

ARTICLE VIII.
NEW THEOLOGY.¹

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WHEN men leave the beaten tracks of religious belief, they usually continue to employ the familiar terms of the forsaken faith, giving them new and, as they flatter themselves, higher meanings. Their motive is, apparently, an unwillingness to break altogether with the sacred past, mingled, in some cases, perhaps, with a secret doubt of the security of the ground which they tread. Like colonists who name their settlements in a strange land after familiar places in the mother country, so long as they hear the well-known sounds they seem to themselves to be not altogether astray and lost, or at least they find a melancholy pleasure in being reminded of what was once dear to them. "It is a sad satisfaction to them to repeat the language although they have lost the faith of their forefathers."² By thus "holding fast to the form of sound words" they conceal from others, as well as from themselves, the fact, or at least the extent, of their aberration. It is, therefore, a prudent policy as well as a mournful pleasure. The works under review illustrate these observations. The old theological terms occur frequently in them, coupled with expressions of earnest belief in what they signify. "The voice is Jacob's voice." It is, therefore, not surprising that superficial readers should find

¹ *The Freedom of Faith.* By Theodore T. Munger. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company. 1885.

Statement of Belief read by the Rev. Theodore T. Munger, D.D., to an Ecclesiastical Council called to install him pastor of the United Church, New Haven, Conn., Nov. 19, 1885. *The New Haven Daily Palladium*, Nov. 20, 1885.

² *University Sermons*, by H. P. Liddon, D.D., pp. 105, 106; on Immortality.

little in them, and should wonder what others can find, to which to object. It is only on close examination that we discover that their theology is one of those "juggling" witcheries

" That palter with us in a double sense ;
That keep the word of promise to our ear,
And break it to our hope ;"

and that their gospel is a very different one from that which we have been accustomed to hear.

The doctrine of the Trinity as formulated in the Nicene Creed about fifteen hundred years ago, has been held by the great body of the Christian church in all its branches, with but trifling dissent. It is stated with substantial accuracy in the familiar words: " There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory." ³ Our author holds that " God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that this is an eternal distinction, and is so set forth in the Scriptures ; not three beings, but One, yet manifesting himself in threefold form, so that we may say of each that he is God ; ' God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God.' " ⁴ He even believes that " in due time the doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will be received as philosophy, and be made the postulate of all knowledge." ⁵ This seems to be clear and strong. We are perplexed, however, to find the language of the Nicene Creed coupled with the ambiguous and always suspicious statement that God is " One, yet manifesting himself in threefold form." ⁶ We are startled by the assertion that the doctrine of the Trinity " has another look to-day from that it wore a hundred years ago," ⁷ and that " a formal Trinity " is psychologically impossible. ⁸ It is not our business to reconcile the statements that God " manifests himself in threefold form," and yet " a formal

³ Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism, Ans. 6. So also the Athanasian Creed.

⁴ Statement of Belief, i. 4.

⁵ *Ib.* i. 7.

⁶ *Freedom of Faith*, p. 60.

⁷ *Ib.* p. 9.

Trinity is psychologically impossible," but it is evident that the writer does not accept the doctrine of the Trinity in its ancient meaning. "We may or may not pronounce the ancient phrases, but we need no longer hesitate to say, 'Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.'"⁴ From this we infer that he has in time past hesitated to use the ancient phrase, but has at last found a meaning for it which enables him to pronounce it with satisfaction; and we look with interest to see what this meaning is. "A paternal heart and will at the centre, a sonship that stands for humanity, a spiritual energy that is the life of men, and through which they come into freedom and righteousness."⁴ A paternal heart and will, a sonship, and an energy—it is needless to point out that these are not the three persons of the Godhead whom the Christian church adores.

The doctrine of the incarnation as held by the entire Christian church with but little dissent is, substantially, that the second Person of the Godhead, "being the eternal Son of God, became man," "by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul," "yet without sin," "and so was and continueth to be, in two distinct natures, and one person forever."⁴ Our author explains the incarnation thus: "It is the characteristic thought of God at present that he is immanent in all created things,—immanent, yet personal, the life of all lives, the power of all powers, the soul of the universe; that he is most present where there is the most perfection;

'He is more present unto every creature he hath made
Than any thing unto itself can be.'

With such a conception of God it becomes easy to see how there should be a Son of Man who is also the Son of God, and a Spirit everywhere present and acting."⁴ The only conclusion from the premises which *we* find "easy to see" is, that Jesus Christ was a created Son of man, to whom

⁴ Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism, Anss. 21, 22. So also the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed.

⁵ Freedom of Faith, p. 60.

God was as much more present than he is to other men, or other "created things," as he was more perfect; and consequently, that the incarnation in Jesus Christ differed from the incarnation in other men, or in inanimate things, in degree rather than in kind. Happily, however, our author gives another explanation of the incarnation, which is quite different from this, and inconsistent with it, though not less divergent from the teachings of the Scriptures and the confessions of the church. According to this view Christ is the manifestation of a certain "eternal humanity in God,"¹⁰ whatever that may be; and "Christ is in humanity in all fulness," not merely "by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul," but by "living the full life of humanity, and entering into all the conditions from which he would deliver—into the subjection to evil, the finiteness, the sorrow and labor and death, and the whole conditioned life of man."¹¹ Since this entrance into "the full life of humanity" could not take place all at once, but was effected through advancing experience, the incarnation was not complete at the birth of Jesus, or until his ascension, or rather it is a process which is never completed, but is "forever carried on in the Spirit."¹² According to this, the incarnation did not consist in the taking upon himself of human *nature* by the Son of God, but is, rather, the progressive and never-ending entering of a certain archetypal "eternal humanity in God" into human *experience*. It is vain to look into the derivation and usage of the word "incarnation," or into the creeds of the church, or into the writings of the great theologians, for such a conception.

The doctrine of the atonement is, that Jesus Christ, by his obedience, sufferings, and death, in behalf of sinful men, removed otherwise insuperable obstacles in the way of their forgiveness and salvation. The almost universal belief has been that these obstacles were other than those

¹⁰ Statement of Belief, iv. 3, 5.

¹¹ *Ib.* iv. 5.

¹² *Ib.* iv. 6. See also Progressive Orthodoxy, pp. 32, 33.

which are found in man himself. The oldest, generally accepted, and apparently scriptural, doctrine is, that these obstacles are found in the claims of the divine law, and the human and divine sense of justice, and that the atonement removed these obstacles, and made it possible for God to treat as righteous all who by faith accept this redemption.¹³ Other ideas have at various times found a local and temporary acceptance, as, for instance, the idea that the ground of the necessity of the atonement lies in the relation of the world to Satan, which was advocated in the earlier Christian centuries. Of the few, comparatively speaking, who have regarded the necessity of the atonement as grounded wholly in man himself, some have found this necessity simply in man's aversion to God, and have seen in the atonement merely a revelation of the self-sacrificing love of God, fitted to attract and subdue men. The ablest advocates of this "moral influence" theory have, however, confessed their dissatisfaction with it, as, in itself, an insufficient explanation of the atonement.¹⁴ Another theory is, that it is only through the sacrifice of Christ that man has "such knowledge of God and of himself as is necessary to a repentance which is revolutionary."¹⁵ Still another theory is, that there is an identity of nature in God and man, which is revealed in the life of Christ and realized more and more by man through faith. According to this theory the grand medium of reconciliation between God and man, the atonement, is, the incarnation.¹⁶ The death of Christ is important only as necessary to the complete revelation of God in the life of humanity. Thus regarded, the effi-

¹³ Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism, Anss. 25, 33; Westminster Confession, xi. 1; Heidelberg Catechism, Anss. 12-18, 60, 61; Articles of Religion (Church of England), xi.; Augsburg Confession, i. 4; Apology for the Augsburg Confession, iii.; Form of Concord, iii.; Helvetic Confessions, etc.

¹⁴ *Vicarious Sacrifice*, by Horace Bushnell, D.D., p. 534 ff.

¹⁵ *Progressive Orthodoxy*, p. 55.

¹⁶ *The Republic of God*, by Elisha Mulford, L.L.D., p. 185, and note; *Progressive Orthodoxy*, pp. 45, 46.

cacy of the atonement lies in its influence upon the minds of men. Hence this is another form of the "moral influence" theory. Most of its advocates, however, seem to recognize a "redemptive force" in the incarnation working through a mystical union of man with God in Christ. Hence the theory is known as the "mystical theory."¹⁷ This, apparently, is the doctrine of our author. "There can be for man no deliverance out of his evil, and from the vanity and sorrow of life, except through his belief that there is behind all things a mind and a heart like his own. Hence the need of a revelation of God by incarnation,—the first and greatest of Christian facts."¹⁸ "Christ lives this life by actual process—to the full, even unto death, and condemns it, i. e., proves it to be not what it seems, takes the evil and despair out of it, by showing men through himself that they belong to the eternal order of God, along with himself, and not to the illusive order of the world—a revelation beginning with the incarnation and ending with the ascension, or rather never ended, but forever carried on in the Spirit."¹⁹ According to this view, the atonement becomes efficacious only through faith in the divine life in humanity, leading to effort to realize it, and through the operation of a certain mysterious force which it exerts through our mystical union with it. Hence our author speaks of the atonement as "the entrance into the world, through a person, of a moulding and redeeming force in humanity,"²⁰ and "as meaning, Christ formed in us, a law and way of life."²¹ He distinctly rejects the idea of "legal atonement,"²² and recognizes no justification by faith, except "in the sense of a faith that, by its law, induces an actual righteousness."²³ The glorious doctrine that the believer is justified before God, completely and solely, by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and is, from the moment of believing, free from condemnation,—the cen-

¹⁷ *Systematic Theology* by Charles Hodge, D.D., vol. ii. pp. 581-9.

¹⁸ *Statement of Belief*, iv. 3.

¹⁹ *Ib.* iv. 6.

²⁰ *Freedom of Faith*, p. 9.

²¹ *Ib.* p. 61.

²² *Ib.* p. 20.

²³ *Ib.* p. 9.

tral and fundamental doctrine of the Pauline theology, of the Reformation, and of Protestantism, the doctrine which has proved the richest source of Christian experience, and the most powerful incentive to Christian living,—finds no place in his system, according to which a man can only be regarded and treated as righteous when he has actually become so through a process of realization of the life of God in humanity extending through years, or ages, or an existence void of “time relations.” In this theology the incarnation is the central and most important thing, rather than the atonement. In fact, it *is* the atonement. It exalts the birth of Christ rather than his death. Its symbol should be the manger rather than the cross. It finds small support in the Scriptures for the prominence which it gives to the incarnation. It utterly ignores their constant insistence upon the transcendent importance of the death and blood of Christ. It degrades the atonement from its place as the means of salvation from sin and of securing righteousness, to that of a means of salvation from vanity and sorrow and illusion and of elevation to a higher order of being. In other words, it takes it out of its *moral* setting and relations. It shows us, not a salvation wrought *for* us, and wholly “finished,” but a never-ending revelation of one which we are to realize for *ourselves*. It confounds the work of Christ *for* us with the work of the Spirit *in* us. In taking away the believer’s confidence and peace and joy in the thought that he *is* justified and saved, and bidding him be content with the hope that he at some time *will* be, it dampens Christian ardor, paralyzes Christian strength, and contradicts the facts of Christian experience and consciousness. In representing eternal life not as the free “gift of God” to the undeserving, but as the just consequence, secured by natural law, of “actual righteousness,” it “frustrates the grace of God.”

The difference between the evangelical doctrine of saving faith and that of our author lies, not so much in the conception of faith, as in the determination of its object, and

the idea of its method of operation. The common view is, that saving faith is "confidence in God as revealed in Christ, and leading to adoring surrender to him as both Saviour and Lord."¹⁴ Its object is the Lord Jesus Christ; and though it may be sufficient when it receives him generally, rather than in any specific character or office," yet it must receive him, without limitation or reserve, as he is "offered to us in the gospel;"¹⁵ and its intelligent and full exercise involves reception of him more especially as a divine Redeemer from sin through his atoning sacrifice." This faith has in itself no saving efficacy; nor does its saving power consist in its tendency to inspire effort for reformation or improvement. It is the divinely appointed *condition* on which justification, adoption, and sanctification are bestowed; it is the act of reaching out and laying hold of the salvation of God. And therefore from the first moment that a sinner truly exercises it, he is saved. On the contrary, our author represents saving faith as consisting in a practical recognition of the fact revealed in the incarnation, that we "belong to the eternal order of God," and "not to the illusive order of the world,"¹⁶ and "are partakers of the divine nature,"¹⁷ and that a divine life has been realized in the life of humanity, and is realizable and ought to be realized by us." Saving faith, therefore, does not save except by a gradual process as it, "by its law, produces an actual righteousness—a simple, rational process realized in human experience."¹⁸ Consistently with this idea, our author defines faith as "the sum of those faculties in man through which he gets out of evil and the life of the world into the life of God," though "faith will always have its play within the Christ idea,"—whatever

¹⁴ Lecture on Saving Faith, delivered by Joseph Cook in Boston Music Hall, Feb. 1, 1885. The Christian at Work, Feb. 11, 1886.

¹⁵ Systematic Theology, by Charles Hodge, D.D., vol. iii. p. 99.

¹⁶ Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism, Ans. 31.

¹⁷ Westminster Confession, xiv. 2; Heidelberg Catechism, Ans. 21.

¹⁸ Statement of Belief, iv. 6. ¹⁹ Ib. iv. 11. ²⁰ Freedom of Faith, p. 9.

that may mean,—and adds, “the whole work of regeneration of society may be included within the operation of faith in Christ.”³¹ These ideas of faith are adjusted to our author’s doctrine of the atonement. They are, alike, unscriptural, and foreign to the belief of the Christian church.

The evangelical doctrine respecting man is, that he is a created being; that he was “made in the image of God,” but fell from his first estate through transgression; and that, in consequence, he has ever since remained totally depraved, that is, alienated from God, and involved in the guilt, condemnation, and ruin of sin, until renewed by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ, he is made “a new creature,” and *becomes* a “partaker of the divine nature.”³² Our author tells us that “man is more than a creation;”³³ that he “is an eternal being;”³⁴ that he is related to “an eternal humanity in God;”³⁵ that he is a sinful being, living “the life of the flesh,” but not totally depraved;³⁶ that he *is*, in his natural state, “a partaker of the divine nature;”³⁷ and that his need is, not so much to be delivered from sin and its consequences, though he has this need, as to be lifted from the imperfect and undeveloped “life of the flesh” into the life of the Spirit,³⁸ through a revelation to him that he “belongs to the eternal order of God, and not to the illusive order of the world.” This sweet gospel of human nature rises to its loftiest flight in the statement of a recent writer, that “when John Bunyan said of a poor profane wretch, ‘there goes John Bunyan but for the grace of God,’”—by the way it was John Newton who said it, of a man on the way to the gallows, but facts are of small

³¹ Statement of Belief, iv. 8.

³² Westminster Assembly’s Shorter Catechism, Anss. 10, 13, 18; Heidelberg Catechism, Anss. 6-8.

³³ Statement of Belief, i. 2.

³⁴ Freedom of Faith, p. 39.

³⁵ Statement of Belief, iv. 5.

³⁶ Freedom of Faith, p. 22.

³⁷ Statement of Belief, iv. 11.

³⁸ Freedom of Faith, p. 62.

³⁹ Statement of Belief, iv. 6.

account to imaginative theology,—“ he might have added—and his humanity and religion would allow him to say what his theology might not—there goes a man whose sin is conquered, and who is a saint in Jesus Christ.”⁴⁰ It is needless to dwell upon the contrast between these representations, on the one hand, that men are sparks of deity, partakers of the divine nature, saints in Jesus Christ, unhappily involved in the life of the flesh and an illusive order of the world, and needing nothing more than to have it revealed to them how great they are, and, on the other hand, the uniform teaching of the Scriptures and humble confessions of the church, that men are fallen, depraved, wicked, condemned, and, without the mercy of God, the atoning blood of Christ, and the cleansing of the Holy Spirit, lost.

The author's view of the work of the Holy Spirit, is, of course, adjusted to his view of man's spiritual need. The received doctrine is, that the Holy Spirit produces a change in the sinful subject of his operations, so great that it may properly be called regeneration, or new birth, or likened to resurrection from the dead; that this change, which is instantaneous and incipient, consists, not in any alteration in the structure of human nature, or transference of it from a lower to higher mode of life, but, chiefly, in a reversal of the attitude of the *will*, so that it is turned and moves toward God instead of away from him;“ that this new life is nurtured and developed in holy character by the subsequent work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification,⁴¹ which is gradual and progressive, never reaching perfection in this life, but immediately completed at death;“ and these operations of the Spirit are effected, not indeed without the use of means, but chiefly by direct application of supernatural power in immediate contact with the soul.

⁴⁰ Christian Anthropology and Philanthropy, by Lewis O. Brastow, D.D., The New Englander, February, 1886.

⁴¹ Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism, Ans. 31.

⁴² Ib. Ans. 35.

⁴³ Ib. Ans. 37.

To our author this last savors of magic and superstition. He is "disposed to regard regeneration as a *process*, involving known laws and analogies, and to divest it of that air of magical mystery in which it has been held; a plain and simple matter by which one gets out of the lower world into the higher by the Spirit of God." "Its effect is not so much to purify the sinful nature, as to raise the whole nature from a lower to a higher type. It is "a constructive rather than a reconstructive process." "The author "would also assign to the operation of the Holy Spirit the widest scope." "He is "the source of all good." All men are subject to his influence, and, according as they yield to it, are by him "led through the process of sanctification." The common virtues in the ordinary relations of life are wrought out by him, but "reach their full quality as spiritual only when they are brought into conscious relations to God." "This doctrine confounds regeneration with sanctification. It does not restrict sanctification to believers. It represents the work of the Spirit as one of elevation rather than sanctification. And it denies to the Holy Spirit direct, personal, supernatural action, and makes all his operations those of law.

The common idea of probation is, that it is a limited period within which men, surrounded and plied with gracious influences, but left to the exercise of their own freedom, must by their own decisive choice manifest their character and determine their destiny. The limit of the period depends upon the divine mercy. Until recently it was believed that the limits of the period coincide with those of life in this world. Dornerism, however, maintaining that all men must finally be judged by their conscious, voluntary treatment of Jesus Christ, necessarily holds that for those who have had no offer of the Saviour in this life probation is continued after death, though not for those who have here made an intelligent and decisive

⁴⁴ Freedom of Faith, p. 33.

⁴⁵ Ib. p. 62.

⁴⁶ Statement of Belief, v. 3.

⁴⁷ Ib. v. 4.

choice respecting the Saviour.⁴⁸ This is commonly regarded as the principal distinctive feature of what is properly called "the new theology." But our author's new theology goes far beyond this. In his view, character and destiny are determined only by repeated volitions, under the law that repeated action of the will tends to become habitual and unchangeable, and character tends to become permanent. They are, therefore, never determined, probation never ends for any man, until through repeated choices the will has become morally incapable of making any different choice. Probation is therefore limited, if at all, not by time, but by law. "Probation is a continuous state or process, till it ends by its own nature. Man has but one probation, but, by its nature, it cannot have any bounds of time, whether of earthly life or world-age. It ends when character is fixed,—if, indeed, we have any right to use a word so out of keeping with moral freedom,—and it is not possible to attach any other bound or limit to it."⁴⁹ Evidently the author does not contemplate the possibility of the will's fixing *itself* unalterably by a single decision: he recognizes nothing as fixing it but the law of habit. He does not accord to the will a royal, self-determining power: it can be fixed only by falling into bondage. The principle, however, works both ways; it is a two-edged sword. If the will cannot become irreversibly set upon evil, except by a long "process," neither can it be unalterably set upon good, except by a similar "process." No man, therefore, is secure in goodness, till his probation is ended, and his character is fixed by a "process" which has rendered him incapable of being any thing else. And then, it may be asked, wherein is the merit, or moral worth, of his goodness? If the author's view is correct, it is not at all probable that any man's probation ends at death. And in proportion to the probability of future probation, the necessity of immediate repentance is diminished.

⁴⁸ *Progressive Orthodoxy*, p. 105.

⁴⁹ *Freedom of Faith*, pp. 42, 43.

The common belief is, that God commits to men certain duties, privileges, gifts, and trusts, for which he holds them personally responsible, and for which he will in due time call them to a strict and final personal reckoning with himself. This will be "the last judgment." Meantime men are left to their freedom. This freedom, which is absolutely necessary to the play and manifestation and development of character, is only possible because of the subsequent reckoning. In our author's view, the only judgment is that which comes upon man by the operation of natural law. Men are constantly reaping the fruit of their doings, and so being judged. Personal accountability is accountability *of* a person, but not *to* a person, but rather to inexorable laws. "We are all the while rendering account to the laws without and within." Judgment is a "present" and "ever on-going process." It is, however, not confined to this world, but has a "universal sweep."⁶⁰ But no judgment is final, until character is fixed. Even the judgment which follows death is not necessarily final. "A change of worlds is followed by judgment,—the change evokes judgment: thus, 'it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment;' but the Scriptures do not indicate that this judgment involves finality, as distinguished from previous judgments: it *may* involve it, but not necessarily, and only as successive judgments or crises point towards finality. Finality is to be found in character, and not in judgment, except as a crisis tends to develop and fix character."⁶¹ "Conduct is always reaching crises, and entering upon its consequences. It may be cumulative in degree, and reach crises more and more marked; it may at last reach a special crisis which shall be *the* judgment when the soul shall turn to the right or left of eternal destiny."⁶² The chief defect in the author's conception of judgment is, that it does not contain the element of justice. "The moment we touch fire we are burned. The sentence of

⁶⁰ Freedom of Faith, p. 341.⁶¹ *Ib.* p. 339, note.⁶² *Ib.* p. 341.

broken law is executed at once." " True; and the same sentence is executed, whether the act was accidental and innocent or wilful and guilty. The broken physical law is vindicated; the broken moral law is not. It is true that there may be suffering in the conscience and moral nature. "The quick pang of conscience that follows sin is the first stroke of judgment." " But some men suffer more remorse for an unkind speech than others do for a dozen murders. And under the law of disintegration, the more a man sins, the less he suffers in conscience. Our author himself has not much respect for the theory of purely moral penalties; "The true preacher of retribution is not one who tones it down to mere remorse and separation from God,—things that no evil-doer takes into account." " He is better satisfied with the theory that every broken law inflicts its own penalty; "If we sin against the body, we are punished in the body." " True; but some men reap less physical suffering from years of sensuality than others get from a single self-indulgence. And some men die without having received the physical penalties of their sins; and how are they ever going to receive them? The fact is, and it is acknowledged on all hands, and has been recognized from the earliest times by heathen as well as Christian writers, that the divine administration of affairs in this world is not conducted on the principles of exact justice, as, indeed, it is impossible to conceive how it *can* be, with the present system of natural law. So patent is this fact, that unbelievers base upon it one of their strongest arguments against the existence of a moral Governor of the universe; while, on the other hand, believers find in it one of their strongest reasons for believing in a future life, in which the injustices of this world may be adjusted. The doctrine that the present system is to continue forever, and that there is to be no judgment except that which is to be executed by natural laws, makes all such adjustment impossible; carries forward the moral confu-

" Freedom of Faith, p. 341.

" Ib. p. 64.

" Ib. p. 330.

sion, and simply eliminates the quality of justice from the character and government of God.

The teaching of the church is, that multitudes of men will, through sin, and refusal to avail themselves of the means of salvation, fall at last under the condemnation and righteous judgment of God, and perish forever. Our author avows a "hope" that all will eventually be saved.⁵⁴ Hope implies more or less expectation. But our author's "hope" seems to be much *more* than a hope. It is true that he does not expressly avow *belief* in universal salvation, though he admits that it is his "dream,"⁵⁵ and that he even deprecates assertion of it "with dogmatic and institutional emphasis" as "practically demoralizing."⁵⁶ But while he does not dogmatize, he skilfully piles up arguments, which, presented with rare charm of diction and tender grace of feeling, are far more effective, and therefore demoralizing, than any coarse dogmatism. He derives his "hope" (1) from a "certainty" which "can be drawn from the heart of God," and (2) from "the uncertainty that gathers about the possibilities of human nature;"⁵⁷ (3) from the Adamic relation of Christ to humanity, (4) the solidarity of the human race, and (5) the equal sweep of evil and redemptive forces, and the superiority of the latter;⁵⁸ (6) from "the spirit and logic of revelation;"⁵⁹ (7) from the nature of probation, which he represents as without limits of time;⁶⁰ (8) from the nature of judgment, which he represents as without finality;⁶¹ (9) from certain "truisms," as he calls them, "that every human being will have the fullest opportunity for attaining to the end of his creation as a child of God; that every human being will receive from the Spirit of God all the influence impelling to salvation that his nature can endure, and retain its moral integrity; and that no human

⁵⁴ Freedom of Faith, p. 63; Statement of Belief, iv. 8.

⁵⁵ Freedom of Faith, p. 335.

⁵⁶ Statement of Belief, vi. 13.

⁵⁷ *Ib.* vi. 12.

⁵⁸ Freedom of Faith, pp. 23, 24.

⁵⁹ *Ib.* p. 63.

⁶⁰ *Ib.* pp. 42, 43.

⁶¹ *Ib.* pp. 339, 341.

being will be given over to perish while there is a possibility of his salvation;"⁸⁴ (10) from "the *consensus* of reason and revelation on this subject;"⁸⁵ (11) from the local coloring of scriptural language;" (12) from "the sense of humanity" which "the leaven of the gospel generates;"⁸⁶ and (13) from the doctrine of evolution, which everywhere underlies and shapes his theology.⁸⁷ On the other hand, while he admits that the mystery of free-will furnishes a possibility of the lost sheep's never being found,⁸⁸ and of a soul's turning to the left of eternal destiny,⁸⁹ he speaks of such a result merely as theoretically possible, and does not express any belief that it will ever in any one instance actually take place; and while he discerns in the future a shadow which we cannot pierce,⁹⁰ and recognizes the fact that the lines of the forces of sin and of the gospel "do not converge to our finite eyes,"⁹¹ he evidently thinks that the difficulty is in our finite eyes, and builds confidently upon the assurance that "the logic of the gospel is salvation, and the secret of the universe is joy."⁹²

Such views of our author suggest an inquiry into his understanding of the Scriptures. He believes that they are inspired,⁹³ or, more exactly, that the men who wrote them were inspired; but all *theories* of inspiration, "verbal, dynamic, plenary," he rejects;⁹⁴ and he thinks that no theory of inspiration can be formulated which can be substantiated,⁹⁵—which, if we accept his view of the amount of error in the religious teachings of the Bible, seems highly probable. Some of his views are plainly at variance with the Scriptures. So much the worse for the Scriptures. He disposes summarily of inconvenient passages, by finding in them a human and a fallible element. "There is no denial of the fact that doctrines now regarded as parts of orthodoxy are the reflections of the

⁸⁴ Freedom of Faith, p. 38. ⁸⁵ Ib. p. 39. ⁸⁶ Ib. pp. 21, 22. ⁸⁷ Ib. p. 22.

⁸⁸ Ib. p. 27; Statement of Belief, li. 7. ⁸⁹ Freedom of Faith, p. 43.

⁹⁰ Ib. p. 341. ⁹¹ Ib. p. 335. ⁹² Statement of Belief, vi. 8.

⁹³ Ib. iii. 5. ⁹⁴ Freedom of Faith, p. 65.

social condition in which they were formulated. The doctrines of divine sovereignty, of total depravity, and of the atonement, are shot through with colors drawn from the corruption of Roman society, from the Roman sense of authority, and the Roman forms of justice."¹⁵ He might have added, had it suited his purpose, that the doctrine of the fatherhood of God is a "reflection" of family life, and that his own doctrines of probation and judgment are "shot through with colors drawn from" modern natural science. He does not seem to see that the fact that a doctrine is presented in the language and coloring of common life does not prove it to be untrue. He repels the confession of Dr. George Ellis, that "the Bible is an orthodox book," and scouts the idea that "we must revise our Bible or keep our creed;"¹⁶ but he does not point out the precise practical difference between revising the Bible and setting aside considerable portions of it on account of their local coloring. He regards the human reason,—taking the word in the largest sense,—as competent to recognize spiritual truth, and to judge of the correctness of statements of it." Nor does he limit this capacity to "Christian consciousness:" he attributes it to "the universal reason." We have sometimes wondered how certain writers ascertain what the affirmations of "the universal reason" *are*, to which they appeal so confidently. We suspect that the high-sounding phrase sometimes means the reason of the writer and those who think with him. "Human nature—so far as it acts by itself—accepts Christianity because it establishes a thorough *consensus* with human nature: it is agreeable in its nature to human nature in its normal action."¹⁷ This statement is open to the slight objection that mankind generally never have, as a matter of fact, found Christianity agreeable, or been persuaded to accept it. Possibly that is because it has been falsely presented to them by orthodox preachers. Whether it will prove more agreeable to them in the form

¹⁵ *Freedom of Faith*, pp. 21, 22. ¹⁶ *Ib.* p. 20. ¹⁷ *Ib.* p. 11. ¹⁸ *Ib.* p. 12.

of "the new theology" remains to be seen. At present there are no signs of its being intensely captivating. Our author protests against doctrines, as "misrepresentations," which "antagonize the sober conclusions of universal reason,"—which Paul tells us "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," and "cannot know them,"—"and evoke the protest of the universal human heart,"⁷⁹—which the same apostle assures us "is enmity against God." But then, Paul's ideas were considerably "shot through." For our own part, we can only say that it seems to us that if only those parts and interpretations of the Bible are to be received which commend themselves to the approval of mankind generally, and everything at variance with these is to be rejected as colored, there will not be much of the Bible left, and the book, as a revelation, whether *from* God or *of* God, is a failure, and, as a guide to religious truth, is about as trustworthy as a last year's almanac.

The fundamental and shaping principle of our author's theology seems to be the theory of evolution,—though Darwin and Huxley would smile to see the doctrine of "the survival of the fittest" transformed by the sentiment of a genial clergyman into the hope of the survival of *all*. Instead of telling us of a personal God who commands, proves, judges, condemns, atones, forgives, sanctifies, saves, the author points us to natural laws. Atonement is a process;⁸⁰ regeneration is a process;⁸¹ probation is a process;⁸² judgment is a process;⁸³ "even love and grace are by law."⁸⁴ Mankind are slowly evolving, by natural processes, under great laws, from fleshly into spiritual beings. The author has attempted to construct a theology on the basis of natural science, or rather, what he conceives to be natural science. His system has an appearance of being scientific; but it is really unscientific at every point. We venture to think that possibly he might have been more successful if he had been less of a *littérateur* and

⁷⁹ Freedom of Faith, p. 12.⁸⁰ Ib. p. 9.⁸¹ Ib. p. 33.⁸² Ib. p. 42.⁸³ Ib. p. 431.⁸⁴ Ib. p. 327.

poet, and had had more knowledge of science, and more of the scientific method and habit of thought. As it is, like another Aaron seeking to improve the religion of his people, he has cast the golden ornaments of fancy into the moulds of exact science, and there has come out this—
theology.

His views are many of them unscriptural. He confesses this, by setting aside, as colored, such of the Scriptures as do not harmonize with his speculations.⁸⁵ They are also illogical. This, too, he confesses, both by inveighing against logic in theology,⁸⁶ and in frank admissions; "It is said of this theology that it lacks logical precision and coherence, and that it parts are not mutually self-supporting. It accepts the criticism, and confesses that it does not first and mainly aim at these features."⁸⁷ They are also repulsive. The representation that "God sustains all relations through law,"⁸⁸ takes away from us that immediate personal communion with God, which is the believer's greatest comfort here, and the perfection of which is his greatest hope. God no longer comes into personal contact with us: a system worse than a priesthood intervenes between us and him. The Holy Spirit no longer touches our hearts, and "witnesses with our spirits," and "helps our infirmities;" his operations are all processes, under law. There is no hope of our being "made perfect in holiness" and "immediately passing into glory," when this weary conflict is over; the conflict will never be over; we have before us the tedious prospect of a long "process" of development. Justice is banished from the universe. We can no longer come to God as our Father for immediate and full forgiveness and blessing: forgiveness and grace are dispensed only by law and process. The tender relation of a Father to his little children is lost in the intricacies of an eternal machine. In our author's writings, considering that they are those

⁸⁵ *Freedom of Faith*, pp. 21, 22.

⁸⁶ *Ib.* pp. 7, 11, 20.

⁸⁷ *Ib.* p. 34.

⁸⁸ *Ib.* p. 327.

of a preacher of the gospel, the words "forgiveness," "mercy," "grace," occur with astonishing infrequency. The fact is, that the things signified by them have, logically, no place in his system. Natural law knows no mercy. Our author's doctrines would be still more repulsive and shocking, if they were carried out to their logical and necessary conclusions; but from this he himself shrinks. Contempt of logic is sometimes convenient.

Whatever else may be said of these views, this at least is certain, that they are in broad conflict with what are called evangelical views, and with the faith of the best part of the Christian church. This, too, he confesses. He does not hesitate to part company with New England theology, and even with Protestantism.⁴⁹ His views are wholly at variance with the creeds, faith, and preaching of all the great evangelical bodies, and particularly with those of Congregational churches. We are of the opinion that a preacher of such doctrines is out of place in a Congregational pulpit, and in the Congregational fellowship. It was not that such doctrines might be preached that our fathers toiled and made sacrifices to establish churches and seminaries. Approval of such preaching is an insult to their memory. Such doctrines are powerless. It was not by the preaching of them that Luther produced the Reformation, or Wesley built up the great Methodist church, or our Puritan fathers made New England what she has been. The sanction of such preaching in Congregational pulpits tends to produce contention and division in the denomination; for there are men, and a good many of them, who will have no fellowship with it. There is rich inconsistency and absurdity in extending fellowship within the denomination to preachers of these doctrines, and refusing fellowship to preachers in other denominations who preach the same doctrines, and probably preach them better. If such preaching is to be tolerated in the denomination, and recognized as good Con-

⁴⁹ *Freedom of Faith*, p. 20.

gregationalism, we may as well throw down all walls of partition, relinquish all attempts to guard the purity of our pulpits, and let any man who pleases preach what he pleases to our bewildered congregations.

And we believe that the preaching of such doctrines is productive of infinite mischief. We often wonder with what ideas or purposes so many of our preachers and professors endeavor to substitute the speculations of German rationalism for the old evangelical and scriptural doctrines. Has, then, the faith of New England been so unsuccessful in training character that we must find something better? Have rationalism and philosophy done so much for the religious condition of Germany, that it is desirable to introduce the same state of things here? Have Unitarianism and Universalism been so powerful in cultivating Christian and spiritual life, that we want to filter their doctrines through our theology? Has faith in the Bible done so little for men, and rejection of it, in whole or in part, and of its divine authority, been so fruitful of blessing, that we want to put people on their guard against putting too much confidence in it, and try to lessen its hold on the public mind as much as we can? At what are our preachers and theologians aiming? Whatever their aim, we have no doubt of the result. We think our author's representations of the atonement, saving faith, regeneration, and inspiration particularly dangerous. And to these we would add, with emphasis, his doctrine of probation after death and probable universal salvation. The inevitable tendency of the preaching of these doctrines is to lessen men's sense of accountability, and to encourage them to continue in sin and impenitence. Already the approval of such preaching, by important councils, is producing these effects. And these, above all others, are not the times when we can afford this. The very foundations of society are threatened by men in multitudes who have cast off all faith in God, all fear of judgment to come, all sense of moral obligation. There is fast

developing a corruption, like that of Rome under the emperors, or Europe in the Middle Ages, which is prolific of great wickedness and crime, and of no less suffering and woe. It is no time to be toying with unauthorized and demoralizing *hopes* and *dreams* of a universal restoration somewhere on the far-off misty horizon of the infinite, or to exchange the vivid and near realities assured by the Word of God for dim and distant possibilities, dreamt of by scientific and metaphysical philosophy, which at once soothe the fears of guilty consciences, and mock the longings of suffering hearts. The world needs more heroic remedies for its disease, profounder consolations for its agony.

ARTICLE IX.

THE BOOK OF JUBILEES.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ETHIOPIC BY PROFESSOR GEO. H. SCHODDE, PH.D.,
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CHAP. VII. 1. And in the seventh week, in the first year thereof, in this jubilee, Noah planted vines on this hill upon which the ark had rested, named Lûbâr, the Ararat Mountains, and they produced fruit in the fourth year, and he watched their fruit and gathered them in this year in the seventh month, and he made wine of it, and put it into a vessel and kept it until the fifth year, until the first day of the new moon of the first month. 2. And he celebrated this day in rejoicing as a festival,¹ and he made a sacrifice unto the Lord, a young one from among the oxen and a ram and a sheep, each seven years old, and a young goat, that he might thereby obtain pardon for himself and his sons. 3. And he prepared the goat first, and he placed of its blood upon the flesh of the altar which he had made, and all the fat he laid upon the altar where he

¹ Cf. chap. vi. vs. 21 and 22.