely of men comparatively unknown. The old leaders were nearly all absent. There was not a member present who had ever sat in the moderator's chair, the retiring moderator, of course, excepted. Of those that were known to the church at large, there were a considerable number—like Bryan, Molloy, McElroy, Boyd, Rose and Chester—who could “neither attempt to palliate nor deny” the “atrocious crime” of being young men—at least as the church counts young men. Then, too, there were measures before the Assembly that some feared as “revolutionary” and others regarded with grave doubt. Moreover, the Assembly was to meet in a “live” town—one of the most marvelous outgrowths of the new South, and perhaps some feared that the ozone of all this new, pushing aggressive life might enter into the Assembly, and cause it to run away with our dignified old church.

Well, none of these fears were realized. The ozone was there, the