

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

No. 8—October, 1891.

I.

ETERNAL RETRIBUTION.

THE question of the future and eternal destiny of man will not rest from discussion. One does not wonder at this. The thought that a single man, still more that multitudes of men, because of their deeds in this short life, should be lost eternally, is one which is so awful to contemplate, that it is not strange that not merely rationalistic expositors of Scripture, but also not a few truly devout and spiritual men, have ever protested that it is impossible that this should be the real teaching of Scripture. Accordingly, such have eagerly laid hold of every word here and there which might of itself seem to warrant a larger hope, and have earnestly sought to show that the passages which, to the ordinary reader, seem to declare the doctrine of the eternal doom of many are susceptible of a different interpretation.

By those who contend for the belief in the final universal restoration of all rational beings to holiness and happiness, it is assumed that this is a necessary logical corollary from our affirmation of the infinite perfection of God. For it is insisted that if we believe in a God who is infinite in knowledge and wisdom, power, love and righteousness, then we must logically admit that it is impossible that He should have allowed any creature to come into being, by whom He foreknew that the gift of life would be so abused as to issue in endless sin and misery. Whatever force there may be in this presumption considered in itself, it will be observed, in the first place, that it wholly overlooks the powerful counter-presumption which is furnished by the fact of the uniformly hardening power of habit. For character, to all appearance, tends to fixedness

liable to constant illnesses; that he was afflicted with an almost diseased bashfulness; but that nothing could daunt his energy or chill the ardor with which he pursued his calling, whether as a pastor under the stress of persecution or in the quiet of village life or as professor at Neustadt, Heidelberg or Leiden. His address was mild and soft; his style of writing usually brachylogical; his theological opinions well considered and soundly Calvinistic. The author says, "It is very characteristic of the theological standpoint of Junius, that he expressed himself as mildly as possible on points of difference in minor matters, but whenever fundamental doctrines like those of the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, His Preëxistence, Predestination, Reprobation and the like came into controversy, he stepped into the arena with burning zeal for them without anxiety as to the judgment of his opponents" (p. 130). Accordingly we find Junius speaking most admirably on, say, the sovereignty of Preterition (pp. 82, 83, 180): "The cause of election and reprobation is the most free counsel of God;" "The proper cause of reprobation is God; of damnation, the man himself by his own sin dying in sin and renouncing God who is our life." This is universal and essential Calvinism, taught consentiently by all true Calvinists, from Calvin to Gomar and Amyraut, Twisse and Arrowsmith, down to Charles Hodge and Henry B. Smith. The book is accompanied with a portrait and a *facsimile* of the chirography of Junius, and includes a full bibliography of his writings and a considerable collection of his letters. — *David Brainerd, the Apostle to the North American Indians*. By Jesse Page, author of *Bishop Patteson*, etc. 16mo, pp. x, 160. (New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company.) A stirring popular biography of this great hero of faith well calculated to awaken missionary zeal. Only, it is a pity that sectarian narrowness could not be wholly banished from a book meant for the edification of Christians of all names. Was it altogether necessary to speak of Brainerd's Calvinism as a "dismal creed" (p. 30)? It was at all events the root of his missionary zeal. — *The Relation of Presbyterianism to the Revolutionary Sentiment in the Province of New York*. An address delivered by Rev. A. R. Macoubrey, D.D., before the Westchester County Historical Society. 8vo, pp. 45. (Westchester County Historical Society, 1891.) The author with as much eloquence as industry collects the testimony which shows the ruling part taken by the Presbyterians in forming the Revolutionary sentiment in New York, and not content with the mere fact, points out also the causes which begot the sentiment among the Presbyterians. — *American Religious Leaders: Charles Grandison Finney*. By G. Frederick Wright, D.D., LL.D., Professor in Oberlin Theological Seminary, Ohio. 16mo, pp. vi, 329. (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1891.) Dr. Wright's biography of Finney is a sympathetic and careful piece of work, although now and then (doubtless through defective proof-reading) we meet with some odd things, as, *e. g.*, pp. 2 and 4, on the latter of which there is a passage which, if strictly construed, tells us that there was no preaching in New Jersey in 1812-14 except in the German language! This biography makes it even more clear than before, that Finney was a great revivalist and a great Christian rather than a great theologian. His manner of preaching was the simplest and most natural possible (p. 18); his matter was always doctrinal—as indeed distinctively doctrinal preaching has always been the instrument of the great revivals. But, as he confessed himself, the doctrine he used in his early discourses was confined to a narrow range: "he found he had been so long in pursuit of sinners with the law to convict them, and only enough of the gospel just to convert them, that his mind had, as it were, run down, and that those high and spiritual truths which are the food and life of the Christian soul had not that place in his own heart which is

indispensable to the effectual exhibition of them to others" (p. 205). He nobly strove to correct this one-sidedness in later life. But his defective early training handicapped him as a theologian throughout. The strongest theological influences he received came from N. W. Taylor and the younger Edwards (p. 25). As a jurist he naturally worked out for himself the governmental theory of the Atonement, which is not so surprising as Dr. Wright thinks (p. 21), considering the domination over the legal mind of the Grotian theory of punishment. In accord with this theory of the Atonement, he consistently denied forensic justification, reducing it to executive pardon, and representing the work of Christ as not its ground but only its condition (p. 235). On the doctrines of Regeneration and Sanctification (pp. 231 and 260; cf. p. 242) his philosophy of moral agency led him to adopt pelagianizing opinions: indeed Dr. Wright tells us (p. 210) that the Oberlin men, amid other differences in their construction of the doctrine of holiness, were in accord in adopting the fundamental postulate of Pelagianism: "What they were all agreed in, however, was the natural ability of the human will to keep the law of God, or, in other words, the equation between the extent of obligation and that of natural ability." It would be instructive to compare many passages in this account, indeed, with say the Introduction to Vol. v, of Dr. Schaff's *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*.—*A Biographical Sketch of John Williamson Nevin, D.D., LL.D., Doctor Praeantissimus*. By Rev. A. R. Kremer, A.M. 12mo, pp. 235. (Reading, Pa.: Daniel Miller, 1890.) The object of this most appreciative biography is not to supersede Dr. Appel's larger book, but to make the character and work of Dr. Nevin better known in circles where the larger work is not likely to penetrate. The book is written too loosely to be widely useful. And Mr. Kremer's appreciation of his hero—great man as he was—is too unbounded. Dr. Nevin to him "outstrips all praise;" perhaps a rereading of the Autocrat-of-the-Breakfast-Table's essay on big trees would be a useful discipline to the author. It gives an odd effect to read in conjunction Dr. Wright's account of Dr. Nevin's tract on the Anxious Bench (*Finney*, p. 67) and the glowing account of the same controversy given by Mr. Kremer. But to Mr. Kremer, Dr. Nevin was always right and always successful.—*The Oxford Movement: Twelve Years, 1833-1845*. By R. W. Church, M.A., D.C.L., Sometime Dean of St. Paul's, and Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford. 8vo, pp. xiii, 358. (London and New York: Macmillan & Co., 1891.)—*Letters and Correspondence of John Henry Newman, during his Life in the English Church*. With a Brief Autobiography. Edited, at Cardinal Newman's request, by Anne Mozley, editor of *Letters of the Rev. J. B. Mozley, D.D., Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford*. In two volumes. 8vo, pp. 436 and 461. (London and New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1890.)—*Philomythus. An Antidote against Credulity*. A discussion of Cardinal Newman's essay on Ecclesiastical Miracles. By Edwin A. Abbott. Second Edition. Crown 8vo, pp. lxxv, 259. (London and New York: Macmillan & Co., 1891.) These three works are probably the most important of the very large Newmanian literature which has been called forth by Cardinal Newman's death. To those who were already somewhat minutely acquainted with the history and personnel of the "Oxford Movement," the two volumes containing Newman's correspondence must be very illuminating. Others will miss in them a sufficient historical setting for the letters to enable them to follow and rightly to appreciate the lines of development, or to test and unravel the psychological problems which they raise. The needed historical sketch is admirably supplied by Dean Church's delightful volume, which almost seems to have been written to give the necessary thread of fact which Miss Mozley, if not unaccountably, yet certainly most unadvisedly omitted. Dean Church