

STEARNS & SMITH. — Charges & inaugural address... Union Theolog. Sem.

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THE CHARGE
AND
INAUGURAL ADDRESS

p. 21

DELIVERED ON OCCASION OF THE INDUCTION OF

THE REV. HENRY B. SMITH, D.D.

INTO

THE CHAIR OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

IN THE

Union Theological Seminary, New York,

SABBATH EVENING, MAY 6, 1855.

UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

THE Inauguration of the REV. HENRY B. SMITH, D.D., into the Chair of Systematic Theology in the Union Theological Seminary, took place in the Mercer Street Church, on Sabbath evening, May 6, 1855. CHARLES BUTLER, Esq., Vice-President of the Board of Directors, presided on the occasion, and put the constitutional questions to the Professor elect. The services were opened with Prayer by the Rev. A. E. CAMPBELL, D.D. After the Induction of PROFESSOR SMITH, the following Charge was delivered by the Rev. JONATHAN F. STEARNS, D. D., of Newark, N. J.

CHARGE,

BY

THE REV. JONATHAN F. STEARNS., D.D.

WE are assembled to inaugurate a Professor of Systematic Theology. He is to teach a science at once the most profound and comprehensive of all the sciences, and taking the deepest hold of man's practical interests for time and eternity. The chair which he is to fill is, of all others, best fitted to enstamp upon the character of the age its broadest, deepest, and most permanent impressions; and thence the teachers of the age, those who are to mould its institutions, shape the course of its destinies, and give character to its men, must look for the most fundamental principles of their teaching. Its immediate sphere of effort is the present, not some past age of the world. Here will be its conflict. Here it must hope for its triumphs. Its province is to theologize the age, to imbue all its thinking with right theological influences, and so enstamp upon it God's image and assimilate it to heaven. It seems proper, therefore, on the present occasion, and as a basis for the charge it now becomes my duty to deliver, to spend a few moments in inquiring, what sort of theology the age requires.

The great fundamental principles of theological science are, unquestionably, among those eternal and unchanging things which belong to no time or place; which, whether we know them

or not, receive them or reject them, are, like him to whom they relate, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." But a distinction is to be made here between the objective truths which form the matter of the science, and the reception and incorporation of them, as practical principles, by the minds who are to be the subjects of their influence. The subjects or recipients of theological truth, it must be remembered, are in the midst of circumstances as mutable and various as the scenery of a winding river. No two ages are the same. The demands of each, its dangers, duties, opportunities, facilities, and turns of thought, are, to a great extent, peculiar to itself. And the theologian who ignores this fact, who, thinking to deal with unchanging principles, buries himself among them, and refuses to look out upon the ever-shifting forms of the world around him, however profound may be his investigations, and however beautifully consistent and logical the theory he constructs, may depend on this, that he will have his theology wholly to himself. No matter how true it may be abstractly, it will lack the points of contact and connexion, by which alone it can become operative on the minds of others.

That there is, in some quarters, a too preponderating regard for this moveable element in theological instruction, cannot be questioned. Besides the infidelity and downright heresy, which affect to despise the whole system of Christian doctrine as a worn out thing, what sad crudities have been vented upon the Church in the name and under the pretext of enlightened views, theology adapted to the times,—the merest theories, filled with all the impurities with which the age is debased, and totally incompetent to purify the stream by which their own waters are made turbid. Some of these have been the result of honest efforts to defend the good old faith of our fathers from the new weapons forged against it by the popular philosophy. And so far, unquestionably, they have been laudable in purpose. Perhaps, for want of better defences, they have sometimes, in a degree, subserved that purpose. Perhaps, in certain minds, they have

kept the faith from being entirely swept away before a tide of false thinking, to which their advocates themselves had yielded the predominance. But better had it been never to have yielded to the foe one inch of ground, whether in religion or philosophy. Better, at least, to have stood firmly on the great radical principles of scriptural truth, and let the philosophies of the day beat their own heads, if they would, against its granite walls and buttresses. God's truth has strength to resist such assaults. Philosophies must come to it. It has no call to advance half way to meet them. Nor is resistance the only or chief function to be performed. The gospel has, and ought to be seen and felt to have, a philosophy of its own. Underlying that divine scheme are the principles of a complete system of thought competent to include, subordinate, and control all our thinking. And that system it is the bounden duty of the theologian to develop and make operative.

And here, let me remark, is one obvious objection to that entire divorce between religion and philosophy, which some advocate. Thinking men will have a philosophy. It is a necessity of their being. And if theology, drawing its principles from the Bible, does not produce one for itself by profound reflection on those great truths which form the warp and woof of its own texture, the world will impose one upon it, and its champions, taking up and accepting the alien system, will be driven, even unconsciously, and in spite of protestations to the contrary, to adjust their religious principles to an apparent harmony with it.

It was partly owing to a mistake just here, that the theology of New England, during the early part of this century, suffered so severe a conflict with Socinian and Pelagian errors. A portion of the leaders of the Church, adopting the current philosophy, gave up the old faith as a thing outworn and unphilosophical. And another portion, holding fast to the old faith with a true affection, and yet yielding intellectually to the same philosophy, proceeded to adjust and modify their creed so as not to appear

in conflict with their metaphysical theories. Thus did such men as Hopkins and Emmons put weapons into the hands of those very adversaries whom they supposed their own system, by its philosophical character, was peculiarly fitted to vanquish. Unitarianism acquired a sway over the minds of men in that region, which it never could have acquired, but for the advantage thus given it by some of its boldest antagonists. And the positions into which some of the admiring pupils of those truly admirable men have since drifted, positions as antagonistic to theirs as were some of those which they most strenuously resisted, are a sufficient warning against imitating their example.

True it is, that the simple facts and precepts of the Bible, as they lie upon its open pages, are sufficient to guide the unsophisticated into the way of salvation. But there are minds to whom philosophy is a necessity. Truth must assume the scientific form in order to gain in them a permanent lodgment; and all minds, even the most unintellectual, are influenced powerfully, although unconsciously, in their reception and rejection of truth, and hardly less in the practical effect of its doctrines upon them when received, by the philosophical theories current around them. If, then, the truths lying scattered over the Bible do constitute a system, and if the germs of a philosophy capable of being so unfolded as to occupy the entire field of intellectual activity are there, are we justified in giving that field over to other influences? Those, who to shun philosophy take refuge in dogmatism, forget that all philosophy is but a development of humanity, in one of its highest and most controlling departments,—the department of the intellect. A false philosophy is a false direction given to the intellectual man. It is error in possession of one of the strongest holds of the human citadel. And how, if we make no efforts to dislodge it and supply its place with a better, shall we be able to bring into captivity every thought of man to the obedience of Christ? You might just as well give over commerce to the infidel, or law, or ethics,

or social life, and think to enthrone religion, as did certain of the Quietists, among the sentiments, as to surrender science and metaphysics to the world and unbelief. To be a Christian in the fullest sense of the word, you must be a Christian in all things. If you are a thinker at all, you must be a Christian thinker. And since to Christianize the world you must Christianize all its departments, the department of the world's thinking requires profound attention, certainly not less than those of feeling and action.

We insist strenuously on an educated ministry—a ministry composed of thoroughly trained intellectual men. And would it not be absurd, first to send our students to the colleges to learn a philosophy which is of the earth, earthy—a philosophy totally at war with the first principles of our faith, and then to transfer them to the theological seminary, there to engraft Christian truth upon the alien stock as best they can! It is true they might, if deeply imbued with the Christian spirit, and fully convinced of the divine authority of the Scriptures on independent grounds, hold fast, through grace, the doctrines taught them, even in spite of their philosophy. But is it wise, is it right to subject men's minds to so terrible an ordeal,—an ordeal from which they cannot escape unharmed but by an intellectual inconsistency, or by avoiding deep reflection on the subjects in question altogether? This mistake has been the cause heretofore of many a mournful defection from the faith, and many an unintended encroachment on its purity and completeness. It will, if suffered to prevail, be the cause of more, and in quarters where they are now little anticipated. The moment philosophical inquiries begin to excite intense interest, that moment will the theology which has provided nothing to supply and guide that interest, become the victim of its encroachments. The philosophical spirit, not secured as a friend, must be encountered as an enemy, and in many instances will prove a traitor in the camp.

But while we deprecate, and cannot deprecate too earnestly,

that spirit of conformity to the age, which makes the Christian doctrine assume in turn all the hues of the ever varying firmament; while we insist that it has principles of its own, theoretical as well as practical, which are never to be compromised, and is bound to give the law to the thinking of the age, not to receive its own law from it, let us beware how we attempt to avoid the evil, by passing over to the opposite extreme. The tendency of all extremes to reproduce each other, should of itself be our warning against such a mistake. If our theology is to become one of the moving and controlling forces of the age, to take strong hold of the reason and conscience, and, by the grace of God, renew and sanctify the hearts of the men who compose it, then it must concern itself, broadly and discriminatively, with their present actual condition; and not only the philosophy of the age, but all its peculiar characteristics and tendencies, mental and moral, must be taken freely into its account. There is such a thing as theology getting out of harmony with the times, even though true. And it is a great evil. Even the good old theology of our Puritan Fathers, excellent as it is, consistent, thorough, eminently biblical, and for the most part stated with a wonderful accuracy, is yet, in many respects, as it lies upon their thoughtful pages, hardly adapted to our own immediate use. It wants the arguments, the defences, the distinctions, and the applications needful to bring it right home to the men of this generation. Questions pertaining to it, which must now be discussed, before we can even get a door open for its reception in many minds, are there entirely ignored, because they had not then been raised. We go to it as to a grand repository of precious materials; but we feel that in the use which is to be made of them, the oil needs to be beaten anew, and the jewels repolished and reset. And to frown on all attempts of this sort, to take fright at the first new turn of thought or form of phraseology, is as unwise as it must be ineffectual for the end designed.

That the present age has marked peculiarities demanding

attention from the theologian, none I think will dispute. Among them may be reckoned the perfect freedom, degenerating often into utter lawlessness, with which opinions are adopted. Hence their endless variety. We see no strong ruling or antagonistic parties, like the mighty armies ranged of yore under the banners of Athanasius and Arius, Augustine and Pelagius, Calvin and Episcopius. Now every man "hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation." And the causes which determine men's position are not so much the presence of some all-controlling principle, or some radical mental bias, as the accidental concurrence of circumstances which to-morrow may shift the battleground to some different region. Far more hopeful would it be for the cause of truth, could we but make up some one grand issue, and fight it out by the strength of fairly matched principles.

A second glance reveals to us, as might be supposed, on the same field, a widely spread and most unmanageable skepticism. It is not a positive unbelief which you can meet by argument. It is a subtle influence. It takes no shape. It is like the miasmata of the marshes: you are not even aware of its presence, till you feel the chills shaking you. But its effects are confined to no single class. It pervades the church hardly less than the world. It gets up into the study of the minister. Every new doctrine of natural science, every new fact or alleged fact in history, geography, or Biblical criticism, shakes men's foundations, and sets them looking out for some entire revolution in the realms of truth. And because they have nothing fixed, because religion as a matter of doctrine is not that earnest thing which compels them to have decisive convictions, the minds of multitudes flow hither and thither, and like the raven that went forth from the ark, move ever to and fro, to and fro, over a trackless abyss.

Nor is it at all incompatible with these phenomena, though it might seem so, that we find side by side with them, and often

sharing the same minds, a tendency to superstition and false spiritualism not unworthy of the darkest ages of Christianity. The soul must have something *supernatural*. It is its aliment, its vital breath. In the absence of a true faith in things unseen, it puts confidence in a dream, or becomes the slave of a superstition.

Nor is that lawless freedom and aptitude for change, of which I have spoken, incompatible with its seeming opposite, a slavish reverence for *authority*, and an admiration of the past, which would gather back and restore every hoary-headed abuse. Radicalism and Romanism, in some quarters, divide the ground. The converted Romanist becomes a radical; and the hot-headed radical, perceiving no medium, abandons his old extravagances and vaults over to Romanism. The votaries of the future shift positions with the votaries of the past, and all for want of something fixed and certain in the present, for both to repose upon.

None can fail, moreover, to have observed, as among the features of the age, a strong materialistic tendency. It has grown partly out of the occupations of the age—the advance especially of natural science and the arts—and has been greatly aided by the philosophy which had at one time almost the exclusive sway among us. Now, falsehoods founded on half truths reproduce those in which the other half is represented. Hence in part, perhaps, the tide of Pantheism that has been now for a long time rolling upon us. With some it takes the form of a most subtle and all-comprehensive philosophy, with some a beautiful but morbid sentiment, with some a law-defying and most malignant Atheism. It disturbs the foundations of belief in the studious pastor, and gives vagueness and indecision sometimes to his pulpit utterances; it sifts its chilling snow-drifts into all the walks of physical and metaphysical science; it goes out into our cities and villages in the fair guise of literary culture, and by its soft seductive eloquence captivates the hearts of our ingenuous young men in the lyceum or lecture-

room; it finds its way in the form of poetry and light literature into the parlor of the man of leisure, and lounges with a winning grace in the boudoirs of our thoughtful sisters and daughters; turning even devotion into dreamy sentiment, and stealing the heart from the worship of one ever living and true God, and a once incarnate and now glorified personal Saviour. It may not deny any of the strong doctrinal statements so much insisted on by our earnest old fathers, but, like an electric bolt, it strikes the life out of them, and leaves us but their blasted, powerless forms. And there is no point at which this subtle mischief requires more to be guarded against than the Theological Seminary.

But in the midst of all this confusion of apparently contradictory errors, we look in vain for any intense and pervading interest in theological truth. Unquestionably mighty forces are in operation among us, and some of them, as unquestionably, for the accomplishment of good results. The philanthropic tendencies of the age are worthy of all honor. The extensive system of benevolent enterprises, missionary, educational, eleemosynary, is a significant illustration. So is the effort to abolish slavery, as far as it is a wise effort. So the interest felt in moral reforms. So the revivals of religion, by which multitudes have been converted. Unfortunately, however, none of them seem working powerfully in the direction of Christian thought. Christian action predominates, not profound Christian reflection. Nice theologic points exercise the dialectic skill of professors and controversialists. Victory gained either by a quibble or a personal sarcasm, delights the successful champion. But the mass of the church stand by, and say, as well they might if this were all, where is the difference, and what is the use? High, sacred, and soul-moving principles, are not placed where they should be, at the top of all reverence and affection. And for want of them, both the permanence and the safe working of all our Christian activity are put in jeopardy. Revivals become spurious excitements. Reforms take an infidel

character. Philanthropy, wanting the guidance of a truly Christian theology, degenerates into a sickly sentiment, or a world-upturning spirit equally to be deprecated.

Now, if you ask, what sort of theology is needful to meet the wants of such an age, the answer is to be found in the very character and variety of those wants. It must be such as will arrest powerfully men's thoughts, call them off from the merely transient and phenomenal, and send them inward to investigate the eternal and unchanging truths of God and the universe. It must have force enough to lay a strong grasp upon the fluctuating and chaotic opinions of the age, and bind them in unity under its own sway,—to shame at once materialism and pantheism, skepticism and superstition, radicalism and traditionalism, by exposing the radical errors out of which they have all had their opposite growths. It must have comprehension enough to embrace the entire field of men's thoughts, penetration enough to descend to first principles, and flexibility enough to apply itself at once to all new exigencies. It must be keenly alive to all that is passing in the world, and prompt to meet in the right way every new manifestation. Of all the discoveries of the day, it must be able to make friends and efficient aids. And taking its stand in the open highway of all knowledge, it must be fearless of harm because founded upon that rock against which even the gates of hell cannot prevail.

For this end we need the pure and exact truth, and the whole truth comprising its latest discoveries. But for this end we do not need a *new theology*. I am at a loss for a single point on which the peculiarities of the age or the advance of knowledge, call for an essential change in any great doctrine. The old system of our creed, which has stood the racking of centuries, which fought the battles of the Reformation and planted America with its best seeds, is competent to stand centuries more. It will bear, I believe, all the light not only of the nineteenth century, but of the ninety and ninth, should it please God to continue the world in being so long. We scarcely need

a new statement of its doctrines, except in the way of explanation, or perhaps enlargement. We need not go about to invent for it a new terminology. The good old well of theologic English will, I think, answer still most of our purposes. Indeed, for such an age as this, theology ought to be eminently conservative. To cut unnecessarily a single cord binding it to all that is true and good in the past, is a most unwise sacrifice. Let its terms and forms of expression be explained. Let its formulas be analyzed, that all may see by what processes they have been reached, and how they are true. In all our inquiries, let us take our stand *upon the past*, and then grasping the present with a strong hand, let us reach forward to the future.

To enable us to do this, what we most need is that our theology should be, in the fullest sense, a *living* theology. I say not a progressive—that term might be mistaken, but a living theology. No mere set of dogmas, however true or happily stated, no cold and dry skeleton of logic however cunningly jointed, will answer the purpose. Our theology must spring up ever fresh out of the ground of the Bible. It must be the immediate growth of our own thoughts, reverently exercised upon the revelations of the Bible. It must be the constant exponent of our liveliest Christian experiences. It must be, in each continuous affirmation which our faith makes of its truths, a new birth of the Spirit. There is a theology which builds itself up on the strong granite foundations of eternal truth, and there it stands fixed, a noble monument. But it is a mere relic of the past, and has no vital relation to the present—it is dead, therefore it effects nothing. There is a theology which is lively enough, and it sways to and fro *over* the foundation of true principles. But it is like a paper kite fastened only at a few points, and for the rest, carried about with every wind of doctrine. We want the combined flexibility and fixedness of the living fruit-producing tree, whose strong roots, deeply fastened in the vitalizing soil, permit the spreading top to wave

safely in the passing breeze, while it fills the whole atmosphere with its fragrance, and refreshes the world with its fruit. We want a theology Biblical to the very core,—springing wholly out of that grand essential fact of the Bible, *Jesus Christ and Him crucified*, and giving us the true genius of the Biblical system in all its fulness,—a theology awake to all that is passing in the world, in sympathy with all that is true and good in the present age, and conscious of all its speculations, true and false, metaphysical and practical,—taking them all to its aid, yet corrupted by none of them,—not clipped or compressed to suit the philosophies of the times, nor yet giving them their usurped sphere unmolested to themselves, but commanding their obedience to itself as the queen of all philosophies, grappling upon strong principles, rooting itself among them, and thence, by its own vital force, throwing its influence out into all parts and departments of humanity.

Such a theology would be, as all true and effective theology must be, unchanging and yet eminently adaptable—at once firm and not bigoted, comprehensive and profound, logical and practical, philosophical and popular. It would be a theology for the pulpit as well as for the lecture-room, for the sick chamber, for the sabbath-school, and for the Christian fireside, as well as for the study; and so uniting under its single sway the heart and the head, the feelings and the intellect, it would commend itself alike to the professor and the day-laborer, the little child and the aged woman. Indeed here is one of the best tests of a truly living theology, that it can find its way to the heart and reason of universal man, and that through all circumstances, “commending itself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” Through it man can find out God, and the choicest gifts of God’s Spirit be communicated to man. It will prove itself both a converting and a sanctifying theology, and, like that word of God of which it is the scientific expression, be “quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword.”

With such a theology who can doubt that the power and

stability and beauty and purity of the Church would be vastly augmented? The influences of the Divine Spirit ever attending it as they surely would, religion would go through the world under its guidance, with a rapidity and force never seen hitherto. The cause of missions would receive from it a marvellous stimulus. To all enterprises of reform it would impart not an impulse only, but a sure direction to the end in view. Christian character, both in doing and in being, both in meek endurance and heroic enterprise, would be developed in forms of excellence now hardly conceived of; the enmity of carnal hearts would be slain, and converts be as the drops of the morning. But such a theology is not the product of mere metaphysical speculation. It cannot be defended and maintained by mere dialectic skill. It will require, indeed, the most profound and patient study, the most comprehensive and liberal scholarly culture, the most ardent thirst after the whole and the pure truth, but above all, it will require indispensably, it must have its birth, nurture, and entire development in **THE EFFECTUAL FERVENT PRAYER OF THE RIGHTEOUS MAN.**

To the maintenance and teaching of such a theology, you, Sir, have, I believe, now devoted your life. For the discharge of the duties of this office your mental history gives you some special advantages. You are no novice in the business of sacred instruction, and the departments of sacred teaching which have hitherto commanded your efforts, no less than your early studies both at home and in a foreign land, have served well as preparatives for this.

Assured then, that you hold the faith contained in our creed as, substantially, the very faith once delivered to the saints, and fully believing on my own part that it is the faith which the world needs for its renovation and salvation, I charge you, teach that faith according to its true genius, boldly, frankly, and with all earnestness. Imbue your pupils with its doctrines. Get them furnished with its reasons and defences, and the knowledge of its manifold relations. Get it so rooted in their minds

that it *must* adhere and be reproduced in all their thinking and preaching. But be not contented with a mere barren *inculcation*. Let them see and feel and *know* it as the expression of a living reality.

You will never, I am sure, be ambitious of becoming the leader of a party or the founder of a new school in theology. The good old doctrines which were held by our fathers, and in which our own childhood was nurtured, the doctrines of the Reformation, of the Puritan settlers of our country, of that great luminary in the theological sky whose light first dawned among the hills of New England, shot its meridian beams across the Continent and to other lands, and set with undiminished splendor over the plains of Princeton, have your sincere confidence and affection; and to explain, defend, develope, and apply them; to bring them into close relations with all that is good and hopeful in the present age, and send them down, not impaired, but expanded and illuminated, to the next, will be esteemed by you both a privilege and an honor. This the age has a right to expect at your hands,—this, the branch of Christ's church with which we are connected both expects and desires;—this, the seminary, whose dearest interests are now intrusted to you, in connection with your honored colleagues in its instruction, *sacredly enjoins*.

Your position is, *must* be, one of intense responsibility. For the defence of the faith you must now stand "in the forefront of the hottest battle." If assailed, place your entire reliance on the truth, *come what will*, and give to the world above all things else an honest theology, honestly stated and maintained. As an instructor, you are required to deal with cultivated minds in that most critical period when a slight error may be like a hair's-breadth diversion in the path of a planet, sending it off measureless distances as a wandering star. Have great respect for the difficulties of your pupils. Turn them not off with an evasive answer. Take them generously by the hand, go with them through all the lanes and corners of error, and show them by

the light of God's truth, how the darkness is to be dissipated. Go with courage. Go with that solemn thoughtfulness which is ever the accompaniment of true courage. Go with earnest prayer, leaning on God as becomes the man who must not only be the guide of souls, but guide the guides of others in the way of life. And may God bless you, my beloved brother; may the Holy Spirit guide, illuminate, and cheer you; and the crown of the faithful be yours.

THE
IDEA OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AS A SYSTEM.

AN INAUGURAL ADDRESS,

BY

THE REV. HENRY B. SMITH, D.D.

FRIENDS AND BRETHREN OF THE UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY:—It is now eighteen years since our Institution was established, to provide the means of a thorough theological training, with the special facilities which this great community present. Its founders called it the "Union" Seminary, "because," as they said, "it was designed to commend itself to all men of moderate views and feelings; who desire to live free from party strife." It stands upon the common ground of the larger Evangelical Churches of our country, the Westminster Confession of Faith, which has been here inculcated with a filial but not a blind devotion; not in the servility of the letter, but in the freedom of its real spirit. The Presbyterian polity has been taught, but never with a sectarian intent. Our beloved Seminary has proved itself to be wisely constituted; its sons are a brotherhood dispersed all over the earth; our churches regard it with increasing favor; and the Great Head of the church has given to us in unwonted measure that missionary spirit, which is a pledge of His real presence, since it fulfils His last command.

Five years ago you called me to the chair of Church History, and now you invest me with the functions of a teacher of Syste-

matic Theology. Would that I might carry into this new position the spirit which animated my predecessors; something of the keenness and faithfulness of the lamented Dr. White, as well as the various learning and true Christian liberality of him whom I immediately succeed.

The two departments which I thus successively fill are truly kindred to each other. They should ever go hand in hand. The most diligent investigation of Christian History is one of the best incentives to the wisest study of Christian Theology. The plan of God is the substance of both; for all historic time is but a divine theodicy; God's providence is its law, God's glory is its end. Theology divorced from history runs out into bare abstractions; history separated from theology becomes naturalistic or humanitarian merely. The marriage of the two makes theology more real and history to be sacred. In God's Book they are fused; its theology glows with historic life; truth and fact, light and life are blended. God reveals himself in historic facts. All history and all theology meet in the person of the God-man, our Saviour. The life of history and the light of theology should ever go together, as an early Christian apologist said, "Life is not real without knowledge, nor is knowledge safe without life; they must be planted together like the trees of Paradise."*

Among the wisest and best of our own and other lands, there is a strong reaction from that extreme subjective and rationalistic tendency, which sneered at the history it was ignorant of, and never spoke of the ancient creeds and of the symbols of the Reformation but in disparagement. We are witnessing the resurrection of this sacred legacy; the venerable Augsburg Confession was readopted two years since, by as thoughtful a body as ever met in Germany. In the midst of our own contending factions, many are pondering the wiser formulas which avoid our abstract extremes. The old faith and the new philosophy, both,

* *Epistola ad Diognetum.*

indeed, have their rights; the struggle of all times, between the conservative and the progressive will doubtless continue until the wealth of eternity shall become the heritage of time. The real question is, whether the whole of the past can be so wrought into the life of the present, as to become the guarantee of the future. Bare external tradition is lifeless: the utterly new is formless; what we need is eternal and historic truth born fresh in the living soul. "Not fixedness nor revolution," says Ullmann, "but evolution and reform" is the motto for our times. Paul argued, that Christianity was older than the Judaism which it supplanted. The early Christian fathers contended, that Christianity is both old and new. If its truths are not unchangeable, then they are not of God: if they are not unfolded and applied only in successive stadia, they are not for man. The perfect transmutation of that truth which is ever old into that life which is ever new, is the problem of history and the triumph of Christianity.*

Thus is it also with Christian Theology. Its life must be from above, and its roots in the past, if it is to bear those leaves, which are for the healing of the nations. Every vital system has received its substance from the Scriptures, which are to us the source and test of divine truth; its historical connections have been with the received symbols; and the philosophical speculations of the times have given it shape. Scriptural

* The conflict between the conservative and progressive elements in Christian Theology, as in other sciences, runs back into the two positions; that all fundamental religious truth is eternal and immutable; and, that this eternal truth is revealed and appropriated, only by successive stages, in the history of the world. Eternal verity enters into the processes of historic growth. The Scriptures contain that verity; the history of the church is its gradual appropriation by the human race. This is the view even of the old Christian apologists of the second and third centuries. Thus Arnobius says: "If the antiquity of authors be required, ours is that of God himself." And Eusebius, speaking of the accusation, that Christianity was a new religion, adds, "So much the greater marvel, that it has already subdued the earth." Compare other citations, in Bolton's "Evidences," a valuable collection of the arguments of the early apologists.

divinity becomes historical, and historical theology becomes systematic. To combine and reconcile these three, the Word of God, historical divinity, and philosophical truth, is the great problem of scientific theology. It will find its solution when the whole of Scripture shall be reproduced in the history of the church, and shaped by a wise philosophy, under the light of the central idea of God's own revelation. And a system thus constructed, will be adapted to the two great ends of scientific theology, the advancement of the science itself, and practical use in the service of the church and ministry.

So far as the limits of the hour allow, let me invite your thoughts to the subject which the occasion demands, and to which these remarks tend; that is, the Idea of Christian Theology as a System. It will be my object to attempt an exposition and vindication of the true conception of Systematic Theology, with its application to some existing controversies and speculations.

What is the radical idea of Christian Theology as a science? How is it distinguished from other departments of truth, natural, ethical, or metaphysical?

In answering this inquiry in the way of description, and not yet of stricter definition, it may be said, that Christian Theology is the exposition of the facts of a divine revelation. This is its special characteristic. It has to do with a real, extant economy, with objective realities, as much as the natural or social sciences. Its ultimate ground is above and beyond nature; but this supernatural has been made manifest in an historical and recorded revelation. The original ray of supernal light has broken upon our earth, irradiating it with sevenfold forms of beauty, which are our blessing, and which we are to study, if we would know the nature of the light. The theologian is to be "deep in the books of God," as the naturalist in the book of nature; both are to divest themselves of fancy and to become interpreters; each studies a realm independent of him in its original, its facts, and its laws. The science of nature has

advanced apace because its eminent explorers have studied that kingdom with an humble and reverential spirit; they have reported the visions and marvels which the telescope has descried in the sublimities of space, and the microscope unvoiled in the most delicate structures. And one of the reasons— is it not so? why theology has been less fruitful, is, that we study ethics and not divinity, our own wills, and not the will of God, and expect in psychology to find the kingdom of God. But the registry of God's wisdom is in his own revelation.

An unreal spiritualism makes man the measure of all things, and decries an historical and recorded revelation. It would evolve all truth out of man's unillumined reason. But the idealism of Berkeley would be as adequate an organon for the study of nature, as such a subjective Christianity for the study of theology. The valid being of nature is presupposed by the naturalist; the historical reality of Christianity is at the basis of Christian theology. Neither nature nor Christianity "borrows leave to be" from human reason or from human wants.

There is, if we may use the phrase, a Christian realism, which is the life of theology. All things are made according to the pattern in the mount. All that is, according to the Calvinistic system, pre-existed in the divine mind in idea and purpose. All true knowledge is a participation in these ideas. All our theology has its ground in the imperishable facts and truths of the Christian economy, pre-existent in the divine mind, having an objective reality and validity, and revealed, not in words alone, but in deeds and in power, and by the Holy Ghost. To speak in the profound words ascribed to one of Britain's almost unknown poets,

"Words are men's daughters, but God's sons are things." *

* This line is found in Dr. Madden's "Boulter's Monument," a poem, published in Dublin in 1745, revised by Dr. Johnson. Mr Croker says, "Dr. Madden wrote very bad verses. The few lines in 'Boulter's Monument,' which rise above mediocrity may be attributed to Johnson." Mr. Jas. Crossley, in "Notes and

The perpetual Providence of God the Father, the Incarnation and Redemption of Christ the Son, Regeneration and Sanctification by the Holy Ghost, the Church and its Sacraments; these are not mere abstract truths, they are truths of fact; the intellect can never learn them by definitions alone, the whole soul knows them through revelation and experience. Unless this be so, our theology is not the ally, but the victim of philosophy; it is but a rope of sand, though it look as strong as a cable and be as fine as the wire-drawn steel. The spirit of nominalism, resting in words and definitions, eats out the core of theology; appealing only to the intellect, it cannot maintain itself against either naturalism or pantheism, for with both of these, words are but symbols of realities. "The lip," says Shakespeare, "is parcel of the mind"; and in all valid theology, each doctrine is parcel of the objective, Christian system. You cannot cut off a twig from a tree, and bid it bud, and blossom, and rejoice. If we lose the inward sense of the reality of God's kingdom in Christ, as our basis, our theology is a mere system of intellectual philosophy, and poor at that; its divinity is all gone; regeneration is an act of human choice; the atonement becomes an expedient or a spectacle; justification is making just or pardon; union with Christ is first a figure and then a figment; the Church is a voluntary society, and not the body of Christ: and theology is on the high road to humanitarianism.

Even Plato might teach us better wisdom; for there ran among the Greeks, says Ficinus, a proverb, that he had three eyes; one for natural things, one for human, and the third for divine realities, which last was in his forehead, the others being under it. This spiritual vision is the first and last requisite of the Christian student, who would read the things of the King-

Queries," vol. iii. p. 154, thinks this line must be from Johnson, and says, that it is in allusion to Genesis vi. 24. But the only allusion is in the two words, "sons" and "daughters;" the idea is quite different.

dom of God, which the natural man knoweth not, which are only spiritually discerned.

Such is the general basis of Christian theology : it is an exposition of the realities of a divine revelation. What are, now, the interior traits of the system itself, which give it the character of a real science ?

Theology begins, when men begin to reflect upon religion : it is the science of religion ; religion is the subject of which theology is the science. Christian theology is the science of the Christian religion ; to construct a system of Christian theology we must know the essential idea of the Christian religion. Three inquiries, then, here demand our consideration : What is religion ? What is the Christian religion ? What is the science of the Christian religion ?

A well nigh universal experience affirms that man is a religious being. Only a materialistic philosophy can ascribe religion to external influences alone or chiefly. Calvin says : "We put it beyond controversy, that there is in the human heart, by natural instinct, a sense of divinity, which cannot be destroyed." "Atheism," declares Nitzsch, "is the attempt not to be religious." Men are impelled to worship, as they are to society, more than they are to science, art, or culture. And all religion implies a sense of dependence on a higher power, and of obligation to its behests. Its etymology teaches us, that it binds the soul.* Plato calls it a "likeness to God, according to our measure." It includes in its true idea, both the vision and the love of deity. It demands the highest energy of all our powers of intellect, heart and will ; and because the highest and combined exercise of all our powers is only in religion, we say that man was made to be religious. Union between the soul and God is, then, the essence of religion, communion of the soul with God is its expression. And here is the specific

* Lactantius Inst. ii. 10. Hoc vinculo pietatis obstricti Deo et religati sumus, unde ipsa religio nomen accepit, non, ut Cicero interpretatus est, a relegendo.

difference of religion from ethics, science, or art. Without the divine presence in the soul, real religion is as impossible as were flame without fuel.

Union and communion with deity must, then, be also included in the idea of the Christian religion. But to answer our second inquiry, What is the specific idea of Christianity? we need to know how it is distinguishable from all other modes of worship. What makes it the perfect religion for mankind?

This idea, now, cannot lawfully be taken from ethical or intellectual philosophy, nor from anything outside of Christianity itself, annexed to it or imposed upon it. The scientific botanist classifies the plants only by their internal structure. This idea must give us some real principle, some *truth of fact*, involved in the very being of Christianity. It must, so to speak, be the soul of the body of divinity. It must enable us to define the inherent nature of Christianity by its ultimate ends, for thus only do we truly know any science or being. If the Christian system have such a principle, then we may have a science of Christian theology: if it have not, then systematic divinity must lack the strictest unity and method.

The salient aspect of the Christian faith in Scripture and in history, is one and simple. It is the religion of Redemption. Its great end or object is to provide redemption for an apostate race, else exposed to remediless woes. It proposes to restore that union with God, which was lost by the fall. There is the first Adam, the head of our ruin; and there is also the second Adam, the head of our redemption. That God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself—this is the key-note of the Christian dispensation, its luminous and life-giving message. All religion is the union between man and God: the Christian religion is a reunion, a reinstated fellowship, a redemption.

And this redemption centres in the person and work of Christ, the one mediator between God and man. In his mediation is, then, to be found the central principle of this divine economy. It may be called the Mediatorial principle, for mediation between a holy

God and sinful man is the essence of his work: or it may be termed the Christological principle, as it represents to us the person of Christ, the God-man. In its fullest statement it includes both incarnation and redemption; for both as incarnate and as redeeming, Christ is our Mediator. In the fact of the Incarnation of the Son of God for our Redemption, may be said to be the grand principle of the Christian faith, its centre of unity. He was made like unto us, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.—Heb. ii. 17.

This principle gives us the specific idea of the Christian system as distinguished from other religions and from mere ethics. Here it is on its independent basis, as a rock, as a tower, as a refuge, as the city of our God. It gives us a fact and not a theory, a person and not an abstract doctrine. And it has for itself an unrivalled fulness and consent of testimony.

Heathenism bears witness to it; for, when "religion grew rank on pagan soil,"* there glimmered through all its idolatries and sacrifices, a strange, unearthly light, wandering in the fitful search for an Incarnate Saviour. Here, too, the Jewish faith has the substance of its ceremonial shadows, its antitype; and, as has been finely said, "its spirit of prophecy expired with the Gospel on its tongue." The Scriptures have a wonderful unity, for all its books give us the one person of our Lord. Human history has no other centre of convergence and divergence than the cross on Calvary, and no other prophetic end than the kingdom of Immanuel; and thus is Christ the life of all history. The profoundest experience of the human soul utters itself in one song of divinest melody, where, in the words of a Father of the church, "there is music, not indeed according to the measure of Terpander, but in the eternal measure of a new harmony of the new name of God."† Philosophy in its highest expounders bows

* Schelling, cited in Neander's Church History, i. 176.

† Clement of Alexandria.

to the idea, when not to the fact of Redemption by an Incarnation; Hegel avows, that Christianity, in the doctrines of the Trinity and the union of the finite with the infinite, has the essential elements of speculation; and Schelling confesses, that "the Incarnation is the principle of all philosophy." All vital theological systems, as they are based in the Trinity, so do they centre in the mediation of Christ. Consciously or unconsciously they pursue that plan, which makes the Trinity the foundation, each separate truth a column, each connecting truth an arch, and Christ the dome that crowns the whole, while the work of the Holy Spirit, like the ascending spire, leads us towards heaven. In the jarring creeds, the name of Jesus is the one celestial language amid the terrestrial dialects; it gives the universal tradition—*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus creditum est*. What religious principle, what idea has a parallel supremacy and authority! Thus does history confess, that there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

The most accomplished of England's comparative anatomists, Professor Owen, has shown that the same type runs through all the gradations of structure in the animal kingdom, which are but modifications of one and the same fundamental form. He hence infers, that a divine mind must have planned the archetype. "Guided," he says, "by this archetypal light, nature has advanced with slow and steady steps amid the wreck of worlds, from the first embodiment of the vertebrate idea, under its old ichthyic vestment, until it became arrayed in the glorious garb of the human form." The analogy holds, with surpassing cogency and completeness, of the central idea of the Christian system and of its divine authorship. The yearnings of Paganism, the struggles of history, the contests of the schools, are but immature and anticipatory efforts to realize that idea of Mediation through an Incarnation, which came to its perfect embodiment in the person of Christ. This is the archetypal idea by whose light alone we may read the spiritual history of our race. And it is as impossible that man could have invented this idea, the

inner law and life of his history, as it is that each animal could have made his own structure and all animals their analogous structures. It is God's idea, for which the race was made.

Such is the mediatorial principle of the Christian system, its distinguishing characteristic, centering in Christ crucified for our sins, according to the Scripture. And having thus attempted to answer the two inquiries, as to the nature of religion, and of the Christian religion, we are led to our third question, What is the science of the Christian religion? What is the idea of Christian theology as a system? If we are correct in the statements already made as to the nature of the Christian religion, then we must here say, that Christian theology is that exposition of the Christian faith, in which all its members are referred to the Mediatorial principle as their centre of unity and bond of cohesion.

Each distinct science has some supreme principle to which its subordinate classifications are referred: it becomes a science only when it has seized its central idea. The whole course of the history of theology may be regarded as a series of attempts to obtain such a principle, as an independent basis. It began with rude generalizations. The doctrines of the Bible were discussed in successive portions, coming out for fifteen hundred years, almost in the order of systematic theology; the whole history of Christian doctrine is, so to speak, one consecutive body of divinity.* The simple creeds of the early church are perhaps to be referred back to the baptismal formula as their common origin; in them history and doctrine are blended. Augustine, in his "City of God," attempts a more comprehensive view; John of Damascus, in the eighth century, sums up in a rude com-

* The order of these discussions, by which the contents of the Scriptures were reproduced in the living consciousness of the church, was, first the doctrines of the Trinity, and the Incarnation, giving the basis of theology; then, the relations of human nature to divine grace, in the Pelagian controversy; next the work of Christ, in Anselm's treatise; then, the systematising of the results in the scholastic systems; while, in the Reformation century, the doctrines of justification by faith, and the doctrine respecting the nature of the church, fitly crowned and concluded the series.

pilation the theological movement of the Greek Church in his "Exposition." The "Master of Sentences" in the twelfth century, made a scientific digest of the Latin tradition, which became the basis of the scholastic systems, that reached their acme in the "Summa" of Aquinas, a work still unsurpassed in mere logical arrangement and distinctions, and fitly compared to a Gothic cathedral. The method followed in these systems was the logical, proceeding from the more general to the more concrete subjects, united with the topical, which states each doctrine in a distinct form, according to the tradition of the church.

Such was the legacy which the middle ages bequeathed to the Reformation in systematic theology. But the inductive soon began to complete and supplant the logical method. The Reformers went back to the original source of theology, in the Divine Word. Faith in Christ is the soul of Protestantism, and the person and work of Christ the real centre of its theology, which came to its fullest expression in the doctrine of justification by faith alone. It was, however, in the Dutch Reformed school that the traditional method was first thoroughly superseded by the theology of the covenants, which, though pressed to some unscriptural conclusions, marring the fulness of grace, did yet grasp the idea of systematic theology with a firmer hand, and applied one central notion, that of the *Covenants*, to all parts of divinity.* With the logical it combined the historical method, following the order of the divine dispensations, though in some of its extremes it subordinated both logic and history to the covenants. It put Calvinistic theology, as a system, far in advance of all others. And hence its influence, even upon politics and government, in the ideas of compact and federal union. The Westminster Confession felt its power, though it has also a freer method.

In reaction from a too exclusive theory of divine sovereignty, others begin their systems in the reverse order, with man rather than God, sometimes making God to be but an indefinite exten-

* Compare Ebrard, *Dogmatik*, I, and Schweizer I, "Central-Dogmen."

sion of man, and theology a mere adaptation to human wants. Schleiermacher makes the Christian consciousness the source of all theology. Some follow simply the order of a creed or catechism. Speculative minds, like Leydecker and Marheinecke, find in the idea of the Trinity the basis of the arrangement, separating the persons in a too marked manner. Others, again, give us a mere ethical theory as the beginning and end of theology, which has led many to deny all system, excepting a convenient classification of proof texts, without any internal method.

These cursory historical statements may serve to make it apparent that the course of Christian theology has been a constant search after an independent principle and basis; and, also, that no system can stand in a just relation to historical theology, unless it combine the logical and historical methods in subserviency to some one overmastering idea, which shall give unity to these methods and to the system itself. The logical order demands that we proceed from the general to the concrete; the historical, that we follow the course of the divine dispensations; the organic method combines these, with a reference of all parts of the system to its centre of unity.

The mediatorial principle of the Christian religion is this centre of unity: it enables us to combine the advantages of both the logical and historical methods with a stricter unity than either or both can give. For, to Christ, as Mediator, all parts of theology equally refer. He is both God and man, and also the Redeemer. The logical antecedents of his mediation are, therefore, the doctrine respecting God, the doctrine respecting Man, the Fall, and consequent need of Redemption, as also that Triune constitution of the Godhead, which alone, so far as we can conceive, makes Redemption by an Incarnation to be possible. Thus we have the first division of the theological system, the Antecedents of Redemption, which is also first in both the logical and historical order. Its second and central portion can only be found in the Person and Work of Christ, his one Per-

son uniting humanity with divinity, in the integrity of both natures, adapting him to his one superhuman Work, as our prophet, priest, and king, making such satisfaction for sin, that God can be just and justify every one that believeth; and this second division of the system follows the first in both the logical and historical order, giving the peculiar office of the Second Person of the Godhead, the Purchase of Redemption, the Christology of theology. And in like manner the same mediatorial idea passes over into the third and last division of the system which treats, in proper logical and historical order, of the application of the redemption that is in Christ, to the Individual, to the Church, and to the History and final Supremacy of the Kingdom of God both in time and eternity. Union with Christ through the Holy Spirit is here the dominant fact; his Union with the Individual, whence justification, regeneration, and sanctification, for our life is hid with Christ in God; his Union with the Church, which is his body, here, as Gerhard says, "like Christ subjected to the cross that it may in the future life with him be glorified." And this scheme of divine realities, and not of mere abstract doctrine, is ultimately to be referred to the counsel of Him, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things. It gives us the true end of God in creation, which can only be, in any profound philosophical, not to say theological aspect, the making the essential glory of the Triune God to be extant and manifest in space and time, in a system which subordinates happiness to holiness and man to God.

When we thus claim that the central idea of the Christian system, which binds its parts together in a living unity, is to be found only in Christ, we do not of course mean that this is a principle in the sense that the rest of the system is to be logically deduced from it, as when in mathematics from the definition of a circle all deductions about it are derived; nor yet, that in the order of time Christ precedes all; but simply, that the mediatorial principle is the centre of unity to the system, to

speak with Nitzsch,* "its middle term." We mean that all parts of theology, as already indicated, can be best arranged by its light; all that goes before leads to it, all that comes after is its application. In redemption prepared, purchased, and applied, we have the whole of Christian theology. The mediatorial principle is the constitutive and regulative idea of the whole system. It is as flexure to the joints, as marrow to the bones, as life to an organism, as man's spirit to man's body, as God's spirit to the universe.

"Spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus
Mens agit at molem."

It makes theology living. It is a principle which is also a fact, as really as the principle of life is also a fact in all organized beings. While strictly Scriptural, it also enables us to combine with itself the prevalent logical and historical methods in the science of theology, and it gives us the rationale, the real inner law, by which to explain these methods. Taken from Christianity itself, it expresses its inmost spirit. Under its influence theology is seen to be, not divine alone, not human alone, but both human and divine. It gives us God and man in its analysis; the God-man, in its synthesis, and man reunited to God in its application. Over all the doctrines of the Bible it casts a hallowed light, so that we see them in both their divine and human aspects. Vinet felicitously remarks, that "the Gospel has put into the mouth of God the saying, 'I am a man, and nothing human is foreign from me.'" Niedner, the most philosophical of the living German church historians, admirably

* System der christlichen Lehre, § 56, s. 116. "Wir nennen daher die Einheit dieses Systems einen Mittelbegriff d. h. einen solchen, der zunächst auf gewisse *Vorassetzungen* führt ehe er eine Auseinandersetzung zulässt." The knowledge of the Trinity, he says, has its root in the knowledge of the Son of God, although Christ himself can be known only through the preliminary knowledge of God, "a relation always recognised, but never fully drawn out among Christian divines."

declares* that the "redemptive system has the character of a divine humanity; for in it what is necessary has become possible, the highest has come nearest to us, the most universal becomes most personal; all in it is at the same time measured in both a divine and human way."†

And the great conflicts of the church, as well as the living consent of its teachers and thinkers, testify to the supremacy to the Mediatorial principle of an Incarnation in order to Redemption. "Deus descendit ut assurgamus"—is both the battle-cry and the triumphal hymn of the sacramental host of God's elect. Christianity achieved its first great victory over the Greek and Roman Paganism, and subdued their civilization, by the fact of the doctrine of an Incarnate Saviour. By divine prescience, and, as it were, by an inward necessity, those truths of the Trinity and Incarnation, which rationalism discards, were first developed in the church, as the historic basis of its theology: and before them the heathen deities shrank back abashed, dazzled with excess of light. Then began what Buchanan called "the luxation of the joints of heathenism;" and since then, as our most eminent American historian has well said, "the idea of

* Studien u. Kritiken, 1853, 5, 854: applied to the individual and society.

† Dr. Julius Müller, in his admirable article, "*Dogmatik*," in the "Real-Encyclopädie für Protestantische Theologie und Kirche," after speaking of the contrast between what is historical and what is rational, that the former gives us only relative, while the latter aims at absolute truth, adds, that in the Christian system, centring in the redemption that comes through Christ, the God-man, we have both combined, and the antagonism between the historical and rational reconciled. It is, he says, in the essence of this perfect revelation, "that the conflict between that which reason seeks, viz., the absolute truth, and that which history gives, viz., relative truth, is abolished. Here we have individual historical facts restricted by space and time, and yet absolutely true, unconditionally valid, the measure of all other knowledge in the religious sphere." "Hence the scientific exhibition of the Christian doctrine can maintain its historical character without losing sight of its office of teaching what is absolutely valid and true in religion; for the Christian religion is itself historical fact, the absolute fact of history." This gives its striking and solitary peculiarity to the science of Christian religion as compared with other sciences.

God with us dwelt and dwells, in every system of thought that can pretend to vitality." And so, too, the second great victory of the true church over the paganized Christianity of mediæval times, was achieved by calling forth the Son of God in his radiant glory from the sacraments in which Rome entombed him, and offering his living person to the faith of the believer. And in its third and present contest with a subtle and relentless pantheistic infidelity,—the real intellectual paganism,—that original sin of human reason, the whole Christian faith lives or dies, as ever of old, in all its other conflicts, with the doctrine of an Incarnate Redeemer; here is the only citadel not stormed, though oft beleaguered.

The living and dying confessions of the heroes of our faith, its men of thought and men of fire—for the Christian heroes have been both, sealing their words with deeds—attest the mighty power of the doctrine of the cross. Origen and Athanasius, Augustine and Anselm, Pascal and Edwards,—

"Those dead but sceptred sovereigns, that still rule
Men's spirits from their very urns,"

with an innumerable company, unite, as such men have in nothing else, in confessing the matchless power that comes from our living Lord. From ancient, mediæval, and modern times their testimony crowds upon us. Irenæus of Lyons, the greatest name of ancient Gaul, declares that the Son of God was made man, and "recapitulated in himself the long exposition of humanity," that he "might accustom men to see God, and God to dwell in man." Tertullian, that fiery and exuberant soul of Northern Africa, whence came the earliest Latin Christian literature, affirms, "that Christ assumed a human soul, to save man in himself, because man could not be saved except by him, and while in him." Cyprian, the dauntless bishop of Carthage, asserts, "that what man is, Christ would be, so that man might be what Christ is." Origen, the glory of Oriental literature, avows, "that there was in Christ an intimate union of humanity and divinity, so that humanity

might become divine." Athanasius the Great, the Father of orthodoxy, the victor for Christianity at Nicæa, affirms against the Greeks, as a "rational" truth, "that the Logos alone could restore to man the divine image," and, yet more boldly, that "God was in man, that men might be made as God." St. Austin, the prince of Latin teachers, and whose name was second only to that of Paul in the Reformation, also confesses, that "God became man, that men might be as God," and he is so entranced with the vision of the glories of redemption, that in spite of the guilt of sin he could exclaim: "*O felix culpa, quæ talem ac tantum meruit habere redemptorem!*"* Anselm, too, who leads the scholastics and is the ablest of the archbishops of Canterbury, in his treatise, *Cur Deus Homo*, evinced the "rational necessity of redemption by an incarnation, since neither man nor angel could effect the work." Luther, the hero of the spiritual conflicts of the sixteenth century, asks, in tender wonder: "Is not that a great thing, that God is man, that God gives himself to man and will be his, as a man gives himself to his wife and is hers," and tells us, that he "who receives Christ's manhood has also his godhead." John Calvin, a name still feared and disparaged by effeminate thinkers, whose posthumous influence has been even greater than was the measure of his earthly toils, proclaims, "that it was meet that the Son of God should become to us Immanuel, that we might have the firm belief that God is dwelling with us" and, that "Christ is the mirror in whom we may without deception contemplate our own election." And it is Lord Bacon, whose philosophy is better known than his more profound theology, who has left it on record, that God is so holy and pure, "that neither angel, man, nor world, could stand or can stand one moment in his eye, without beholding the same in the face of a mediator;" "here," he adds, "is the true ladder fixed, whereby God might descend to his creatures, and his creatures might ascend to

* Richard a Sancto Victore repeats this, as follows (see Dorner, *Christology*):

O certe necessarium Adæ peccatum, quod Christi morte deletum est!

O felix culpa, quæ talem ac tantum meruit habere redemptorem!

God." And, not here to make more than a passing allusion to our own Edwards and his history of Redemption, the whole recent evangelical Theology of Germany, all its great men who have fought its fiercest battle with our faith's subtlest foes, unite with one consent in the main position of Schleiermacher, that "the specific element of Christianity is found in a fellowship with God, conditioned by the redemption that comes through the God-man."

In farther vindication of this idea of Christian theology it may be said, that our faith is seen to be the highest and best of systems, independent of philosophy, yet containing the wisest philosophy, when it is planted upon the rock, Jesus Christ. Both in theoretical completeness and practical efficiency, in its adaptation to all man's wants, the system which has Christ for its centre stands alone and unequalled. The theoretical problem of the highest system for human thought, and the practical problem of the most efficient system for human action, are solved by the Christian faith, when seen in its symmetry and felt in its power, as recapitulated in the person of the Son of God.

A complete system of truth must embrace both God and man, both time and eternity. It must have its ultimate grounds, beyond which our thoughts cannot reach; its ultimate ends, solving the problem of the final destiny of humanity; and it must contain in itself the powers, by which it can achieve the ends which it forecasts as needed and best. These tests of a real and final system of truth apply, we hold, to the Christian system, viewed as centring in the person and work of Christ, and to that alone.

It has its ultimate grounds, beyond which thought cannot penetrate. In the Divine being and agency; in the Triune subsistence and manifestation of the Godhead; in the intimate relations of nature and man to God, the creator and preserver of all; in the union of the infinite with the finite by that Incarnation, which is the groundwork of all revelation: in these, not to mention other truths, the Christian system has the firmest

ontological foundation, where all human thought may rest in that mysterious awe, which is essential to religion and inseparable from our finite capacities.

It has also its ultimate ends, comprising the final destiny of all that is created. Its principles reach from the inmost centre to the outmost periphery of human thought, desire, and wants, embracing the eternity of our being. Imagination cannot penetrate beyond its eternal kingdom; no principle can supersede or surpass its universal love, which subordinates to itself all other moralities. All the rightful interests of man, each in its several integrity, may be retained in this kingdom, if subordinated to its last end, the glory of God in redemption. And in that comprehensive end are comprised the wisdom and love of God the Father, the fulness of grace that is in Christ the Son, and those gifts of the Holy Ghost, which form a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, an eternal fellowship between God and man.

Nor is this all. For the same system is able not only to state, but to solve the great problems of human destiny, thus evincing its superiority to mere philosophy, and its inherent rationality. For the problems of the union of the finite with the infinite, of the reconciliation of a holy God with a sinful race, and of our personal and immortal destiny, which philosophy can only state, the Christian system solves. The full perception and conviction of this great fact about Christianity would end, and this alone can terminate, the unnatural war between philosophy and faith. For philosophy and faith are set at variance only by sin, and kept in discord only from not seeing Christ as he is! Philosophy and faith! both are from God; the one may descry the end, and the other gives us the means; the one states the problems, which the other solves: philosophy shows us the labyrinth, and Christ gives us the clue; the former recognises the necessity of redemption, the latter gives us the redemption itself. The two at variance! When every Christian knows, what one has said, that "when we speak the language of the

Bible, we speak our mother tongue ;” at variance! only when philosophy goes “sounding on its dim and perilous way,” averting the heart from Him who of God is made unto us wisdom, as well as, and because, righteousness and redemption ; at variance! only as the light of the sun is at variance with the heat of the sun, or as the light and heat of the great ruler of the day are at variance with the lesser lights that rule the night : at variance! only as redemption is at variance with sin, eternity with time, the Incarnation with the creation, and the God of grace with the God of justice! at variance! even, and only, as a true answer is at variance with a solemn question, as the solution of a problem is at variance with the problem itself ; since all that Christ proposes and does is to solve, in a practical, living method, the absorbing problem of the relation of man to God, and of sin to redemption. For this end was he born, and for this cause came he into the world, that he might be the King of eternal truth.

And the inherent superiority of the Christian system is also manifest in the fact, that it contains the efficient powers by which it can achieve the ends, which it declares to be best and needed. Theology, unlike philosophy, is a practical as well as a theoretical science : its object is to transform the Christian faith into the Christian life. How impotent is speculation, how mighty is faith, in doing the work which both know to be of vital necessity! Christianity fulfils its own prophecies ; it proves its divine origin by its superhuman victories. Every opposing religion, and every arrogant philosophy, it has overcome in its resistless march, and from them all, one after another, has been heard the expiring cry, wrested, it is said, from the apostate Julian : “Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!” It is more than realizing the vision of Cicero, in his “Laws,” that the “whole world is to be esteemed one community of gods and men.”* Through our earth it is diffusing the principle of jus-

* De Leg., Bk. i., c. 7.

tice, as it also here first made charity to be the greatest of the virtues. It has ennobled womanhood, sanctified childhood, spiritualized manhood, and opened to all the gates of endless life. It helps us to "strip off our fond and false identity," and "woos and clasps us to the eternal spheres." It has brought the kingdom of God to the very vision and heart of man. It touches our deepest and tenderest feelings, and makes us strong for conflict or submission. It awakens, that it may still the sense of guilt. It relieves our untold sorrows, and imparts those hidden joys no tongue can tell. Its inmost efficacy is seen in the formation of a holy mind, in the transformation of a sinner into a loving child of God, a marvel which neither science knows, nor art can imitate. And in the race, as in the soul, it creates new and higher wants, and satisfies them. Its promises irradiate the future, as its beneficence has blessed the past. Human rights and human wants demand its triumphs. The world travails and sighs for redemption, so that perpetual war may issue in perpetual peace; that oppression and caste may be abolished; that labor may be guided by moral law and not by the soulless rule of supply and demand; that our politics may be patriotic and just; that the terrible inequalities of social life may be eradicated, the hungry fed, the naked clothed; that the physical may be for the moral, and the moral for the spiritual; that our humanity may be one brotherhood, in Christ our elder brother and our King. All this is pledged in the triumph of his kingdom, foreshadowed in the promise of its millennial glory. And though some expositors, adhering to the letter, put that glory in a merely sensual and Jewish form,—reminding us of Milton's sarcasm, that "what to the Jew is only Jewish is for the Christian Canaanitish," yet, that it is to be a kingdom in which Christ shall reign and redemption be completed, is ensured to us by the faithful pledge of Him who has promised, and is alone able to effect, that grandest of consummations, that brightest vision of the race,—the ushering in of that "sacred, high, eternal noon," in which the kingdoms of the

world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.

We may crown and conclude our positions as to the theoretical and practical superiority of the system that centres in Christ, by the statement, that its practical efficacy is due to those very truths in which it is theoretically the most sublime. It has its power in the Trinity, Incarnation, the Atonement, Justification, and Regeneration. Its virtue is gone if you take from it the single idea of reunion with God through Christ; here is its simplest lesson contained in its grandest fact. Angels desire to know it, while children learn its power. That same system which is objective in the highest spiritual sense in its institution and authority, is also subjective in the most intimate manner in its workings and application, and the truths whereby it is the one, are the instruments whereby it is the other. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have eternal life:" here is the whole sublime and simple system, its source, its central truth, its power, its promise, its appeal and its felicity; it is all given us in this amazing fact which leads us more than any other to stand in awe before ourselves and God.

From this attempt at an exposition and vindication of the true nature of systematic theology, we pass to its application to our own times and controversies. Our limits, however, will allow us to refer only to the theological and not at all to the humanitarian or pantheistic tendencies of the day.

Those current dissensions, which unhappily divide our churches, have started from the Westminster Confession of Faith as their common historical source. This Confession is the ablest and ripest product of that great Reformation, which was so fruitful in symbolic literature. The Calvinistic or Reformed portion of the Protestant Church had the most prolific spiritual progeny of this kind. While the same type of theology runs through the Swiss, German, Dutch, French, Scotch, and even the Anglican Reformed bodies, they also have a greater variety

than the sister Lutheran churches. The Westminster Confession was the last of these larger Confessions, for that of Savoy in its doctrinal parts is almost verbally the same: it was produced in the most vigorous period of English theology, by as grave and discreet an Assembly as was ever convened in Europe. No creed, excepting that of Trent, was composed with such deliberation; none of modern times has had so wide and deep an influence. In the New England and the Presbyterian Churches of our land, none has superseded it. Other influences have helped our prosperity: but at its basis has been the system of faith, popularly known as Calvinism, but which is higher and better than any name of man, and which has come down to us through a long line of elect ones,—Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles; Augustine, whose symbol is a burning heart; the profound Anselm, and the subtle Aquinas; Luther, the hero, and Calvin, the constructive genius of the Reform; Pascal, who, with Calvin, made the French language to speak divinity; South, the keenest wit, and Leighton, the most spiritual thinker, of England's palmiest days; Knox, the fiery herald, and Chalmers, the exuberant orator of Scotch divinity; through Baxter and Bunyan, Owen and Howe, Edwards and Bellamy. It is a system which has always been the language of prayer when not of theology; its essence is found in that invocation of Augustine, which first stirred the polemics of Pelagius: "Give, O Lord, what thou orderest, and order what thou wilt." It dwells fondly upon the high articles of the divine majesty; its aim has ever been

"To vindicate eternal providence,
And justify the ways of God with men."

In holy awe and love, it always says, by the grace of God I am what I am; the only limit it puts upon the divine grace, is in the divine wisdom, not coercing the sinful will. It begins and ends with the adoration of one of old:—"Thou art the Lord of all Thou hast created; with Thee stand the causes of all that is unstable; with Thee abides the immutable origin of all that is

mutable ; with Thee lives the eternal reason of all that is irrational and temporal.”*

This general system of belief, earnest chiefly for the truth, austere chiefly towards sin, zealous in revivals, missions, and reform, has shaped our thoughts and manners. In its essential features it is doubtless held by many, whose terms and definitions are at variance. Our prominent, diverging tendencies, are, perhaps, better classed as theological and ethical, rather than by the invidious contrast of orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Polemical, and especially ecclesiastical zeal, has added fuel to the strife of words, dividing those who ought never to have been sundered. We see eye to eye, when we look into each other's hearts, and still that tongue, which an apostle calls an evil member. Quintilian might teach us, that “it should be esteemed among the virtues to be ignorant of some things.” Socrates makes Alcibiades confess, that he is most dogmatic about what he half knows and is half ignorant of. We might be both wiser and better by following the inspired sayings: Be not many masters ; and, Charity is the bond of perfectness.

Our doctrinal disputes may be traced back to the influence of the so-called New England Theology, coming into the Presbyterian Churches with that time-honored interchange of ministers, which has so widely blessed and united our whole land. These discussions, on the surface, refer to the greater or less tenacity with which the “ipsissima verba” of the confession are insisted upon ; but they have also a deeper ground.

In the Theology of the elder Edwards many find the seeds and summary of the strife. And he was a man, take him for all in all, we have not looked upon his like again ; simple yet profound ; subtle and comprehensive ; humble yet ardent ; of an

* Tu autem Domine, qui et semper vivis, et nihil moritur in te, quoniam ante primordia sæculorum, et ante omne, quod vel ante dici protest, Tu es, et Deus es, Dominusque omnium, quæ creasti ; et apud te rerum omnium instabilium stant causæ ; et rerum omnium mutabilia immutabiles manent origines ; et omnium irrationabilium et temporalium sempiternæ vivunt rationes.—August. Conf. i. 6.

intense spirituality and the keenest polemic sagacity. Had his general culture been equal to his spiritual insight, and his historic learning to his dialectic skill; had he speculated upon the objective facts as earnestly as upon the subjective aspects of the Christian faith; had he elaborated a whole system, instead of detached, yet vital portions; he would have bequeathed to us a more unrivalled fame. Yet still his wisdom is seen, not only in what he says, but in his failing to say some things. Sundry extreme positions are extracted from him by inference, not by testimony; it is what his expositors think he ought to have said, and not just what he did say. Thus fares it, for example, with the philosophemes, that all that is moral is in exercises; that the power to the contrary is the radical idea of freedom; and that virtue has ultimate respect to happiness. Neither the divine efficiency, nor the human efficiency, into which the New England controversies afterwards degenerated, can be justified from Edwards, any more than from our Confession of Faith. His object in his polemic treatises is to vindicate the Calvinistic system, as scriptural and rational, against the Arminian philosophy; his object in all his works is to magnify that new and spiritual life, which he knew so fully from his own ripe experience.

His Theory of the Nature of Virtue has been stigmatized as a covert utilitarianism; but this is a grand misconception of an elevated speculation; it is utilitarian, neither as making virtue consist in a tendency to happiness, nor, as making virtue to have an ultimate respect to happiness. Benevolence, or love, with him has respect to all good, and ultimate respect to the highest good, that is, in his view, to holiness and not to happiness.* His departures from the letter of the Westminster Con-

* This is Bellamy's authentic interpretation: "The good of being in general, which is the object of benevolence, is not the partial, but the complete good of being in general, comprising all the good that being is capable of, by whatever name called—natural, moral, spiritual. It is the sum of all good." Bellamy on this point represents the views of Edwards more correctly than have many others. See Bellamy's Life, in the last edition of his Works. The position that

fession are an enlargement and not a violation of its spirit, in a more comprehensive view of the end of God in creation; a deeper analysis of the nature of virtue; a more careful discrimination between natural and moral ability and inability; and a vindication of the fact, that imputation is mediate instead of immediate, or, that what is real in the relation between Adam and his posterity, and between Christ and his people, is at the basis of what is legal.

His leading works may all be grouped around one idea: *man in his relation to divine grace*. The state of man without grace is set forth in his treatise on "Original Sin," the most scriptural and profound disquisition on that theme in the English tongue: of the relation of sovereignty to free agency in the bestowal of grace, he treats with unmatched logic in his work on the "Freedom of the Will;" into the soul, as possessed of grace, he gives a ripe insight in the essays upon the "Religious Affections," and the "Nature of True Virtue," in the former in its practical bearings and in the latter in its ultimate theory; and the results of grace in application to the whole system he sets forth, theologically in his grand treatise on the "End of God in Creation,"—which he makes to be the divine glory manifest in the divine works, and, under its historical aspects, in his "History of Redemption," in which all of God's works and ways, all theology and all history, are exhibited as centring in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

The immediate school of Edwards, whom Nassau Hall made its president, was soon divided, as is the case with the followers of most great men, into two parties, both faithful to him, where

benevolence, in the system of Edwards, has ultimate respect to happiness, is not borne out by any consistent interpretation of his treatise on the Nature of True Virtue, and it is wholly inconsistent with his positions in his kindred work, "The End of God in Creation." His theory is, that virtue consists essentially in benevolence or love; in love to all that is, according to its dignity and value; in an impartial love, which seeks all the good of all that is, with ultimate respect to the highest good, or holiness. This love takes two chief forms, the love of benevolence and the love of complacency.

he enlarged the thought of theology, but both raising new questions. Bellamy annihilated the logic of the Antinomians; Smalley elaborated most carefully the distinction between natural ability and moral inability. Hopkins adds the epithet "disinterested" to benevolence, and once alludes to the possibility of resolving all that precedes choice into a divine constitution, though he does not teach the dogma of an uncorrupt human constitution. That sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, and that a willingness to be damned is the best ground for the conviction that we never shall be, were consequences deduced from his theories. Emmons, in the spirit of Berkeley's nominalism, resolves the soul into a series of exercises, and of course holds that all sin consists in sinning; but he held as strongly that the direct divine efficiency is the source of all exercises; and many who plead his authority, adopt his exercises without their efficiency. Justification he consistently resolves into mere pardon. Next comes the notorious distinction into the men of Taste and the men of Exercise; the former resting upon the authority of the elder Edwards, Bellamy, Smalley, Burton, Dwight, and possibly Hopkins also; the latter, really derived from the younger Edwards, but resting in the abstractions of the logical Emmons. But this original and as yet unwritten theological movement found its extremes, chiefly in the consequences urged upon the two theories of divine efficiency and of disinterested benevolence.

These led of course to a violent reaction, bringing up the counter poles. The reaction from the theory of divine efficiency led to the theory of an ultimate human efficiency in all that can be termed moral; our choice, and that alone, it was said, constitutes morality in man. Disinterested benevolence stirred up the impulse of self-love, which was taken out of its proper place as a mere psychological fact and made to be the basis of an ethical theory, the main-spring of moral action. The soul was indeed reinstated in its native rights, as a real substance, but the exercise theory was retained as ultimate in ethics, and the direct

divine efficiency banished to unknown recesses. The metaphysical paradox, that sin is the necessary means of the highest good, was supplanted by the theological paradox, that it may be that God could not prevent all sin in a moral system. On the general basis of the Scotch philosophy, a consistent theory was constructed, if we only allow the ultimate formula in ethics to be this—that the will always chooses happiness with plenary power to the contrary. It is an ethical and not a theological theory; God's agency as a moral governor is always external to choice. It is a theory of pure individualism, set over against a scheme of unqualified sovereignty.

That in both of these extreme tendencies there is a deviation from the wise tradition of Calvinistic theology, and also from the Fathers of New England theology, I need not stop to prove or argue. Neither on an abstract divine efficiency, nor on an equally abstract ethical theory, have our confessions or systems been founded as their ultimate idea. And it is in its bearings upon the whole system of Christian theology as a *system* that I would speak of this ethical theory. In giving shape to Christian theology, and the final statements of Christian doctrine, especially in respect to nature and grace, are we to apply the test of such an ethical theory? Is ethics to say the last word, to give the final definition? This is the vital question at the heart of these discussions.

It is not to be doubted that all doctrines should be held and stated so as not to conflict with a true psychology and a valid ethics. Ethical truth has a relative value in the Christian scheme. But if intellectual and moral philosophy be the ultimate standard, are we not forced to the inference that in the controversy between philosophy and faith, philosophy or the intellectual form of truth is the final arbiter? Nor need we doubt that if we have a moral system, profound enough, like that of Edwards, to cover the methods and ends of God's real system, it would not matter much whether we called it a moral or a theological scheme. But the case is different when we assume some

merely naturalistic system as the touch-stone by which to try the Spirit of God. When, for example, God's whole government is vindicated by the fond fancy of a power to the contrary, so far as that is distinguishable from the power of choice, and which is never exercised, nor can be, without losing its identity; and when the whole of virtue is made so abstract, that nobody ever did or can experience it; when happiness is made its ultimate object, and that, too, a happiness which in its last analysis must be a form of self-love, and which, if it become, as self-love, the direct object of virtuous choice, would give us the very essence of sin; and when the whole anthropology and soteriology of the Christian system, and its theodicy too, are made to rest on such barren abstractions, we have come, I think, about to the end of ethics, and if we make it the beginning of theology we shall soon find its end in its beginning. Not in such lean abstractions was the hiding-place of the strength of the theology of the fathers of New England. That was hid with Christ in God; holiness and not happiness, God's will and not man's, was the soul of their system.

To illustrate the bearings of such a moral system upon the scheme of Christian truth, let us suppose it drawn out in more articulate statements, and conduct it to its inferences, holding only logic responsible for the same, and not meaning to apply either the principles or the deductions to any man or body of men, but only to systematic theology.

God, let it be said, governs all his moral creatures by and in a moral system; Christianity is essentially such a system. A moral system is one administered by moral law. A moral law is a rule of action addressed by sanctions and motives to moral agents. A moral agent is one who chooses with plenary power to the opposite, which power is available even for holiness without grace. Choice of the general good or happiness is the whole of virtue, and merits eternal happiness. Choice of a less good is the whole of sin, and deserves eternal punishment. The whole of moral government is restricted and confined to such

exercises of choice. Nothing else can have moral terms properly applied to it excepting such conscious choices.

Let us suppose, now, such a scheme applied as the ultimate standard to the Christian system, as contained in the Bible, in our experience, in our confessions. Let the express or implied understanding be, that the facts and truths of the Christian faith are to be modified so as to meet the requisitions of such an ethical theory.

The idea of the Christian system, as we have seen, is contained in the fact that it is the religion of Redemption, centering in the person and work of Christ. It supposes a race lost in sin, and for a general ruin it provides an equally general atonement made for us by Christ, and applied in our justification, regeneration, and sanctification, through the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit.

What part of this Christian system is ejected from the moral sphere by such an ethical theory?

It of course excludes all original sin; it was made to do that. It is idle and fallacious to apply any terms, which have even a lingering shade of moral quality about them, to our native condition, since conscious choice alone makes morality: not even a "sinful" bias can be left. It also follows, that God's moral government, as such, has nothing to do with the race, but only with individuals. The theory also excludes the influences of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification from the sphere of morality in us, so far as these are not the objects of conscious choice; for it says, that choice of the highest good, and that alone, is holiness.* It also excludes all spontaneous affections and desires, so far as not absolutely under the will's origination and control. And hence it has been consistently said, that a man's will may be wholly for God, and all his affections tending to the world and self. The regeneration of

* See Julius Müller's Address on Pelagianism, in the "Deutsche Zeitschrift," 1854.

infants is impossible, or else there are two kinds of regeneration, one of which is moral and the other not. Native depravity, as a moral state, is impossible, or else there are two kinds of depravity, one of which is moral and the other not. All the influence of the race upon or in us, all the influence of Divine Grace upon or in us, all the influence of our own natures and affections upon or in us, are absolutely excluded from our moral sphere, so far as these are not our choice, with full power to the contrary. And what have we left, but an abstract series of exercises, the very shadow of ourselves, as our moral realm? In the popular mind, what we do, and not what we are, becomes the standard of character. The fatal defect of the whole scheme is in defining what is moral, ultimately by its cause or desert, and not by its nature.*

How, too, can the atonement and justification be brought under this ethical system? Can one being act for another, in such a sense, that his merits may be the moral ground of the other's justification? If he can, then the whole of moral government is not found in each one's individual choices, which seems to overthrow this whole system. Consistently with such a system, it would seem that we must say, that justification can only be on the ground of each man's own choice, as holy or as containing the germs of holiness; and does not this annul the doctrine of justification by faith? Even if we say that Christ satisfied public justice, the question still remains, does his work belong to a moral government, or not? If it does, then, is there not more included in a moral government, than each man's in-

* Such results as those which Müller urges in opposition to this theory, are inevitable, when the canon, which Edwards lays down so carefully, is disregarded, "that the virtue or vice of the dispositions and acts of the soul, lies not in their cause, but in their nature." So soon as we make the ultimate test of our definitions to be the cause of the acts, that is, the will's choice, or the desert of the acts, and not their inherent nature, the above conclusions seem to be inevitable.

dividual choices? If it does not belong to a moral government, where does it belong? Is it physical, or is it to be resolved into mere sovereignty? Or are there, somehow, two kinds of moral government? Paul says, Christ was made under the law, that he might redeem them that are under the law: Pelagius says, "God makes us men and we make ourselves just."

When this same theory makes the atoning work of Christ to be a merely governmental scheme, it fails to answer the question; *How* does the atonement satisfy the ends of public justice? What are these ends, which it satisfies, and how does it satisfy these ends? If public justice be taken as equivalent to benevolence, and benevolence be defined as having ultimate respect to happiness, it is difficult to see, how a proper theory of the atonement can be constructed on this basis. All that remains is, to consider the atonement as a means of moral impression. But how can it produce even this moral impression, unless it be considered as satisfying the demands of the divine holiness?

The whole penalty of sin, from which Christ redeems us, it is claimed by this theory, is eternal death, meaning thereby solely the infliction of the full penalty of the law in a future life. There is then, of course, no instance of the infliction of any proper punishment for sin in the present life.* God does not govern men here by any actual punishments. This appears to be more consistent with the theory of Combe's Constitution of Man than with the arguments in Butler's Analogy. How, too, on this system, can God be said to exercise a proper moral government over nations? Does not God, as a moral Governor, punish nations here?

* With a singular inconsistency, it is said, that Christ did not in any sense endure the penalty of the law, because he did not suffer remorse; and at the same time it is said, that the whole of the penalty is in the future life. Do not men suffer remorse here? Is it here not a penalty, and in the future world is it a penalty?

On the assumption of the same theory, that man, without Divine Grace, has adequate power to make to himself a new heart, the old and careful distinctions between natural and moral ability and inability lose all their value, for in these it was always implied, that on account of our moral inability our natural ability was not available for holiness, without grace. To sunder the natural ability from the moral inability violates the whole aim of these distinctions. While to will is present with us, yet how to perform that which is good we find not, excepting by grace. Not to press the position, that perfectionism is the logical result of this theory, let us suppose, by way of test, that the assumed power, without grace, is actually exercised. Would it, could it, be a holy choice, without divine influence? Does not religion in its very essence imply a union of the divine with the human? Without the presence of God in the soul, all that we can choose is an idea of God or Christ, or some abstract general good; and is not this the very essence of a pantheistic religion? It is not enough here to say, with the pagans, "*non sine numine*," for every religious act must be from, through, and to God.

So far as this theory also makes happiness to be the ultimate object of virtuous choice, it suggests various questions. Is not its only consistent form the theory of self-love, since all happiness in the last result must be a subjective state? In this form does it not substitute a mere psychological for an ethical fact? Does the virtue of love to God consist in an ultimate choice either of His happiness or of our own? How does the atonement of Christ meet the demands of such a happiness theory? Did He satisfy public justice; and is that the sum of such subjective happiness? How can happiness be shown to be the only good? Are there not different kinds of happiness? What makes moral happiness to be best, and to be different from all other kinds? And when we have answered the last question, are we not beyond any mere happiness theory?

Such are some of the results which seem to follow when such an ethical system is made the measure and final test of the system of theology. All that is objective and vital in the Christian system is relegated from the moral sphere. Christianity is a sort of outside scheme and expedient, and not an experienced reality. From such ethical abstractions you cannot derive a single Christian truth. A system of theology constituted on this basis, is, at the beginning and end, a mere system of ethics. Instead of Christian truth we get metaphysical unrealities, *stat nominis umbra*; we have a ghostly form without flesh or blood, in place of the radiant person of the Son of God. The vital power of the Incarnation and the Atonement is gone: for the theory leaves both outside of the strict moral sphere. The terms of specific Christian truth may be retained, but their soul is eaten out by a strange fire; they may be used in deference to the ear and to the "memory of the heart," but the intellect is warned against them. A parasitic naturalism is meanwhile feeding its own life with the grace which it supplants. Besides all that such ethics can give us we must have the whole of Christianity too, if we would be Christians.

These results, we think, follow, when an ethical system usurps the supremacy in the construction of Christian theology. We do not mean to intimate that any evangelical men accept these consequences; only avowed rationalists can do this. Nor do we deny to ethics an appropriate place in the system of theology and in preaching. Even the extreme ethical theories have helped to counteract some vicious ultraisms, to check some excesses, and to lop off some excrescences. They are counter to some extreme contraries. Antimonianism is rebutted by the position that holiness is necessary to real faith. "Unregenerate doings" have been supplanted by the Gospel call to immediate repentance. The antipodes to an arbitrary will of God is an equally arbitrary will of man. A metaphysical ability is set over against an equally metaphysical inability. Self-love has its claims against the demand that we should be willing to be

cast off for ever. A supralapsarian theology reacts into the irrational dogma that sin is no part of the divine plan. From the abhorrent notion that infants are actually condemned to eternal death for Adam's sin, some have found relief by saying that infants are only animals. The one extreme, that God does all for himself, as self, calls up the other, that God's whole aim is the happiness of his creatures. None of these extremes can be held or preached. Such ethics and such divinity counteract each other. The real power of our theology is not found in either, but rather in giving us a Gospel which can be preached; in its call to immediate repentance under the influences of the Holy Spirit; in its offer of eternal life in Christ to all on the ground of his atonement made for all; in its doctrine of grace rather than of ability; in its exaltation of the spiritual rather than of the natural; in its love and not its self-love; and in its harmony with rather than in its deviations from the older confessions.*

When such an ethical system comes out of its proper place, as a counteracting agency to an equally abstract theology, and usurps authority over the whole realm of Christian truth, we say it has mistaken its office and place. It can have something to say only in a narrow sphere of theology, the point where divine and human agency come together, with the application of the Christian system, taken for granted, to the heart and life. When it assumes more than this, we bring against it the whole objective force of the Christian revelation, and say, thus far,

* The true New England theology is not to be held responsible for such an ethical theory, as the ultimate theory in theology, or as the controlling theory in constructing the system of theology. Such a theory is abstracted, and not deduced, from the fathers of New England theology; it is really taken from a philosophy which runs counter to their real spirit, and is imposed upon them by an arbitrary logic. Through their speculations are to be traced two entirely distinct tendencies; the one, the highest-toned Calvinism in the matter of Divine Sovereignty; the other, the formulas of natural ethics. But it was the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, and not mere ethical truth, which was at the basis of their systems and gave the tone to their preaching.

and no farther. Then, if we would not make Christ the bondsman of nature, we are obliged to say, that these ethical formulas are not our ultimate truths; that they give us practical and not essential verity; that its phrases are popular and not scientific, the language of the understanding and not of the reason, of the common ear and not of the divine oracles, nor of scientific theology. The terms of our older creeds are sometimes spoken of in a patronizing way, and we are told that we may be allowed to use them, if we will be careful to explain them by the light of the advanced state of intellectual and moral philosophy in the nineteenth century. But it is at least doubtful, whether in such phrases as original sin, justification by faith, and union with Christ, there is not more of the solid simplicity of both theology and philosophy, than in the position, that we must choose the highest happiness of the universe as our supreme good with full power to the contrary. Such ethics, as compared even with the Apostles' Creed, is an essentially superficial affair, made on the basis of a philosophy which abjures metaphysics, and finds all truth in common sense.

Nor can such an ethical system satisfy man's profoundest wants, or solve the real problems of his destiny. It answers the high questions of our fate to the ear and not to the heart. It is mute before our deepest experience, of conscious guilt for our radical sinfulness, and of joyful freedom in a holiness which our wills did not and could not originate. It makes morality and religion a surface matter; not what we are, but what we do, becomes the standard. In the Bible, if seen at all, it is only as flitting on the surface of here and there some solitary texts. In historical theology it is not at home excepting with Arius, Pelagius, and the Arminians; and in the Christian symbols, from Nice to Westminster, it is found only as a contingency. And in the conflicts of Christianity with its present subtle forces, if we plant our theology on such a basis, we cannot withstand the pressure of the pantheistic idealism on the one extreme, or of solid materialism on the other, or of the historical

tradition in which the Papacy claims its power. For such an ethical system does not meet the speculative demand, which pantheism tries to satisfy; nor has it a body of facts to oppose to the material realities; and it is wholly cut off from the line of Christian development which Rome vainly pretends to be its own. It does not give us that objective, historical basis, nor that mysterious depth and awe, nor those physical relations of both sin and redemption, which are essential to the permanency and authority of the Christian system. Here are conflicts and questions our fathers dreamed not of; what might have satisfied their exigencies, taking as they did the whole of objective Christianity for granted, cannot meet the necessities of our contests with the combined forces of spiritualism, materialism, and traditionalism.

In assigning this position to ethics in its relations to Christian theology we are borne out, not only by the growing convictions of sober thinkers among ourselves, but also by the verdict and methods of the whole evangelical school of the recent German theology. They have grappled with the questions just beginning to agitate us. Whatever their other differences, they have all renounced the position, that ethics can lawfully give shape to the truths of Christianity. Schleiermacher, Neander, Müller, Tholuck, and all the authors of the recent treatises in doctrinal theology, Twisten, Ebrard, Thomasius, Martensen, Liebner, and Hoffmann, make Christ and his redemption the centre of the system, as contrasted with any ethical scheme.

And here is the true point of contrast and comparisons between a system of theology which finds its constructive principles in ethics, and one which finds these principles in Christ. It is in what we have endeavored to vindicate as the true idea of a system of theology. By scripture, by history, by all the symbols of our faith, by all the avowals of spiritual experience, the Christian system is proved to be more than, and distinct from, any mere scheme of moral government. It can subordinate ethics to itself, but it cannot subordinate itself to ethics.

without self-annihilation. It is theological and not ethical, in its inmost nature. It is a system of divine realities, having an objective validity as well as a subjective influence. All in it is from, for, and to God; the triune deity is at its foundation, manifested and revealed in the whole of history, and centering in the Incarnation. Resting on this basis, the Christian system views the human race, not as a mere collection of separate units, but as existing in two prime relations, that to the first, and that to the second Adam. The whole Christian doctrine of sin runs back to our union with the first Adam in the fall; the whole Christian doctrine of redemption runs back to our relation to the second Adam, which is the Lord from heaven, in his Incarnation and Atonement. And these relations are spiritual and moral, and not merely physical; they are thus set forth in the fifth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans, which contains the final revealed facts on both these points, and the heart of the difference between Christianity and ethics. A moral system gives us, at the utmost, man as he might be *in puris naturalibus*; the Christian system starts with man in his real position, lost and needing redemption. The former runs back only to our acts of choice; the Gospel rests in our union with Christ: the freedom of the one is the bare power of choice, the freedom of the other is in a glad submission to Jesus. The one knows only pardon for sin, the other reunites us to Christ, by real, yet mystical bonds, and thus justifies as well as pardons: the righteousness of the former is constituted by our wills, the righteousness of the latter is of God through faith in Christ alone. The one vindicates God's government on naturalistic grounds, the other by means of God's own plan. The Gospel rests in facts and submits to mysteries, "ungrasped by minds create;" ethics would make all clear to the understanding by a logical definition. The working power of ethics is in the sense of duty; the weight of the Gospel is in its supernatural truths, in the sense of sin, in the love of God, in the love of Jesus.

"Talk they of morals! Oh! thou bleeding Love,
The maker of new morals to mankind;
The grand morality is love to thee."

The one makes the good of the creature to be the end of the system, the other the glory of God made extant and supreme, that God may be all in all. The one is a psychology; the other is a Christology.

You have called me, Fathers and Brethren of the Board of Directors of this Seminary, to the responsible post of a teacher of Christian theology, at a time when there are increasing divisions within the Church, both ecclesiastical and doctrinal, and when the powers of superstition and unbelief are assailing our common Evangelical Christianity. To allay its internal contests, and to oppose its inveterate foes, the Church needs to come nearer to Christ. As He is the restorer of our peace, so should He be the restorer of our science and theology. I have spoken my mind frankly on some of the great topics which agitate and divide us. I have spoken with the deepest conviction as to what is our vital need. I may have crossed some prejudices, and have pleased no extreme and no partisan; but I have spoken only against a system, and not against parties or men. To mediate between our extremes is our vital need, and such mediation can only be found in Christ, and not in an ethical system. As the central idea of the whole Christian system is in mediation, so should this be the spirit of our theology, the spirit of our lives. There is a higher unity, which is not the indefinite middle between the two extremes. There is a golden mean, where discord is lost in concord. The pendulum, as it oscillates from end to end, ever passes over its centre, while it moves the hands of time. There is a common orthodoxy, as well as these embittered antagonisms. Whatever partisans may say, we are forced to be either Antimonians or Arminians: we are not left to the alternative of blind fate or irrational contingency; we are not shut up to a divine efficiency which makes God the author of sin, or to a human efficiency which makes

man the author of holiness, to an imputation of Adam's sin without personal participation, or to a denial of all moral connection between the race and its head; to saying, that all sin is sinning, or that all sin is in its essence a passive state; to the dilemma, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, or that God could not prevent it in a moral system; to a theory of the atonement which makes it either a spectacle or a bargain, a mere means of moral impression or the literal infliction of the strictest distributive justice; to a wholly external or a merely internal justification; to a redemption without regeneration, or a regeneration without justification; to the alternative of a theory of virtue which makes happiness its end, or to a theory which makes it consist in a merely abstract rectitude; to a Trinity without unity, or a unity without the Trinity; to an exclusively immanent or a merely manifested Trinity. Nor yet, in fine, are we left only the choice between a theology of the covenants and a bare moral system. These extremes annul each other, and prepare the way for Christ. Between them He is, as it were, crucified afresh, as of old between the two malefactors; it is in Him, and not in them, that the Church is to trust; it is in Him, and not in them, that the life of the soul and the light of theology are to be found. Both the divine and human elements of theology centre and are harmonized in the person and work of the God-man. He is the only mediator: He is the only reconciler. For every soul that trusts in Him he solves the whole problem of sin and of redemption; in every living heart he is doing every day and hour, what our theology has been seeking after, wandering, alas! so far from Him. The organon of Christianity, of theology, of history, of the universe, is to be found in Him, if found at all. And when our science returns to him, when it comes and rests in the Divine Word, the Divine Reason, the Divine Reconciler, then we shall have a complete philosophy, and a complete theology, and they shall both be one. For, as Lord Bacon has said, in the very spirit of the wisest induction, all things "in time and

eternity have respect to the Mediator, which is the great mystery and perfect centre of all God's ways, and to which all his other works and wonders do but serve and refer." And, as a higher inspiration has declared, He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last; his goings forth have been ever of old; it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and in Him all things are to be made new, a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

And when the system of Christian theology shall be seen by the eye of science, as well as by the eye of faith, to be rooted and grounded in Him, then shall it be redeemed from neglect, and elevated again to its true position, as the queen of the sciences, their sacred port. Every base thing of human passion, and every high imagination of unsanctified reason, has raised its front against the holy majesty of divine truth. She has been dishonored, defamed, yea, despised. Every crude science has entered the lists against her. The records of the solid rocks of earth, and the registry of the hosts of heaven, have been invoked to bear witness against her reverend rights. Literature, science, and art oft think themselves not "poor enough" to pay their homage unto her, who, as Queen of the Sciences, once sat in the seat of princes, and gave laws to the state, and wisdom to philosophy, and ruled the wisest of her race in their inmost thoughts and being! Now, like her Divine Master, she seems to have descended for a time from her regal state, and laid aside her robes of majesty, while the long pomp of worldly principalities and powers is passing by, regardless of her venerable honor. Yet, with proud humility, never can she forget or disown her celestial origin and rights, but still, with the voice of eternal love and wisdom, calls ever as of old in the name of Christ: Come, learn of me; I am the way and the truth and the life; come, ye weary, and I will give you rest; come, ye lost, and I will give to you salvation; come, ye discordant sciences, and I will teach you a celestial concord; come, all dispersed by the

confusion of mortal tongues, and learn the imperishable language of the immortals. For this I left my native sphere, and chose thy earth my place of exile, for thy good, that I might give to science its last principles, to art its highest themes, to literature its divinity, to man his God, the race its redemption, that thus through Christ all things might be reconciled unto God, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven.

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