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THE CLERGY AND SOCIAL MORALS.

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"They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."—ROMANS 10 : 2.

IN a recent issue of one of our city journals—a journal of the very highest character and most wholesome influence—there appeared a sermon ; though the deliverances of the pulpit very seldom find entrance into the columns of the paper I refer to. But the editor deemed this sermon of such consequence to the public weal that he not only gave it newspaper currency, but advised that it should be printed and disseminated widely in the community. What could have been the burden of the sermon ? This : The preacher had felt constrained to warn rich men that they could not buy their way into the kingdom of God, on earth or in heaven, by giving a few thousands of their financial substance to a church or a charity ; one of our notably wealthy men having just about that time given ten or twenty thousand dollars to Christian missionary work, I think ; the gift having furnished the occasion, it would seem, for the preacher's solemn warning, which the editor emphasized with equal solemnity.

Now, the circumstance—for it is little more—has suggested to my own mind several reflections pertinent to the subject I have in hand this morning.

The preacher in question being credited with a rare courage, as he was, in having so admonished our wealthy men, involves, as I look at the matter, a reflection upon the preaching fraternity generally ; which reflection, I venture to say, is almost wholly undeserved. I myself, at least, don't know a man of the order so wanting in moral courage, or so void of a just sense of what his office requires of him, as that he would shrink from declaring, if fit occasion should call, just what St. Peter once declared to one Simon : "*Thy money perish with thee ; because thou hast thought that the gift of God might be purchased with money.*" But

I am quite sure that few or none of our rich men to-day are seriously under the delusion Simon was under. Doubly sure am I that the man toward whom I directed a surmise just now as having been the benefactor in the case I am recalling, would harbor the notion for a moment that Almighty God would accept money, or that churches or charities would accept money, in substitution for personal righteousness, or as a cloak for unrighteousness. I, for one, would give the millionaire credit for common sense as to these things ; the money in the instance I am alluding to having been meant, I feel confident, simply to serve one of the ordinary uses of money and nothing more. I hold no brief to plead the cause of rich men ; but we may as well be rational and fair in our judgments of them, and even in our animadversions, whenever they may be called for.

Incidentally, while the missionary gift was being commented upon in the public prints, or, later, when the sermon came out, a singular moral proviso was hinted at as something which it might be well to adopt, to save vestries and trustees from becoming parties to dishonorable doings in receiving money from men who might be under suspicion of not having come at it worthily. *Investigation* should be made by churches and charities, it was suggested, or by those acting for them, as to whether offerings were wholly free from moral taint before turning them into their treasuries !—which is all impracticable nonsense, of course. If a man's antecedents and moral standing in society should be really subject to grave suspicion, it might be well to let such a man know that his offering would not be welcome ; but as to formal investigation—who should conduct it ? and how would you go about it ? Where, and how,

speech is manipulated to make it work backward—that is, yield some new quality of the thing figured, which was not so much as dreamed of when the plastic phrase was used—all this is but the paraphernalia for foisting the said metaphysic on us as inspired. The fourth chapter is again almost as fresh and helpful as the first. It deals with certain things arising mainly in practice, and only afterward defended with a theory, which have nevertheless had much to do with narrowing Christian thought and life. Asceticism and ritualism come in for their share, but the instructive part is that which relates to the peculiarly Protestant pictism of intensified religious sentiment, “the apprehension that religion consists not so much in a large and wise government of life, as in certain obscure experiences superinduced upon it,” that conversion is necessarily a moral earthquake, that “salvation has chief reference to another life”—all these errors and their consequences are properly classed here. The partial separation of the manly and religious life is not the least of these consequences; and one cause, at least, of the inefficiency of the pulpit, and of the alienation of the masses from the Church as an institution is in this direction not very far to seek.

The book is lucidly written and the publishers work is fairly well done.

EDWARD C. MOORE.

PROVIDENCE, R. I.

THE HARMONY OF ETHICS WITH THEOLOGY. An Essay in Revision. Is there Probation after Death? Is there Hope for the Heathen? Can Infants be Saved? By the Rev. HENRY E. ROBINS, D.D., LL.D., late President of Colby University (1873-82); Professor of Christian Ethics in the Rochester Theological Seminary. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1891. 16mo, pp. 100, 50 cents.

He must be unusually insensible to the power of earnestness of thought and feeling and eloquence of speech, who can read this little book unmoved, even though he may not be able to follow all its reasonings. Not that we should have any difficulty in following the author in his fundamental conception that the world has lived under a dispensation of grace since the fall, and that it is in this fact that all the apparent anomalies of its moral government find their explanation. This conception has become, indeed, almost a commonplace of Reformed thought; it may be found worked out with great thoroughness and consistency, for example—to name only a single representative from each side of the sea—in Dr. Robert S. Candlish's “The Atonement: Its Efficacy and Extent,” or in Dr. Robert J. Breckinridge's “The Knowledge of God, Subjectively Considered.” Dr. Robins's treatment appears to us less felicitous than theirs, inasmuch as he organizes the matters involved in this conception, from the point of view of the moral government of God alone, without reference to the Covenant of Redemption, in which alone the scheme of the dispensation of forbearance has its ground, and from which alone it can receive its justification. Accordingly, the justice or possibility of such gracious dealing with a lost race does not appear in his pages. We pass at once from the contemplation of man under the eternal and unchangeable demand for moral perfection, made by moral law—which “cannot be modified by any conceivable conditions in its claims”—to the contemplation of man under grace with perfection no longer demanded of him but only “repentance and faith,” with no account of

the possibility of the change except the intimation that it pleased God to interpose a Mediator between Himself and our lost race. Here is not a “harmony of ethics and theology,” but a deep disharmony; ethics demanding perfect obedience for acceptance with God; theology offering the prize on the easier terms of “repentance and faith.” And as the provisions of the Covenant of Redemption can alone solve this difficulty, so they alone supply a safe guide for the explanation of the details of the administration of the dispensation of forbearance. Had the author taken them for his clew, he would have been saved from what we cannot but think certain exaggerations—and shall we not even say inconsistencies?—in the conclusions which he draws. He would have known, for instance, how to preserve the principle that “the conditions of salvation must be in essence the same for those who hear, and those who do not hear the New Testament revelation,” without reducing the ground of acceptance with God to general “repentance and faith,” in the face of the whole New Testament, which knows of no saving faith except personal trust in Christ Jesus, known and believed in; and thus he would have escaped becoming amenable to his own warning (p. 86) against those who cherish “a larger hope” for the heathen than God's revelation warrants. He would have known also how better to reconcile common grace and special grace, election and the free offer of salvation, the sincerity and the sovereignty of God, than we find any hint of in his pages. But we cannot here go into details.

BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD.

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES. By the Rev. G. T. STOKES, D.D., Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of Dublin, and Vicar of All Saints, Blackrock. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son. Crown 8vo, pp. xxiii., 424, \$1.50.

The fourth series of the Expositors' Bible is completed with the volume of Professor Dr. Stokes. The general character of the voluminous work edited by Dr. W. Robertson Nicoll is already well known to most English-speaking clergymen. Dr. Stokes has wrought along the lines marked out in the design of the editor, but his volume has its own characteristics. The exposition covers only the earlier portion of the Acts of the Apostles, “down to, but not including, the conversion of St. Paul and the baptism of Cornelius” (p. v.); about one third of the book. Accepting this point as the close of the first great division of the inspired narrative, and finding in it a statement of great “representative facts,” as Bishop Lightfoot called them, the author discusses these facts in twenty chapters, each appropriately designated. The first chapter, however, is rather an “introduction” than an exposition. In the preface there is more or less matter that belongs to what is termed “introduction,” since it refers to many of the corroborative “sources” of apostolic history. Special prominence is given to the recovered Apology of Aristides, which was not accessible to the writer when preparing the earlier chapters of his volume. In the last chapter this work is made use of for apologetical purposes.

Dr. Stokes writes “as a decided Churchman,” but while positive he is not pugnacious, and while churchly he is candid and truly catholic. His naïve confession (p. xii.) about the difficulty of using the Revised Version, as he has attempted to do, leads him to say that “the mixture of the Re-