

THE Presbyterian Quarterly.

NO. 45.—JULY, 1898.

I. COMPLAINT* AGAINST THE ACTION OF THE SYNOD OF SOUTH CAROLINA IN ADDRESSING AN OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION TO THE CIVIL COMMONWEALTH.

TO THE VENERABLE,

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN THE UNITED STATES :

We, the undersigned Ministers and Elders of the Presbyterian Church in the United States and members of the Synod of South Carolina, submitting to its authority, hereby present to your venerable body this our Complaint against the action of said Synod of South Carolina taken at its meeting at Darlington, S. C., on Monday, November 1st, 1897, in the matter of a petition to an official representative of the United States, touching certain civil affairs which concern the commonwealth.

*This Complaint as here given appears in an amended form. The nature of the subject, the time limit imposed by the Constitution, and the circumstances in which the writer found himself, combined to render it impossible for him to put the first draft of the Complaint in such form as was desirable.

The writer ought to add that he found it impossible to confer with the individuals who authorized him to sign their names to this paper as co-complainants, or even to submit to them for their formal approval the Complaint as drafted by himself. (Rev. W. T. Hall, D. D., is the single exception. To him the writer is indebted for valuable and valued advice and suggestions.) He has reason to believe, however, that on all material points he has faithfully represented the mind of his co-complainants.

W. M. MCP.

DABNEY'S CHRIST OUR PENAL SUBSTITUTE.

CHRIST OUR PENAL SUBSTITUTE.¹ By Robert L. Dabney, D. D., LL. D.
12 mo., pp. 115. Richmond, Va.: The Presbyterian Committee of Publication. 1898.

With Dr. Dabney, there has passed away the last of a remarkable company of theological thinkers to whose lot it fell to reassert the historical faith of the Presbyterian churches, after it had been endangered by the theological ferment which marked the earlier years of the present century,—a ferment which culminated, so far as the Presbyterian churches are concerned, in the division of 1838. The controversies which preceded and followed that event had, no doubt, a large place in forming their theological convictions and developing their power; for the succeeding third of a century their activity was at its height; the whole of the remainder of the century has felt their influence, and, by the blessing of God, has enjoyed some part of their living teaching. No one can estimate the steadying effect of the powerful advocacy of the historical faith of the Reformed churches by these men,—and that not only upon the life and thought of the churches which they more especially served, but also on the whole course of theological development on American soil. Under their guidance the Presbyterian churches not only rose above the Pelagianizing vagaries of the “improved Calvinism” pressing in from New England, but intrenched themselves to meet the neologies of German origin which had already begun to trouble the American churches by the middle of the century and have come in like a flood during its latter half. Such men as Charles Hodge (1797–1878), Robert J. Breckinridge (1800–1871), and James H. Thornwell (1812–1862), to whom may be added Henry B. Smith (1815–1877), though he was a few years their junior, were enough to cast a bright light on any period. Their personal work was closed with the opening of the last quarter of the century, but was ably continued by a group of like-minded successors, such as W. G. T. Shedd (1820–1894), Robert L. Dabney (1820–1898), and Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823–1886). Surely it is not often that a single group of churches is served at one time by such an assemblage of theological talent as is represented by these names.

It was not granted to all of these great thinkers to bequeath the products of their theological labors to posterity in a systematized exhibit. In one way or another only fragments of the systems of Drs. Breckinridge, Thornwell and Smith have been preserved for the world. Dr. Dabney belongs in the more fortunate company of those who were permitted to publish their systems in their entirety: and his concise *Syllabus and Notes of the Course of Systematic Theology taught in Union Theological Seminary, Virginia*, worthily takes its place by the side of Dr. A. A. Hodge's *Outlines of Theology*, and may even, along with it, be ranged with the more elaborated systems of Dr. Charles Hodge and Dr. Shedd, as something more than a *compendium* if

¹The lectures which compose this book were delivered by the author at Davidson College as the second series on the “Otts Lectureship Foundation.”—ED.

something less than an exhaustive discussion of the whole circle of theologoumena. Remaining with us, moreover, to the very end of the century, he has continued to the last to bear testimony to the truth contended for by the whole company of thinkers of which he was so vigorous a member. The little volume now before us is only one of several compositions, which, appearing from the press after his death, witness to his unquenchable activity and inexhaustible intellectual and spiritual strength up to the very moment of his departure to join again in the other world the company of students of the things of God with whom he had wrought in this.

As a volume intended for popular reading, it is not to be considered so much a contribution to theological science as a specimen of that high art of which Dr. Dabney was a master, of utilizing the results of theological thought for the instruction and protection of Christ's humble children. Its subject is the very core of the gospel. Its purpose is to clear from doubt the minds of the people of God, vexed by the assaults of unbelief, and to establish them in the faith that is in Jesus. Its manner has in it all the vigor of speech which has characterized Dr. Dabney from his youth up, and all the richness of thought which has come to him with the labor of years. We cannot imagine a docile reader rising from its perusal without having his conviction strengthened and his faith in the Redeemer of God's elect quickened.

In its very nature the book is polemic, having for its object rather to protect a well-established doctrine of Christian theology from persistent attack than to construct a new doctrine or offer a new construction of an old one. Certainly no one who will simply look about him with open eyes can judge such a polemic uncalled for. The substitutive sacrifice of Jesus Christ is so much the central fact of the Christian religion, that it may well be identified shortly with Christianity: Christianity is moribund when this central tenet loses its hold on the faith of men. Nevertheless, it must be confessed that it is very loosely held in very wide circles to-day, and is not infrequently absolutely rejected, with something like scorn. "Theories of the Atonement," is what we not very accurately call the attempts now making on all sides of us to construe Christianity without it: they disagree with one another on every conceivable matter except in their common rejection of the central truth of the gospel, that Christ bore our sins on his own body on the tree. Chancing to open a volume of lectures by one of the Bishops of our American Methodist Episcopal Church,—Bishop Foster's *Philosophy of Christian Experience*—my eye caught this sentence: "The whole theory of substitutional punishment as a ground either of conditional or unconditional pardon, is unethical, contradictory and subversive." There is nothing in this sentence peculiar to Bishop Foster: it is the characteristic note of modern theologizing. Dr. Dabney was governed by his usual clear insight into the conditions of the actual life of thought of our day, when he gave his latest hours on earth to the composition of a little volume designed to ward off this assault from the flocks of Christ. What more appropriate work could the servant do just before returning to his Master than spend his latest breath in defending that gospel of the blood of Christ to which he owed his own salvation, against an almost world-wide attempt to rob it of its power?

That he has done what he attempted with thoroughness and incisiveness, need not be said. Beginning with a statement of the "rationalistic objections to penal substitution," he proceeds to define and state the issue, and then enters in detail on a refutation of the objections, ending with a brief exhibition of the evidence of Scripture and the immanent consciousness of Christendom in behalf of the assailed doctrine. Special attention is paid to "the utilitarian theory of punishments" as underlying the assault, and to "the ethical objection" that it is impossible for God to punish one for another's sin. Not only in the chapter on "our opponents' self-contradictions," but throughout the volume the keenness of the logical analysis passes all praise. There is no need, however, of going into details. Suffice it to say that Dr. Dabney is in this volume, too, all himself.

Perhaps it may not be out of place in the pages of THE PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY to express the hope that the proof-reader will revise again the text of this welcome little volume before it is issued in that second edition which it deserves. There are some errors, like the bungling of the Greek clause on page 10, and the printing of "effect" for "affect" on page 58, which may give occasion to the scoffer.

B. B. WARFIELD.

Princeton.

JAMES' ESSAYS IN POPULAR PHILOSOPHY.

THE WILL TO BELIEVE, AND OTHER ESSAYS IN POPULAR PHILOSOPHY.

By Wm. James. Published by Longmans, Green & Co., New York, London, and Bombay.

The popular lecturer and learned Professor of Psychology at Harvard has added immensely to his reputation by the publication of these essays. Many of them were read to philosophical clubs, and as such were no doubt a surprise to those who heard them. For they are considerably away from the thought which prevails in so-called scientific bodies. Four of them are high-class contributions to religious thinking. We may say that about half the book is concerned with theistic knowledge of the most useful kind. The other half is strictly philosophical, without any marked religious tendency. It is addressed as a whole to students of philosophy, and these alone of his readers will perceive the great power of the writer and the effective arraignment of the agnostic, the positivist, and the anti-theist.

In the first essay, "The Will to Believe," he opens with the somewhat startling words :

"I have brought with me to-night something like a sermon on justification by faith—I mean, an essay in justification of faith, a defence of our right to adopt a believing attitude in religious matters in spite of the fact that our merely logical intellect may not have been coerced."

He next proceeds to point out the kinds of hypotheses which obtain in scientific thinking, viz.: *living, forced, momentous*, with their respective antitheses, *dead, avoidable, trivial*. The decision between any two of these he calls an *option*. He then presents his thesis thus :

"Our passional nature not only may, but must, decide an option between