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I. CALVINISM AND CONFSSIONAL REVISION.¹

OUR brethren in America cannot sufficiently realize to what an extent they have excited the interest of the Dutch Calvinists by their efforts to reach a revision of their ecclesiastical symbols. There are three causes to which this interest is due. First of all, the remembrance of the ever-memorable fact that the first Reformed Christians to set foot on American soil embarked for the New World from the Netherlands. On this account, Dutch Calvinists still feel a most intimate bond of sympathy with the Reformed in America, and thank God for each token of brotherly affection by which the latter country has so repeatedly strengthened this deep-rooted attachment. In the second place, the Dutch Calvinists have hailed with great enthusiasm the development of American church-life, as called forth by the principle of a *Free Church*, and emulate their brethren in America in their strenuous efforts to make this only true principle victorious in the Old World as well. To which must be thirdly added, that the Dutch Calvinists fully share the conviction of their American brethren, that the symbols of the sixteenth century were the product of a battle of spirits somewhat different from that in which the church is engaged at present, and cannot, consequently, inspire us with the same enthusiasm with which they stirred the race of our fathers. For such reasons, we feel ourselves closely allied with

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II. THE UNIVERSAL BOOK.

THE study of literature is beginning to take a much higher place in education, and deservedly so. Much of the so-called study of literature is limited to mere hand-books, setting forth the names and personal traits of authors, and the names and character of their several productions, with brief selections by way of sample and illustration. Such studies seem intended to improve the taste and style of the student, and the result expected is aptly expressed in the one word, culture. Such a study of literature is wholly inadequate, and even misleading. The literature itself is the proper object of study.

Books contain the best thinking of the men who wrote them, expressed in their best style, elaborated out of the real experiences of life, and arranged to accomplish noble ends. The man who masters the works of one great author, thereby approximates the greatness of his intellect, assimilates into himself his moral force, imbibes the very grandeur of his conceptions, and appropriates his knowledge in such a way that when he reproduces it in his own thinking, it comes with all the freshness and vigor of absolute originality. Such a student is thus so inspired with the aims and impulses of his author that he can start from his vantage ground and achieve yet greater things. The culture, which is in itself so desirable, is the natural and incidental product of such study, and not itself the prime object of pursuit; just as happiness is the result of the pursuit of virtue, and is not itself the chief good. The student of literature, therefore, has little use for books about literature, except as he needs a grammar or a glossary. Some men study literature, again, on the same principle as that on which they string beads. Memory is the string, and fine figures, racy anecdotes, striking allusions, and fine passages of rhetoric are strung thereon for ready use. To such a student of literature, a cyclopædia of quotations, or a concordance, is the perfection of tools.

If one could master the entire literature of a people, he would present in himself a marvel versatility of genius, profundity of thought, universality of knowledge, the climax of wisdom, and the perfection of beauty. At least, he would realize in himself all these things, in so far as they are found in the literature he masters; and just so far we might call him a universal man.

Now there is a literature the absolute mastery of which will make this universal man. Greek and Roman literatures fall far short of such perfection, though they ought to be studied, and will be studied, till the end of time—studied as the fathers of English literature studied them.

The literature of the English-speaking people falls short of a universal literature, except so far as it draws its inspiration from the universal fountain.

There is a literature, unique and complete, the product of a remarkable people, extending over a period of sixteen hundred years, the expression of a long-continued civilization—a varying and widely-varied civilization. Allow me to repudiate, once for all, the terms barbaric and semi-barbaric, as applied to a people whose law-giver was divine and whose civil king and supreme judge was the Eternal Son of God.

The literature of that people, comprised in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is from every point of view the most remarkable of all the literatures. Modern critics call it *a* literature to disparage it; we call it *the* literature—the Bible—to exalt it and to locate it among literatures. It is unlike all other literatures in that it is both human and divine. We approach it from the human side and find it as distinctly human as if it were all human; we approach it from the divine side and find it as distinctly divine as if it were all divine—the analogue of the real Word, the God-Man. Its facts are all attested, its conclusions are all incontrovertible, its principles are all impregnable. All the mere human productions of that people have been eliminated from the Compend, and have in the main perished.

You find therein all the valued elements and forms of literature: history and biography, poetry and proverb, philosophy and fiction, civil codes and social customs, morals and religion, and,

withal, a prophetic vision which sweeps the whole arc of time from the creation to the final glory, and unfolds the mysteries of two eternities.

Such a literature, with such an origin, and such authorship, may well be set forth as a universal literature; and, bound in one volume, it may be called the Universal Book. It is a mistake to limit its value to matters spiritual, as is the fashion in some quarters, and that for the purpose of disparaging the remainder, and with the result of destroying, or, at least, damaging the whole. Without quoting its own claims, it is fair to presume that the whole is profitable, and that none of its parts are superfluous.

It is safe and proper, just here, to premise a few things.

(a). This literature grew in volume as the centuries passed, just as other literatures, but not on the same principle. Each addition to these last is, in part, the product of the time and conditions which gave it birth, and, in part, the product of personal genius; while the additions to the Bible are but the working out of a plan and purpose by one author, who determined the whole. This opens up the question of the object and scope of a *written* revelation—a question too wide for this hour. Suffice it to affirm, that it is not an evolutionary product of an evolving civilization, but rather a reducing to permanent form of the doctrines of the ages, and a necessary consecutive refutation of newly-rising heresies. The growth of the volume of inspiration kept pace with advancing perversions, so as to save the truth against the time of universal apostasy.

(b). Each separate book of the Bible reflects the local color and conditions of its author and times, and is exactly adapted to the immediate end for which it was written. This does not, as some imagine, mar its general utility, but rather enhances the certitude of its lessons.

(c). This book, like all other books, is to be interpreted according to the laws of language, which are as imperious as the law of gravitation, and an honest and competent exegesis carries conviction against all comers.

Now, if the points made thus far be accepted, it will hardly be necessary to *prove* the Bible to be the universal book; it would

seem sufficient to *illustrate* the same. We need not forget, however, that apt illustrations carry with them all the force of a syllogism, and are far more easily apprehended.

I. The Bible is preëminently a book of facts—attested facts. Now science has for its object the discovery and proper formulation of facts, and, to make proper inferences from the same, by processes both inductive and deductive.

True science must include all possible necessary data gathered from observation, experience and competent testimony. Now the Bible does not teach science, but every fact in the Bible or elsewhere has, or may have, a positive scientific value—so great that one single fossil shell found in the wrong place would necessitate the destruction and reconstruction of the entire classifications of one noble science, and perhaps the modification of others collateral. The facts of the Bible, then, are the primary, fundamental facts of science, attested and recorded by the Holy Ghost through Moses and Daniel and Paul, and are of superior authentication to those recorded by Humboldt, Agassiz and Spencer. The science which ignores these primary Bible data is partial, misleading, and presumptively false. For example, the science of philology deals with the origin and growth of language. The philologist finds certain laws operating to-day in the formation of dialects and in divergencies of speech, and that existing tongues show the operation of these laws in the past; and he concludes that all differences of language originated in this way. The confusion at Babel is a primary fact, and should be so recognized. The failure to start with it leads to a final rejection of it.

Or take ethnology. The true starting point of the science is found in the tenth chapter of Genesis, where are written the generations of the sons of Noah: "And by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood."

Why has the philosopher sought the *summum bonum* in vain, except that he has overlooked the revealed fact that, "man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever?"

In ethics, the world is full of systems and theories which practically ignore "the fall," "total depravity" and the processes of "sanctification by the Spirit." There are no better attested facts than these.

In psychology, men of the largest learning and ability elaborate plausible systems of every shade from absolute materialism on the one hand to the subtlest idealism on the other; whereas the surface Bible data of body and spirit are the starting point of the study of man.

And so through all the range of earth-born sciences. In their conclusions, they do sometimes suggest a mistaken exegesis of the Scriptures, but they cannot convict them of error. All truth is a unit in its correlations and presents essential harmony at all overlapping points. How then shall agnosticism formulate a science in harmony with revelation? Faith, therefore, remands all science falsely so-called to revise its agnostic conclusions, and to introduce Bible data as fundamental and paramount.

II. The Scriptures are full of general principles which need no further enunciation or elucidation. Indeed, every categorical proposition is closely allied to and dependent on some general truth. When general truths are once duly authenticated they take rank along with the axiomatic truths by which they have been tested, and themselves become the tests of other rational processes. This is true in mathematics. Thus, when once it is proven that the sum of the three angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles, no rational process can be accepted as true which in premise or conclusion contravenes this theorem. Now the Scriptures are full of principles as well as facts; and what is a principle but the statement of a complex fact? These principles are sometimes the conclusions of rational argument, sometimes the results of actual experience, sometimes the utterances of a sanctified common sense, and sometimes the more formal oracles of supreme wisdom but however, they may appear to be set forth, they have the divine imprimatur and the seal of eternal truth. All other truths must accord with them or be rejected. Rationalism hates these fetters and scorns their limitations and claims for itself the inerrancy which it denies to the Scriptures and brings all truth, human and divine, to the test of its own imperious and unwarranted assumptions. The principles of sound morals and good government, of true philosophy and common sense are all found in this book of books, and woe betide all that varies from it. The

illustrations of this will be more apparent as we illustrate this broader proposition.

III. The Universal Book solves all the problems of the ages. Such a civilization, reaching from Abraham to John, extending over two thousand years, modified by the civilizations of Egypt and Babylon, Assyria and Persia, Greece and Rome, and itself modifying them in turn, may fairly be supposed to have grappled with every problem. In this there is "nothing new under the sun." "That which has been is that which shall be." Human nature is everywhere and always the same, and asserts itself under varying conditions. The same things in essence are reenacted in divers forms, and their solutions are substantially the same. These problems are of supreme interest to the generations engaged in their solution and they inspire the literature of every people. It seems fair to claim that this literature illumines every human path with the light of divine wisdom. Take the lowest view of the scope of revelation, that it is only redemptive. Redemptive of what? Is it only a personal redemption? This view is too narrow. Is it not also the redemption of the family and of the state? The race is to be redeemed, socially, politically, commercially and industrially, if ever it shall come to pass that "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

The revealed word is adequate to all the race results set forth in these wondrous figures of speech. The Bible is the text book for the race; it touches human thought and action at every point, and may well regulate the whole.

Let us cite a few illustrations. The covenant made with Noah on that beautiful Sabbath day when he came out of the ark, and ratified by sacrifice, and sealed with the bow in the cloud, as if the very sign-manual of heaven were written across the sky, is the "bill of rights" for the race, giving the guaranty of "life, liberty,

and the pursuit of happiness." Under it the plowman follows his furrow and the reaper gathers his grain, for the promise is, that "seed time and harvest shall not fail." Under it we eat flesh, as well as the fruits of the ground, and the eating of blood is forbidden, because it is the life. Under it, murder is punished with death; blood redeemed with blood. This is a covenant for the race, and every attempt to set aside its provisions has met disaster and shame.

Or, consider the God-given right of representative free government. It was given to be exercised under a warrant. "Take you wise men, and understanding, known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you." "Able men, and men of truth, who fear an oath, and hate covetousness." So long as the choice conforms to the warrant, a nation may be free, but when the warrant is broken, *jure divino* free government perishes in anarchy or despotism.

Take another illustration. Aristocracies have been the bane of republics and the curse of all peoples. The Hebrew commonwealth had such checks and balances in its inspired constitution as to minimize the danger, if not to make them impossible. Aristocracies are a seven-headed monster feeding insatiate on helpless populations. History tells us of priestly aristocracies, blooded aristocracies, landed aristocracies, monied aristocracies, military aristocracies, literary aristocracies, and prescriptive aristocracies. It were an interesting study to see how the model republic was guarded against all these; but time forbids.

Take another illustration. Adulterations and imitations characterize the civilization of which we constitute a part. Foods and medicines are adulterated. Clothes and shoes are shoddy; tableware and jewelry are base but brilliant imitations; education and religion, too, have their imitations and adulterations. I once heard the cynical Irish patriot Mitchell pronounce the word "civilization," with inimitable scorn. "A hybrid word," said he, "with a Latin head and a Greek tail, whose typical product is a God-forbidden mule." I do not know how far he understood the divine law against hybridization, adulteration, and spurious imitations. "It is confusion."

Take a last illustration out of hundreds more. The family is of divine origin; its constitution is of divine authority, the primordial unit of church and state, and the creature of neither, one woman for one man, an indissoluble bond, the man the head of the woman, the proper subjection of children, the autonomy of home, the end a holy seed. But instead, the outcome has, too often, been polygamy, easy divorce, young America, woman's rights, boarding-house life, coöperative nurseries and kitchens, and the relegation of childhood and youth to mere hirelings. Degrade marriage to a mere co-partnership between equals, to be dissolved at will by either party without social stigma, these and a host of other evils sweep in like a flood, and the very foundations of church and state, as God ordained them, are destroyed. Who will construct any thing better out of the ruins?

Suffice it to say that every phase of man's life has its laws, and every relation in life its duties and responsibilities, and these all operate so like the laws of the physical universe that men talk helplessly of fortune and fate and destiny; and well they might, if left to solve the problems of either alone. But this Universal Book sheds over all the clear light of a divine purpose and provides for every exigency. No man, nor people, nor nation are left between the upper and the nether millstone to be ground to powder, except as the teachings of Scripture are neglected.

Some study the Scriptures devotionally, some theologically, others homiletically. I would disparage neither of these except they be exclusive. Every educated man should find in them the unification and interpretation of all sound learning, the test of all that is vicious and inadequate. There is nothing good in human thought and action, in its ultimate product and analysis, for which we do not find a warrant there, or least a concrete illustration. Nor is there any human heresy which is not fairly exposed and refuted, either expressly or by implication in the Word of God.

J. B. SHEARER.