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ART. I.—“*Du Prêtre, De La Femme, De La Famille.*” *Spiritual Direction, and Auricular Confession; their History, Theory, and Consequences.* By M. MICHELET, Assistant Prof. in Faculty of Letters, &c. Phila.: James M. Campbell & Co. 1845.

THE present condition of Popery presents a singular combination of weakness and strength. Weak in the power of inherent and prolonged vitality, it is yet strong, partly in the remaining forms of a once vigorous life, and partly in that sudden and feverish strength which is, perhaps, the last convulsive start of expiring nature. So weak that it requires the aid of Austrian bayonets and English frigates to retain possession of the very seat of its power: it is yet so strong, that this very protection is given as the price of its interposition to restrain Irish turbulence and German independence. Like a huge and creeping parasite, it grew and twined itself around the nations during the long night of the middle ages; and though strong arms have torn away many of its folds, and let in the light of heaven; and though a slow and sure decay is working at its root, yet the gnarled trunk and twisted branches still retain their hold on the various ramifications that have sprung from the yet living roots of the old Roman Empire, with at once the tenacity of life and the rigidity of death. Its political element, the Papacy, as a civil power claiming certain exclusive civil and political rights, has become weak, imbecile, effete; an image of gold with feet of clay: while its spiritual element, Popery, the mystery of iniquity, the huge and fallen archangel of Christianity, still retains its power over the minds and hearts of men. The scarlet-robed queen, though degenerated into a wrinkled and shriveled hag, has still retained the privilege of her order, the terrific power of the curse.

VOL. VI.—1

ART. VII.—*Sermons on Important Subjects.* By Rev. SAMUEL DAVIES, A. M., President of the College of New-Jersey. *With an Essay on the Life and Times of the Author,* by ALBERT BARNES. In 3 vols., 12mo., pp. 497, 556, 499. Second edition. New-York: Dayton & Saxton. 1843.

THE author of these volumes was a Congregational minister, and, in some respects, was a most remarkable man. As a pulpit orator, this country has furnished but few equals. For persevering industry and toil in his Master's service, he has left an example worthy the imitation of the pious in all ages. For great success in his labors, as a Christian minister, he was singularly successful. Few men, perhaps, in any age have been more highly honored, than was our author, in accomplishing the great objects contemplated in the Christian ministry.

President Davies was born on the 3d of November, A. D. 1724, in the county of Newcastle, state of Delaware. He was probably of Welsh descent. His father was a farmer, of great plainness and simplicity in his mode of living, but honest and pious. He died while Samuel (our author) was young. His mother was distinguished for her natural talents, and eminent piety. He was an only son, and a great favorite of his parents. His mother had long prayed for the bestowment of such a blessing, and when he was born, she could not but look upon him as a token of the divine favor, and given in express answer to her prayers. In writing to a friend, our author adverts to this fact, as follows:—"I cannot but mention an anecdote known to but few; that I am a son of prayer, like my namesake Samuel, the prophet; and my mother called me Samuel because, she said, I have asked him of the Lord." 1 Sam. i, 20. He was early dedicated to God by his parents, and this, he informs us, had a great influence on his mind in his early consecration to his Master's service. There being no school in the vicinity where his father resided, he was kept at home and taught by his mother; and such were his sprightliness, his propriety of conduct, and his remarkable progress in study, that when a boy he exhibited indications of great promise.

At the age of about ten years he was sent to an English school, at some distance from his father's house, where he continued two years, and made great proficiency in his literary acquisitions; although, during this period, partly for the want of proper religious instruction, he became somewhat careless as to his spiritual interests. He, however, attended to the duty of secret prayer, especially in the evening. The reason he assigns for this was, "he feared lest

he should die before morning." It is said, that he prayed ardently, about this time, that he might be "introduced into the gospel ministry," a calling to which his youthful mind seemed to have a strong predilection.

The precise time of his conversion is unknown, though it is supposed to have taken place when about twelve years of age. Being early dedicated to God by his parents, he was now led to consecrate *himself* to God, through faith in the atoning merit. For a time he was exercised with perplexing doubts respecting his divine acceptance but by constant prayer, and impartial and repeated self-examination, he obtained a satisfactory assurance of his adoption into the divine family, which he happily retained to the end of his life.

He was not favored with a collegiate education, though he was blessed with some of the advantages which the country at that time afforded for literary pursuits. His pecuniary means were limited; and this probably accounts for the fact of his not passing through a regular collegiate course. Being naturally endowed with an extraordinary intellect, and being ardently zealous to accomplish whatever he took in hand, he prosecuted his studies with astonishing success. All subjects within his investigations were mastered with apparent ease. By his indefatigable labors, his scholarship became quite extensive.

From what has been said, it appears that he early selected the Christian ministry as a calling for life. Whether the prayers and instructions of his parents had any influence on this early selection, is not necessary here to inquire. At what age he entered upon his long-desired vocation is uncertain; though it is highly probable that he commenced his ministry when about twenty. At twenty-one, it is supposed that he was engaged as a minister, in a revival of religion in Virginia, an interesting account of which he gives in a letter to the Rev. J. Bellamy. In 1747, being twenty-three years of age, he was sent by the presbytery of Newcastle to Virginia, then a colony, and noted for profaneness and immorality. He preached to several congregations, which formed a kind of circuit, and in the discharge of his duties he was frequently under the necessity of traveling sixty miles. Such were his patience, perseverance, and piety, together with his powerful ministrations, that his labors were attended with great success. The "wilderness and solitary places" bloomed and blossomed before him. Many sinners were converted through his instrumentality, and among them were many slaves, who, no doubt, will furnish additional jewels in his "crown of glory."

Here he continued to labor until 1753, when he was chosen by the synod of New-York, at the instance of the trustees of New-Jersey College, as a suitable person to accompany the Rev. Gilbert Tennent* to England and Ireland, for the purpose of soliciting funds for said college. In this mission he was highly successful; and to his services, mainly, the college was indebted for its subsequent flourishing condition. In England he was greatly esteemed and beloved: his popular talents called forth great applause. While there, he formed an acquaintance with several distinguished gentlemen, with some of whom he continued to correspond till his death.

After his return to this country, he entered again upon the work of traveling his circuit in Virginia, preaching with success to his congregations until 1759, when he was elected president of the New-Jersey College. He succeeded the celebrated Jonathan Edwards, who entered upon the duties of the presidency of the college in 1758, and continued to discharge them but a brief period. In about two weeks after, he departed this life in hope of a "glorious immortality." President Davies entered upon his new calling with great zeal. Such had been the circumstances connected with his ministerial labors, that he had had but little opportunity for improvement in academical learning. He now applied himself with renewed energy to the studies necessary for a thorough qualification for so important and elevated a vocation. His success was great in his literary labors; and by his judicious management the college became very prosperous, and attained a high state of literary merit. But his intense application to study, together with his other labors, which were quite onerous, was more than his enfeebled constitution could endure. A change of exercise proved also undoubtedly disadvantageous to his health. He had been accustomed to much exercise in his long rides in Virginia, and now to confine himself to the duties of the college, merely walking from his own house to Nassau Hall, the distance of about ten rods, necessarily deprived him of his usual exercise—that exercise which the state of his health at that time demanded. He became exceedingly prostrated, and in Feb., 1761, he died of the inflammatory fever, in the thirty-seventh year of his age, having occupied the presidential chair of New-Jersey College about seventeen months.

* Gilbert Tennent was brother of the celebrated William Tennent. He labored in New-Brunswick, New-Jersey, and is said to have been a useful and popular preacher.

His death called forth much sorrow and lamentation in this country and in England. Several sermons were preached on the occasion. Dr. Finley, the successor of Mr. Davies in the presidency, preached from Rom. xiv, 7, 8: "*For none of us liveth unto himself,*" &c. The doctor remarks in his introduction, as a reason for selecting this passage, "When I reflect on the truly Christian, generous, yet strict catholicism that distinguishes this whole chapter, and how deeply it was imprinted on Mr. Davies' own spirit and influenced his course of life, I am ready to conclude, that, perhaps, no text could be more aptly chosen on the occasion." Dr. Gibbons, a distinguished divine, with whom Mr. Davies became acquainted on his visit to England, preached also an able sermon on the occasion from Eph. i, 11: "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." The doctor gives a succinct view of the character of his honored friend, in which he represents him as one of the best men he ever knew; but some of his remarks in illustrating the doctrine of the text are strongly *Calvinistic*. The Rev. David Bostwick, M. A., has given a "just portraiture of President Davies," in which an analysis of his character is strikingly portrayed. Several others preached on the occasion, but it is not necessary that their productions should be noticed in this paper.

President Davies seemed to have been peculiarly fitted for the exigences of the times in which he lived. It was an age characterized by profligacy and vice; corruption of manners and a deep-rooted opposition to spiritual things had become exceedingly prevalent.* A large proportion of the people had become averse to experimental piety, and many who adhered to the "form," were destitute of the "power, of godliness." To meet the opposition, prejudice, and ignorance of such a period, required the first order of endowments. Such were pre-eminently possessed by our author. Like the Wesleys, he was evidently "fitted to his day." Mr. Bostwick describes him as being "adorned with such an assemblage of amiable and useful qualities, and each shining with such distinguished lustre, that it is hard to say in which he most excelled; and equally hard to mention one valuable or useful accomplishment in which he did not excel. A large and capacious understanding; a solid, unbiaised, and well-regulated judgment; a quick apprehension; a genius truly penetrating; a fruitful invention; an elegant taste—were all happily united in him, and constituted a real great-

* For the truth of this remark, see the *Memoirs of the Tennents*, who were his cotemporaries.

ness of mind which never failed to strike every observer with an agreeable surprise."

The reader has already been informed that his early advantages for an education were limited. By this circumstance, however, he was by no means discouraged. He thirsted after knowledge, not merely as an accomplishment, but as a means of extensive usefulness. His strength of genius and indefatigable application placed him in honorable standing among the first scholars of his age; and by the friends of education he was placed at the head of one of the first literary institutions of the country. Let those young preachers in the itinerant field, who are struggling under many embarrassments in acquiring a thorough education, remember that Davies did not become a scholar at once, but by patient perseverance in close application to study;—so of Franklin, who became a philosopher;—so of Newton, the astronomer;—so of Locke, the logician;—so of Clarke, the linguist. Education is usually purchased at the price which Jacob paid for his wives—years of faithful and incessant toil.

But as a Christian minister, our author particularly excelled. He loved the work, being satisfied that he had been called to it by the "Holy Ghost," and to it he unreservedly consecrated all the powers of body and mind. Feeling that the "love of Christ constrained" him, he went forth an itinerant minister, as did the apostles,

"To seek the wandering souls of men."

In the exercise of the ministerial functions, "his fervent zeal and undissembled piety, popular talents and engaging address, soon acquired for him a distinguished character, and general admiration. Scarce was he known as a minister but he was sent, on the earnest application of the people, to some of the distant settlements of Virginia, where many of the inhabitants, in respect of religion, were but a small remove from the darkness and ignorance of uncultivated heathenism; and where the religion of Jesus, which he endeavored to propagate, had to encounter all the blindness, prejudice, and enmity, that are natural to the heart of the most depraved sinner. Yet, under all apparent disadvantages, his labors were attended with such remarkable success, that all opposition quitted the unequal combat, and gave way to the powerful energy of the divine Spirit, which was graciously pleased by his ministry to add many new subjects to the spiritual kingdom of our glorious Immanuel."*

* Rev. Mr. Bostwick.

“The work of the ministry,” says the author just quoted, “was Mr. Davies’ great delight, and for which he was admirably furnished with every valuable qualification of nature and grace. Divinity was a favorite study, in which he made great proficiency for one of his years, and yet he generally preferred the most necessary and practical branches of it to the dark mazes of endless controversy and intricate disputes; aiming chiefly at the conversion of sinners, and to change the hearts of men by an affecting representation of the plain, but most important and interesting truths of the gospel. His talent for composition, especially for the pulpit, was equaled by few, and perhaps exceeded by none. His taste was judicious, elegant, and polite, and yet his discourses were plain and pungent; peculiarly adapted to pierce the conscience and affect the heart. His diction was surpassingly beautiful and comprehensive, tending to make the most stupid hearer sensibly feel, as well as clearly understand. Sublimity and elegance, plainness and perspicuity, and all the force and energy of language, were seen, to some extent, in all his writings. His manner of delivery, as to pronunciation, gesture, and modulation of voice, seemed to be a perfect model of the most moving and striking oratory.

“Whenever he ascended the sacred desk, he seemed to have not only the attention, but all the various passions of his auditory entirely at command. And as his personal appearance was august and venerable, yet benevolent and mild, so he could speak with the most commanding authority, or melting tenderness, according to the variation of his subject. With what majesty and grandeur, with what energy and striking solemnity, with what powerful and almost irresistible eloquence, would he illustrate the truths and inculcate the duties of Christianity! Mount Sinai seemed to thunder from his lips, when he denounced the curses of the law, and sounded the dreadful alarm to guilty sinners. The solemn scenes of the last judgment seemed to rise in view, when he arraigned, tried, and convicted, self-deceivers and hypocrites. And how did the balm of Gilead distill from his lips, when he exhibited a bleeding Saviour to sinful man, as a remedy for the wounded heart and guilty conscience! In a word, whatever subject he undertook, persuasive eloquence dwelt upon his tongue; and his audience was all attention. He spoke as on the borders of eternity, and as viewing the glories and terrors of an unseen world, and conveyed the most grand and affecting ideas of these important realities; realities which he then firmly believed, and which he now sees in the clearest light of intuitive demonstration.”

The above may be viewed in the light of high-wrought pane-

gyric; but to what extent it may be thus regarded, we will not here decide. The representation was drawn by a personal friend, and how far the influence of friendship led to exaggeration, cannot be fully decided; charity, however, would prompt to a belief that the writer labored to give a faithful "portraiture" of his friend, as a Christian minister. And we are more inclined to this belief, from the fact that the representation agrees with those given by Drs. Finley, Gibbons, and others.

But to the volumes before us. These contain a large number of sermons on "important subjects," which were published after the author's death. Such was their rapid sale, that they soon passed through nine editions. They passed through several editions in England, and were sought after there with great eagerness by the religious reading community. Indeed, it is believed that no sermons of modern times have passed through more editions than have these, except those of Mr. Wesley. And though, perhaps, occasionally wanting in elegance of diction, and excessive in verbiage, yet they will be sought for and read when many others of more recent date shall have been consigned to oblivion. Dr. Gibbons, in the sixth London edition, speaks of them as follows:—

"A calm and elaborate inquiry into the connection of those passages which he chooses for his subjects, and a close investigation, when it appeared necessary, into the meaning of the text by consulting the original language, and fair and learned criticism;—a careful attention to the portions of sacred truth upon which he proposes to treat, so that his discourse as naturally rises from his theme as the branch grows from the root, or the stream issues from the fountain. In every page, and almost every line of our author's sermons, his readers may discover the subject he at first professed to handle; and he is ever illustrating, proving, or enforcing some truth evidently contained in it; observing a due regard to the divine word, by comparing and confirming Scripture by Scripture, by taking the sacred text in its easy and natural sense, and by pertinent citations of passages, both in the proof and amplification; an observance of method and order, so as to proceed, like a wise builder, in laying a foundation and regularly erecting the superstructure, and yet diversifying his method by making it sometimes open and express, and at other times indirect and implicit; a free, manly diction, without anything of a nice and affected accuracy, or a loud-sounding torrent of almost unintelligible words on the one side, or a loose negligence, or mean and low-creeping phrases, unworthy of the pulpit, on the other; a rich vein of evangelical doctrine with a proper notice of practical duties, or awful denunciation of divine wrath against the impenitent and incorrigible; an impartial regard to the cases of all his hearers; like a good steward distributing to all their portion in due season; animated and pathetic application, in which our author collects and concentrates what he has proved in his discourses; and urges it with

all the power of forcible address and melting persuasion to the heart." —Pp. 3, 4.

That the critic may find some objectionable things in the sermons before us is freely admitted; and that there are some sentiments in them that would be objected to by a large proportion of the readers of the *Methodist Quarterly*, is believed; for it should be remembered that the author of the sermons was a Calvinist, and that some of the peculiarities of his creed would naturally find a place in them; but notwithstanding all their objectionable features, we must be permitted to pronounce them as among the most eloquent and useful sermons ever issued by the American or English press. A few extracts from them must suffice.

In Sermon II, our author discourses on John iii, 16: "For God so loved the world," &c. It was preached immediately after he had recovered from a severe fit of sickness, and was introduced by the following remarks, which evidently show his ardent desire to benefit his hearers:—

"I have been solicitously thinking in what way my life, redeemed from the grave, may be of most service to my dear people. And I would collect all the feeble remains of my strength into one vigorous effort this day to promote this benevolent end. If I knew what subject has the most direct tendency to save your souls, that is the subject to which my heart would cling with peculiar endearment, and which I would make the matter of the present discourse.

"And when I consider I am speaking to an assembly of sinners, guilty, depraved, helpless creatures, and that if ever you are saved it will be only through Jesus Christ, in that way which the gospel reveals; when I consider that your everlasting life turns on this hinge, viz., the reception you give to this Saviour, and this way of salvation; when I consider these things, I can think of no subject more suitable for recommending the Lord Jesus to your acceptance, and to explain and inculcate the method of salvation through his mediation."—Pp. 31, 32.

In elucidating the subject, he notices at length the following points in his usual style, which, for *strength* and *simplicity*, is scarcely equaled by the celebrated Dr. South:—

- "1. Without Christ, all are in a perishing condition.
- "2. That through Christ, a way is opened for salvation.
- "3. The grand prerequisite to being saved, is faith in Jesus Christ.
- "4. That those who believe in Christ shall be saved.
- "5. That this method of salvation is a most striking and astonishing display of the love of God."

Our author lived in an age in which infidelity was embraced by many, especially of the youth. Against it, he frequently leveled his artillery with great power and effect. In a sermon on the "*Divine Authority and Sufficiency of the Christian Religion*," he thus speaks of the religion of the Bible :—

"The religion of the Bible has the directest tendency to promote true piety and solid virtue in the world ; it is such a religion as becomes a God to reveal ; such a religion as we might expect from him ; a religion intended and adapted to regulate self-love, and to diffuse the love of God and man through the world ; a religion productive of every humane, social, and divine virtue, and directly calculated to banish all sin from the world ; to transform impiety into devotion, injustice and oppression into equity and universal benevolence, and sensuality into sobriety ; a religion infinitely preferable to any that has been contrived by the wisest and best of men."

Mr. Davies was a great lover of his country. In defense of its liberties, he appeared with all his zeal and eloquence. He preached on the occasion of his country's invasion by a foreign power. He gives the enemy no quarters. He fully believed in the efficacy and power of the gospel to triumph over the wickedness of this world, and that the time would come when the kingdom of the Redeemer would exercise its "government over our guilty race." His sermon on the "*Mediatorial Kingdom and Glories of Jesus Christ*," for sublimity of thought and true eloquence of expression, is hardly surpassed by any writer of ancient or modern times. But on the character of these sermons it is unnecessary that we should say more. The above will suffice for recommending them to the reader's attention. This was the principal object of the reviewer.

That the enterprising publishers have presented the public with a new and cheap edition of these sermons is a matter of thankfulness ; and it is ardently hoped that they will still prove a great blessing to the ministry and to the church, and that they will continue to be read with increasing interest, delight, and profit, until time shall be no more !

R. W. A.

New-London, Conn., Sept., 1845.