

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

VOL. XII.—No. III.

OCTOBER, MDCCCLIX.

ARTICLE I.

REVISED BOOK OF DISCIPLINE.

The Revised Book of Discipline, by having been reported to the last General Assembly, has become, in some sort, the property of the Church; and as its fate will, in all likelihood, be settled by the next Assembly, it is a matter of grave importance that the principles it embodies should be rightly understood, and the grounds and tendencies of the changes introduced in it set in their true light. It has already been subjected to a severe criticism—a criticism extremely kind in its spirit and temper to the authors of the book, but without the slightest mercy or favor to the peculiarities of the book itself. The contrast between the courtesy with which the members of the Committee, personally considered, have been treated, and the freedom with which their production has been handled, may be taken as an apt illustration of the genius of Presbyterianism, which teaches charity to the man without concessions to his errors, and which, while it repudiates all human authority, endeavors to observe the maxim: Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. We thank our brethren for the good opinion they have expressed of us. Indeed our modesty might have been shocked at the laudatory terms which they have

is deceptive and external, only needing a match to be applied in order to explode the mine. The match was applied in one of the most offensive and incendiary speeches ever flung upon a deliberative assembly; and it went quietly out, simply because there was no train which it could ignite. Above all, we rejoice in the evidence furnished by the debates, that the church is more and more clearly comprehending her own principles, and more and more earnestly addressing her energies to the great work of subduing the world to Christ, her Lord.

ARTICLE VIII.

The Knowledge of God, Subjectively Considered. Being the Second Part of Theology considered as a Science of Positive Truth, both inductive and deductive. By ROBERT J. BRECKINRIDGE, D.D., LL.D., Professor of Theology in the Seminary at Danville, Kentucky. *Non sine luce.* New York: Robert Carter & Brothers. Louisville: A. Davidson. 1859; pp. 697.

That a second volume, so weighty in matter and so bulky in form, should have been written and prepared for the press within the time that has elapsed since the publication of the first, is a testimony to the diligence and industry of the author which vindicates him from all suspicion of making his professorship a sinecure. Dr. Breckinridge measures life by labor and not by years. A man of action, he finds no place for rest, he seeks no repose, in this sublunary scene, where the Master's commission is only to work. The truth is, in every state the unimpeded exercise of energy is bliss—it is not action, but toil, not exertion but drudgery, that constitutes the bitterness of labor—soundness of mind is as inconsistent with torpor as soundness of body with lethargy. Motion is the sign of life, and delight in motion an unfailing symptom of health. It is an omen of good that our Professors, in all our Seminaries, seem to

be working men. Princeton, year after year, is sending forth volumes of sacred criticism, which are not surpassed in genius, scholarship and piety, by the productions of any other school in Europe or America. She has taken her place as an authority abroad. Danville, in her infancy, has vindicated her claim to the title of a first-class institution, by works which belong to the highest regions of thought. Allegheny is not idle; every Sunday School, and almost every Presbyterian family, bear witness to the quiet and unostentatious labors which are prosecuted within her walls. Our friends at Union are notoriously indefatigable, and we have no doubt that the North-west will not be long in putting her light in a candlestick, from which it may be radiated through the whole church. It is, perhaps, enough for our humble selves to read what our brethren write, and if any man thinks that it is no labor to peruse their teeming works, and occasionally sit in judgment upon them, we would say to him, as a Baptist Minister said to his congregation when, upon entering his pulpit, he found his head prove truant to his tongue, "if any man thinks it easy to preach let him come here and try it." In reading Dr. Breckinridge's massive volumes, we are reminded of an anecdote of himself when he was a pastor in Baltimore. On a certain Sunday his pulpit had been filled three times by ministers returning from the General Assembly, and at the close of the day he was asked in our presence by a member of his congregation how he felt? "Oh, very tired! very much exhausted!" "Tired? How on earth can that be, when you have been resting the whole day?" "Resting? resting?" said the Doctor, "do you call it rest to listen to such preaching, and then to be compelled to understand it? Why, sir, I never worked so hard in my life." If, upon going through the 697 pages which make up the volume before us, any one should be asked, whether he had had an easy time of it, he might answer, and if he were a spiritual man, he certainly would answer, that he had had a most delightful time of it, most profitable and refreshing, but he would be far from saying that there had been no tax upon his intellectual energies. It is a work which cost labor, and it exacts labor in order to master it. But the

labor is not unrequited. Diligence here, as in the culture of the earth, maketh rich. Dr. Breckinridge, to use the beautiful simile of Milton, conducts us to a hill-side, laborious indeed at the first ascent, but else so smooth, so green, so full of goodly prospects and melodious sounds on every side, that the harp of Orpheus was not more charming.

The book bears the image of the author; it is a faithful transcript of his mind. The tendency to seize the abstract in the concrete, to detect the law in the fact; intensity of energy manifested in a fervor of expression, amounting not unfrequently to positive exaggeration; bursts of passion, often swelling into the highest eloquence, or breaking forth into terrible invective, or subsiding into the tenderest tones of pathos; sudden alternations from the most opposite extremes, from the gay to the grave, from the lion to the lamb, are as conspicuous in the book as in the man; and if his name had not been upon the title page, albeit not gifted with any extraordinary power of guessing, we should have been at no loss in divining the author.

The general design of the book is to trace the history and progress of religion, whether personally considered as manifested in the individual, or collectively considered as manifested in the church. The first volume discussed Theology as a doctrine, the second treats it as a life. In the first volume the science was purely speculative, in the second it is wholly practical. In the first the scheme of redemption, and the great truths which it pre-supposes and involves, were merely the object matter of thought. In the second they are living springs of energy, subjective laws and powers in the soul of man. The first volume aims simply to describe the theologian, the second portrays the Christian believer. It may, therefore, be regarded as a treatise of experimental religion, and its special province is to exhibit the work of the Holy Ghost in applying redemption to the hearts of men. The book falls into two general divisions, religion as produced and manifested in the individual, religion as producing and manifested in the church; for Dr. Breckinridge considers the church as subsequent in the order of thought to the individual, the outward organic expression of an inward spiritual life. With him the

church as naturally springs from the common relation of individual believers to Christ, as the family from the relation of children to the same parent. The following is his own summary of the general contents of the volume.

“The order of the general demonstration may be made intelligible by a brief statement. In the First Book I attempt to trace and to prove the manner in which the knowledge of God unto salvation passes over from being merely objective, and becomes subjective. In the Second Book I endeavor to disclose, and to demonstrate, the whole work of God in man unto his personal salvation. In the Third Book, the personal effects and results of this divine, subjective work, are sought to be explicated. This seems to me to exhaust the subject in its subjective personal aspect. But these individual Christians, by means of their union with Christ and their consequent communion with each other, are organized by God into a visible kingdom; which has a direct and precise relation to the subjective consideration of the knowledge of God. From this point, therefore, the social and organic aspect of the subject arises; and the Fourth Book is occupied with what is designed to be a demonstration of the church of the living God. But just as the work of grace in individual men is necessarily followed by the Christian offices, and so the subject of the Third Book necessarily followed the subject of the Second; in like manner the consideration of the gifts of God to his church, and of all the effects of these gifts, follows the organization and progress of the visible church in a peculiar manner. And thus the subject of the Fourth Book leads directly to the subject of the Fifth, in which the life, action and organism of the church are discussed, with reference to the special gifts bestowed on it by God. And here the organic aspect of the knowledge of God unto salvation, subjectively considered, seems to terminate. What remains is the general conclusion of the whole subject in a very brief attempt to estimate the progress and result of these divine realities, and to disclose the revealed consummation of God’s works of creation, providence and grace.”

Dr. Breckinridge begins with a graphic description of the actual posture of the universe under the condemnation of sin, as modified by the introduction of grace. He shows that the Scriptural accounts of the fall and of redemption are the only facts which are competent to explain the mysteries of our present condition. The world is not what it would have been, and what it must have been, had there been no purpose of deliverance; it is not what it would have been, and what it must have been, had the deliverance been universal as the curse. The election of grace modifies every thing, so as to pro-

duce and to explain the precise dispensation of mingled good and evil which we daily experience. Our race is in ruins, but not hopelessly lost. God has a seed to be collected from it, and the whole career of Providence is but the evolution of the plan by which He displays His grace in the vessels of mercy, and gloriously vindicates His justice in the vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction. We are neither in the incipient state of moral beings, probationers for life under law, nor in the final state of punishment or reward. We have been tried and have failed, but are not yet wholly abandoned to despair. Intermediate between the fall and its final issue is a dispensation of mercy, which looks to the full execution of the sentence or its complete remission, according as the offered Saviour is received or rejected. In the meantime, the blessing and the curse are marvellously intermingled. Good and evil are in constant and terrible conflict, and the miseries of our lot are made the instruments of a wholesome discipline, or the proofs of incorrigible impenitence.

Dr. Breckinridge next proceeds to unfold the nature and general provisions of that Covenant through which this modifying grace has found its way into our world. The discussion of this topic, without being scholastic or technical, is logically complete. It is more—it is rich and Scriptural, and in the sublime march of the principles which are successively evolved, the petty cavils of petty minds against the supremacy and sovereignty of God, are felt to be contemptible. One of the most delightful features of this book is the conviction which everywhere pervades it, that God's character needs no apology at the bar of sinners. Dr. Breckinridge never shrinks from the offensive truths of the Gospel. He brings them out plainly, fully, boldly and confidently. He opens his mouth wide, and utters all that God has revealed. Election, particular redemption, efficacious grace—he scouts the notion of the possibility of salvation, without recognising these elements. Grace with him is real grace, and not an euphemistic name for a result actually dependent upon the will of the creature. Christ is a real Saviour, and not an instrument by which the sinner is enabled to gratify his pride. The Holy Ghost is a real sancti-

fier, and not an influence by which the energies of men are stimulated, and their better impulses roused into action. The Persons of the glorious Trinity have entered into a real covenant to redeem a church from the lost multitude of the race, and are not the authors of paltry expedients, or abortive efforts to coax men into what they find it impossible to effect. The problem of sin is a problem with which, according to Dr. Breckinridge, God is competent to deal. It is not something unexpected; not something which He could not have prevented, and which fills Him with regret as He looks upon the universe, perverted from its end. It did not take Him by surprise. In the depths of eternity, the fall of angels and of men was distinctly contemplated, and that eternal Covenant established which, in its final evolution, was to bring infinite glory to the wisdom, goodness and power of God, from the whole manner in which He has dealt with, and manifested the infinite resources of His being in dealing with, this vast question. Dr. Breckinridge next shows that the provisions of the covenant are not arbitrary or capricious, but exactly adapted to the moral and intellectual nature of man. The plan of salvation is precisely such a plan as the exigencies of sinners demanded. It fits their case as the form of the key corresponds to the wards of the lock. Man is dealt with as a rational and accountable being, and every element of the constitution which God gave him is minutely respected in the method by which God saves him. And yet the plan, while it disturbs not the freedom of man, is so ordered that salvation is no contingency. The scheme is incapable of failure. So far from being a wonder that the elect are saved, the marvel would be how any of them could be lost. Here is the mystery of infinite wisdom and of infinite grace. How absurd, in the light of such provisions, provisions revealed in the Scriptures and realized in the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands of God's children, to represent sin as something too strong for the Almighty!

The next topics brought before us are the conditions with respect to the sinner, upon which the promises of the Covenant are suspended—that is, what God requires of us in order that

we may be saved. Here Dr. Breckinridge concurs with that class of the Reformed Divines who resolve them into *two*, repentance and faith. The double relation of these graces, as duties in themselves and as the means of other benefits, is carefully noted. They do not save as duties—that would be legalism—but as graces involving a peculiar relation to Christ and to God. Here we think the reduction unscriptural, and the argument illusive. The term *condition*, if taken in the general sense of a preliminary requisite, is applicable to every grace which precedes the final result, as well as to faith and repentance. It is applicable to meditation, to prayer, to the reading of the Scriptures, to the diligent use of all the ordinances of the Gospel, as well as to every internal habit wrought by the Spirit preparatory to the great reward. This is only saying that there is an order in the communication of God's blessings, by virtue of which one grace is prior to another. In the narrower sense of that which unites us to Christ, and makes us actual partakers of redemption, the term condition is, in our judgment, applicable only to faith. It is clear that the ground of all personal interest in the blessings of the Covenant, is union with Christ. This no one asserts more strongly than Dr. Breckinridge. Union with Christ secures justification, adoption, sanctification, and the whole salvation of the Gospel. The condition, and the sole condition, of union with Christ, is faith. The man who believes is saved. Now, if we understand Dr. Breckinridge, he seems to maintain that repentance sustains a relation to God analogous to that which faith sustains to the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance he represents as the only means of our deliverance from sin, either outward or inward, either original or actual. "Nothing," he says, "can be more certain than that every benefit we derive from Christ is made to depend, in some way, on our faith in Him, while all pardon of sin is directly connected with repentance, and all increase in holiness is beyond our power, except as we see and hate sin on one side, and see and strive after holiness on the other." It is true that there is no pardon to the impenitent; but there is no pardon, not because repentance is a means of pardon, but because there is no union with Christ, and consequently no possi-

bility of being sprinkled with His blood. It is precisely because faith is the exercise of a renewed soul, that it is incompetent to those who cherish the love of sin; true faith includes in it the renunciation of the flesh as well as the reception of the Saviour. The very purpose for which it receives Christ is that it may be freed, as well from the dominion as from the guilt of sin. Salvation, the blessing to be obtained, means nothing, unless it includes holiness. To state the thing in another form. What is the formal ground of pardon? It is certainly the blood of Christ which cancels our guilt. How is that blood applied to us? Just as certainly by the Holy Spirit. How does the Spirit apply it? By uniting us to Christ. How does He unite us to Christ? By that process of grace which terminates in the production of saving faith. United to Christ, we receive two classes of benefits, inward and outward; the inward all included under the generic name of repentance, and appertaining to the entire destruction of sin and the complete restoration of the image of God; the outward having reference to all those benefits which affect our relations to God as a Ruler and Judge. Both classes of blessings are equally the promise of the Covenant. Both are treasured up in the Lord Jesus Christ. We obtain both by being in Him, and as we are in Him only by faith, faith must be the exclusive condition of the Covenant. There can be no doubt that we are justified exclusively by faith; but justification includes pardon—therefore, we are pardoned only through faith. It is clear, too, that the Spirit is received only by faith, and yet the Spirit is the sanctifier, the author of all penitence and of all real holiness. We think, therefore, that repentance, instead of being represented as a condition of the Covenant, should be represented, as Calvin has done, as a compendious expression for one great class of its blessings, while justification and adoption should be referred to another, both classes sustaining the same relation to faith. The blood and the water flowed together from the Saviour's side. To be in Him is to have them both; and if we are in Him, as Dr. Breckinridge frequently admits, only by faith, then faith is the sole condition

of the Covenant. This seems to us to be the teaching of the Westminster Confession:

“The grace of God is manifested in the second Covenant, in that he freely provides and offereth to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation by Him; and requiring faith as the condition to interest them in Him, promiseth and giveth his Holy Spirit to all His elect, to work in them that faith with all other saving graces, and to enable them unto all holy obedience as the evidence of the truth of their faith and thankfulness to God, and as the way which he hath appointed them to salvation.”*

We have but little sympathy with the fears of those theologians who have insisted upon repentance as a condition of the Covenant, in order to screen the Gospel from the imputation of licentiousness. The faith which justifies is no dead faith, but a faith which works by love. It admires the beauty of holiness, as well as the glory of the Saviour, and contains in it the very seeds of repentance. It never embraces Christ without renouncing sin, and the more lovely and adorable He appears, the more hateful and odious it becomes. The truth is, Christ cannot be divided, and to receive him at all, is to receive him in the fullness and integrity of his salvation. Faith, moreover, is the only grace which exactly responds to the nature of the Gospel as a complement of promises; therefore, faith is the only grace which is suited to be the condition of the Covenant. Our design, however, is not to argue the question, but to intimate the general grounds of our dissent from the author's mode of representation.

After the conditions, he next takes up the successive dispensations of the Covenant, and in this chapter a rich mass of truth is condensed in a very brief compass. He shows conclusively that there never has been but one Gospel, and that though there have been diversities of administrations, and each illustrative of the manifold wisdom of God, there never has been but one Saviour. The first great promise has spanned the arch of time.

These five chapters, briefly recapitulated, constituting the First Book, have all been preliminary to the main design of the treatise.

* *Larg. Cat.*, Q. 32.

tise—the exhibition of the work of grace upon the human soul. They have briefly illustrated our precise condition, as under the curse of one covenant and the promise of the other; they have shown the origin, nature and exact provisions of that promise which compendiously includes all Divine grace; they have traced its nice and beautiful adaptations to our nature as men, and our case as sinners, and marked the steps by which, to ages and generations past, as well as in these latter days, God has revealed it as the ground of all human hope. We are brought at last to the Gospel as it comes to us in the new economy; and as that is the instrument through which all salvation is applied, we are now prepared to follow the wondrous path of the Spirit, as He calls the sinner from darkness to light, and translates him from Adam to Christ, and from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear son. This work of grace upon the soul is contemplated in two distinct but inseparable aspects. First, with reference to the agency of the Holy Ghost, who accomplishes it; second, with reference to the agency of the new creature which it evokes; that is, we are first led to consider the graces, and then the offices or duties, of the Christian—his life as a habit divinely implanted, and as an energy actively manifested. To the first topic the Second Book is devoted: to the second, the Third. Union with Christ, effectual calling, regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification and eternal blessedness, together with all the benefits incidentally connected now or hereafter with these august gifts, are the subjects which, under the first head, successively pass before us; while faith, repentance, new obedience, good works, the spiritual warfare, in fine, all the elements of holiness, together with the rule by which faith and duty are to be regulated, constitute the topics which exhaust the consideration of the second head. The reader will perceive at once, that here is a rich table of contents; that if these subjects are adequately treated in the experimental relations in which they are contemplated, we have a work upon personal religion of the deepest interest and importance. We are happy to say, that Dr. Breckinridge has fulfilled his task nobly and well. No child of God can lay down the book without being grate-

ful to the author for the comfort and edification he has received; and no minister can take it up without feeling, as he passes through its closely concatenated chapters, that theology, as here exhibited, is not a dead abstraction, but a living reality, and that he is better prepared, by the pregnant discussions of these pages, to deal with the hearts and consciences of his people. Dr. Breckinridge has taken the two factors—the truth in the hands of the Spirit and the soul of man, and has shown the wonderful results produced by their joint action. Other qualifications beside learning were required to write such a book. The author must have felt the power which he describes, and been conscious of the life he delineates. He must likewise have been familiar with the exercises of others. It is evidently Christian experience, portrayed by a pastor who has conversed with many a sinner and comforted many a saint. We need not say that the work is thoroughly evangelical, exaggerating nothing to increase the offence of the cross, and extenuating nothing to conciliate the approbation of the carnal heart. The supernatural character of religion, the utter impotence of man, the resistless efficacy of grace, the all-pervading nature of the change implied in the new birth, all these and kindred points, are brought out with a freshness, an unction, and a truth to life, that make the book as delightful to the Christian as the last new novel to a girl in her teens. It is one instance of a work in these days of sophistical speculation, in which there are no compromises with a shallow philosophy. Here are no evasive efforts to reconcile the justice of God's authority with the helplessness of man, by distinctions which every converted heart instantly repels, and whose only effect is to seduce the impenitent into the belief of a lie; no futile attempts on the one hand to strip God of His sovereignty, under the pretext of saving His character, or to refine away on the other the depravity of man, under the pretence of saving his responsibility. Dr. Breckinridge states the truth, and the whole truth, as God has revealed it, perfectly confident that the Divine glory has nothing to lose, and human guilt nothing to gain, from honest and faithful dealing.

Having in the Second and Third Books dispatched the sub-

ject of personal religion in its graces and its duties, he next develops the doctrine of the church as the necessary result of the communion of believers with each other, in consequence of their union with Christ; children of the same father, they must constitute one family. The church is considered in a two-fold aspect, corresponding to the two-fold aspect in which the individual believer was surveyed; first, in relation to its idea or essence, its fundamental principles, its aims and ends; and then in relation to the gifts of God to it in the ministry, the word and the ordinances. The Fourth Book is devoted to the first, the Fifth to the second aspect of this subject. In the matter of church polity, the exposition contained in this volume is the clearest and most Scriptural of any with which we are acquainted. It is a disreputable truth, that there are many Presbyterians and Presbyterian ministers, who are very imperfectly acquainted with the characteristic principles of their own system. The ruling elder, even in decisions of the General Assembly, occupies a very anomalous position, and it is still disputed whether he is the proxy of the congregation, deriving all his rights and authority from a delegation of power on the part of the people, or whether he is an officer divinely appointed, deriving his authority from Christ the Lord. It is still disputed whether he belongs to the same order with the minister, or whether the minister alone is the Presbyter of Scripture, and the ruling elder a subordinate assistant. It is still disputed whether he sits in Presbytery as the deputy of the brotherhood, or whether he sits there by Divine right as a constituent element of the body; whether, as a member of Presbytery, he can participate in all Presbyterian acts, or is debarred from some by the low nature of his office. That all government is by councils; that these councils are representative and deliberative, that *jure Divino* they are all Presbyteries, and as Presbyteries composed exclusively of Presbyters; that Presbyters, though one in order, and the right to rule, are subdivided into two classes; that all Presbyteries, whether parochial, classical or synodical, are radically the same; that the church in its germ, and in its fullest development, presents the same elements; that her whole polity is that

The Knowledge of God,

a free commonwealth; these points are ably, Scripturally, unanswerably established in the work before us. The only topic which Dr. Breckinridge has failed to elaborate, is one which all the reformed theologians have evaded—the precise nature of the visible church. Is it or is it not specifically a different thing from the communion of saints? Dr. Breckinridge treats it as the body of believers made apparent. He restricts the church in its proper sense to the congregation of the faithful. None can be truly members of it but those who are members of Christ. He accordingly maintains, with Calvin, with Luther, with Melancthon, that hypocrites and unbelievers, though in it, are not of it. They are insolent intruders, whom it is the office of discipline to expel. We do not say that this representation is not correct, but supposing it to be correct, we should like to have had it explained upon what principle the official acts of an unconverted minister become valid. Judas was a devil, and the son of perdition, but was he not also an Apostle, and did he not receive his commission directly from the Lord? Was he a mere intruder into an office to which he was Divinely called? Our Book evidently makes the distinction between the visible and invisible churches to be, that in the one the profession, in the other the possession, of faith is the indispensable condition of membership. The two do not, therefore, seem to correspond. The one is not an imperfect exhibition of the other, but a different, though a related institute. Where the specific difference is not the same, there can be no identity of species. Then, again, the constitution of the visible church, through families, many of whose members never become saints, would seem to intimate that the visible church is something more than the communion of saints made apparent. The whole subject is encompassed with difficulties, and we should have been glad if Dr. Breckinridge had devoted to it a larger share of his attention. It is undergoing a warm and vigorous discussion in Germany, and we hope the result will be the clearing up of difficulties which still embarrass many earnest minds.

We cannot express too highly our approbation of those parts of the work in which Dr. Breckinridge has discussed the rela-

tions of the church to the state, the world and the secular institutions of society. We are confident that the truths which he has had the grace to enunciate upon these topics, are the only truths which can secure to the church in this country the position of influence which she ought to occupy. If she undertakes to meddle with the things of Cæsar, she must expect to be crushed by the sword of Cæsar. If she condescends to put herself upon a level with the countless institutes which philanthropy or folly has contrived for the earthly good of the race, she must expect to share the fate of human devices and expedients. She is of God, and if she forgets that it is her Divine prerogative to speak in the name and by the authority of God; if she relinquishes the dialect of Canaan, and stoops to babble in the dialects of earth, she must expect to be treated as a babbler. Her strength lies in comprehending her spiritual vocation. She is different from all other societies among men, though as a society she has ethical and political relations in common with the permanent organizations of the family and the State; yet in her essence, her laws and her ends, she is diverse from every other institute. The ties which bind men together in other societies are only mediately from God, and immediately from man. She is immediately from God, and mediately from man. The laws of other societies are the dictates of reason, or the instincts of prudence; her laws are express revelations from heaven; other societies exist for the good of man as a moral, social, political being. She exists for the glory of God in the salvation of sinners. Her ends are supernatural and divine. She knows man and God only in the awful and profound relations implied in the terms guilt, sin, pardon, penitence and eternal life. Existing in Christ, by Christ and for Christ, she has no other law but His will. She can only speak the words which He puts in her mouth. Founded upon Divine revelation, and not in human nature, she has a Divine faith but no human opinion, and the only argument by which she authenticates either her doctrines or her precepts, is: Thus saith the Lord; Her province is not to reason but to testify. These principles, clear in themselves and vital as they are clear, Dr. Breckinridge has unfolded with signal success; at the same

time he has not overlooked the aspect of opposition in which her testimony must often place her to the institutions and customs of the world. Whenever earthly societies of any sort involve corrupt doctrines, it is her duty, in the name of God, to witness against the lie, but she can interfere no farther, except in relation to her own members, than to expose and rebuke the falsehood. When secular institutions involve no corrupt principles, her position is one of silence in relation to them. As God has neither commanded nor prohibited them, she leaves them where He has left them—to the discretion of His children. The simple proposition that all church power is ministerial and declarative, consistently carried out, explains her whole duty. The meaning is, that the church can only execute what God enjoins, and can teach as faith or duty only what God reveals. When, therefore, she is requested to recommend some human contrivance, she has only to ask herself: has God made it the duty of His people to engage in it? Has He anywhere commanded them to join this, that, or the other society? If not, what right has she to require it? If the thing is wrong, she has a right to condemn it. If liable to no moral objections on the score of principle, she must be silent, and the reason of the distinction is obvious. All wickedness is contradictory to the law of God, and she has a right to declare that law. In the other case the question is one of the fitness of means and ends, and that is a question of opinion. God has given no revelation about it, and therefore she has nothing to declare. She may say, if she chooses, that the principles involved are not objectionable, but she cannot say that the given application of the principles is ordained of God. In other words, in the case of evil she has the positive right to condemn. In every other she has only the negative right not to disapprove.

It may be said that this conception of the province of the church has never been adequately realized. This is only saying that she has never fully comprehended the liberty wherewith Christ has made her free. It was a slow process to cleanse off all the slime of the papacy. The purest churches in Europe are still bungling about the question, perfectly simple to us,

concerning the relations of the church to the State. It is not strange that we should be perplexed about problems growing out of her peculiar posture in America, as in one aspect a purely voluntary institution. In the meantime, God has been teaching us by disastrous examples. We have seen the experiment in certain quarters tried, of reducing the church to the condition of a voluntary society, aiming at the promotion of universal good. We have seen her treated as a contrivance for every species of reform—individual, social, political. We have seen her foremost, under the plea of philanthropy, in every species of moral knight-errantry, from the harmless project of organizing the girls of a township into a pin-cushion club, to the formation of conspiracies for convulsing governments to their very centre. The result has been precisely what might have been expected. Christ has been expelled from these pulpits, and almost the only Gospel which is left them is the Gospel of the Age of Reason. Extreme cases prove principles. If we would avoid a similar condemnation, we must hate even the garments spotted by the flesh; we must crush the serpent in the egg; we must rigidly restrain the church within her own proper sphere, and as she refines and exalts the spiritual nature of man, we may expect her to purify the whole moral atmosphere, and, indirectly, through the life which she imparts to the soul, to contribute to the prosperity of all its interests. Her power, in the secular sphere, is that of a sanction and not a rule. As pre-eminently suited to the present time, when this subject is beginning to awaken the interest which its importance deserves, we commend the twentieth and twenty-second chapters of the treatise before us.

The future of the kingdom of God, that is, the dispensations of the covenant of grace beyond the economy of the Gospel, under which we live, Dr. Breckinridge has reserved for a few modest and cautious suggestions at the close of the book. He thinks that there are two dispensations yet to come, the dispensation of millennial glory, to be inaugurated by the second advent of the Redeemer, and the dispensation of heavenly blessedness, to be inaugurated by the delivery up of the Lamb's Book of Life. We are delighted with the spirit which pervades the exposition

of these topics, and equally delighted that, though Dr. Breckinridge coincides in some of the leading views of the millennarians, he repudiates the crudities—we had almost said the monstrosities, which disfigure the publications of that sect. He has no idea of a period in which Christ is to become subordinate to Moses, and in which it shall be the highest glory of the Gentiles to turn Jews. We may differ from Dr. Breckinridge as to the competency of the Gospel dispensation, under augmented measures of the Spirit, to subdue the world to Christ, but we are heartily at one with him as to the duty of the church to preach the Gospel to every creature. We may differ from him as to the state of things preceding and introduced by the second advent of Christ, but we are at one with him as to the necessity of watching, and praying, and struggling for His coming. It is the great hope of the future, as universal evangelization is the great duty of the present. If the church could be aroused to a deeper sense of the glory that awaits her, she would enter with a warmer spirit into the struggles that are before her. Hope would inspire ardor. She would even now rise from the dust, and, like the eagle, plume her pinions for loftier flights than she has yet taken. What she wants, and what every individual Christian wants, is faith—faith in her sublime vocation, in her Divine resources, in the presence and efficacy of the Spirit that dwells in her; faith in the truth, faith in Jesus and faith in God. With such a faith there would be no need to speculate about the future. That would speedily reveal itself. It is our unfaithfulness, our negligence and unbelief, our low and carnal aims, that retard the chariot of the Redeemer. The bridegroom cannot come until the bride has made herself ready. Let the church be in earnest after greater holiness in her own members, and in faith and love undertake the conquest of the world, and she will soon settle the question, whether her resources are competent to change the face of the earth. We are content to wait the progress of events. In the meantime, who that has ever reflected upon these great realities, and groaned in spirit at the clouds and darkness which beset them, can withhold his sympathy from the man who writes the following lines :

“In every point of view, therefore, the glory of the Messiah seems to be immediately and transcendently involved in His second coming and millennial reign. And his loving and trusting children ought to beware of dishonoring him and deadening their own high and spiritual hopes, by low and carnal allegorizing about these sublime mysteries; as well as of deluding themselves by vain and shallow dogmatizing concerning them, as if they were perfectly simple and elemental. For myself, I speak concerning them after many years of anxious meditation, as one who would prefer not to speak, and who feels assuredly that they who will follow us will get a clearer insight as they draw nearer to them. The grand and leading ideas which belong to the future progress and glorious consummation of God’s eternal covenant, seem to me to be perfectly clear. Around these are other ideas, carrying with them, apparently, the highest probability of truth, but not a satisfying assurance that we comprehend them justly. And then around these, in circles perpetually enlarging, are topics vast and numerous, involving God and man, and the universe, and questions the most intricate and overwhelming concerning them all, in which a single inspired word misunderstood, or even a shade of thought wrongly conceived, may involve us far beyond our scanty knowledge and feeble powers. And how could it be otherwise? It is the infinite and eternal thought of God, not yet realized in its actual accomplishment, which mortals are striving to penetrate and disclose.” Page 681.

In the conclusion of the meagre and imperfect sketch which we have attempted to give of the contents of this volume, it only remains to form a general estimate of its merits, and of the place which it is likely to occupy in our religious literature. Accepting theology as a science of positive truth, that is, of truth which can be certainly and infallibly known, the author has attempted to construct the system in such a manner, that each particular proposition should not only authenticate itself by its own light, but command conviction by its manifest relation to the whole. The autopistic power of the truth is more prominent in the second than in the first volume. In the first, which is purely speculative, the theory charms by its consistency, clearness and coherence. The temple which is reared is a grand thing to look on, and a noble thing to contemplate—but in the second, another element is added, the element of experience. The Holy Ghost bears witness in the human soul—and man is no longer a spectator, but a worshipper, and actually beholds the glory of God, as He displays His grace above the mercy seat. That a work whose aim was to make

Divine truth speak for itself, first to the understanding, as a matter of speculation, and then to the heart, as a spiritual power, if executed with even tolerable ability, must be entitled to respectful consideration, is obvious from the nature of the case. That a book on experimental religion, professing to trace it, not in the light of philosophy, but in the light of the written word, which compares the impression with the stamp, the life with the doctrine; that such a work, if executed by one who has any real insight into the mysteries of grace, must be pre-eminently useful to the children of God, is equally clear. All this might have been said if these books had been written by feebler hands. The second volume we think in all respects superior to the first. It touches a chord which vibrates in every Christian heart, and though specially prepared with reference to the training of ministers of the Gospel, it is equally adapted to the edification and comfort of the humblest child of God—"The penitent and believing followers of the Saviour of sinners" "They who fervently desire life after death" will "find light and consolation" in what the author has written, and that which he "has done will live." We have received the most grateful testimonies to its worth. Unsophisticated believers, who knew nothing of theology except what God had taught them, have spoken of the book to us in terms which showed how much good they had gotten from it; and we have before us the case of a young minister of more than ordinary promise, who professed to have derived more benefit from it than from all the treatises he had read. It not only warmed his own heart, but taught him how to warm the hearts of others. We do not say that the book is free from faults—it has faults, faults of method and faults of expression—but they do not seriously impair its sterling merits. We have already intimated that the separation of the objective, subjective and relative, or as we should prefer to express it, the speculative, practical and polemical, strikes us as arbitrary, and little suited to the successful culture of the science. Theology is one; it is either wholly speculative, wholly practical, or mixed. The mode of treatment should correspond in our judgment to its own essence, and should not be successively adapted to the single elements which constitute that essence. If theology in

purely speculative, it should be expounded exclusively in the light of Theory; if it is wholly practical, it should be taught with a special reference to the activities it is intended to call into play; if mixed, it should be treated as a combination in which these elements are jointly and not successively found. For our own part, we dislike the phrase *mixed*, as applied to the manner in which speculation and practice enter into the religious life. There is no mixture; but these phases of our being are blended into the unity of a higher energy. Spiritual energy is one, but it includes every lower intellectual and moral energy. To explain:—We have one form of mental energy in the mere assent to truth—this is the lowest exercise of reason. Then we have another form of mental activity in the perception of the beautiful. Here there is combined with assent, a feeling or an emotion. The combination is what we mean by the sense of the beautiful. So in the sense of duty or obligation, there is also an intellectual and an emotional element, but they constitute one energy. In the religious life, we have a combination of the purely intellectual, the esthetic and the moral, into a still higher energy—and the science of theology should be treated according to this characteristic of true religion. Hence we think it leads to a needless repetition to represent successively what the nature of the thing presents in combination—and we cannot but think that Dr. Breckinridge is occasionally hampered by the restraints of his method. Still whatever defects the book may have, they are only blemishes. Its solid worth is hardly affected at all. He has not written in vain. There are thousands of hearts that bless him, of which he will never know until he meets them before that throne, where he and they will better understand and appreciate the infinite grace of that glorious Saviour, which he has so lovingly described. His book is a noble testimony to truths, which, but for his exertions in concert with a congenial band of confessors, would have been almost forgotten in the present generation. It well deserves to be the crowning labor of a life which has been zealously devoted to the vindication of the grace of God against fraudulent suppressions on the one hand, and sophistical evasions on the other—and long, long may he continue to speak through these refreshing pages!