

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

VOL. XXXV.—NO. 3.

JULY, MDCCCLXXXIV.

ARTICLE, I.

EVOLUTION.¹

Gentlemen of the Alumni Association:

At the same time that you honored me with an invitation to deliver an address before you on this occasion, the Board of Directors of the Theological Seminary, in view of the fact that "Scepticism in the world is using alleged discoveries in science to impugn the word of God," requested me "to give fully my views, as taught in this institution, upon Evolution, as it respects the world, the lower animals, and man." Inasmuch as several members of the Board are also members of this Association, and both Board and Association feel the same interest in the Seminary, I have supposed that I could not select a subject more likely to meet with your approval than the one suggested to me by the Directors.

I am all the more inclined to make this choice, as it will afford me the opportunity of showing you that additional study has, in some respects, to a certain extent modified my views since I expressed them to many of you in the class-room.

¹ This Address was delivered May 7th, 1884, before the Alumni Association of the Theological Seminary at Columbia, S. C., and is published in the SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW at its request, and also at the request of the Board of Directors of the Theological Seminary.

ARTICLE V.

"EVOLUTIONARY ETHICS AND CHRISTIANITY."

The article with the above title, in the *Contemporary Review*, from the pen of Professor Goldwin Smith, cannot fail to strike every thoughtful reader as one of the many indications that the theory of Evolution is loosening its grasp on the minds of students of physical science. Professor Smith evidently feels that any theory with so broad a sweep as that of Evolution, touching as it does the whole sphere of man's knowledge and relations, cannot, if true, be repugnant to any part of his nature. If it be true, it must not only fit all the facts of his physical nature, and of the world of matter around him; but, also, must not fail to harmonise with all the facts of his moral and religious nature. Those who hold the theory of Evolution feel this. Evidences of this are seen in the great efforts which have been put forth to construct a system of ethics founded on the principles of this theory, and the somewhat ridiculous performances in the line of public religious services. It is an effort of the former sort that has called forth Professor Smith's article—that article being a review of Mr. Leslie Stephen's "Science of Ethics." About two years ago Professor Smith published a very able article in the *Contemporary Review* on the question, Has Evolution yet found a new "Basis of Morality"? His very decided opinion was that it had not done so up to that time, and his late article shows that he thinks no nearer approach has been made to success by later efforts. After noticing some admissions which Mr. Stephen made in his treatise, he says, "The inference which I (though not Mr. Stephen) should draw from these frank avowals is, that it is impossible to construct a rule of individual conduct, or for the direction of life, by mere inspection of the phenomena of Evolution, without some conception of the estate and destiny of man. In what hands are we—in those of a Father, in those of a power indifferent to the welfare of humanity, or in those of a blind Fate? is a question which, let the devotees of physical science, in the intoxicating rush of physical discovery, say or imagine what they

will, must surely have the most abiding as well as the highest interest for man. The ship of life is not, nor is it likely ever to be, made so comfortable that the passengers will be content to float along in it without asking for what port they are bound.” Again, he asks, “Can the question of our destiny be prevented from forcing itself upon our minds? If it cannot, is it possible, without a satisfactory solution of that question, to attain the happiness to which it must be the aim of any science or system concerned with human action to light mankind? . . . Can a man when he buries his wife or child shut out of his mind the idea of death? Even the enjoyments in which the thought of annihilation is to be drowned, the more intellectual they become, bring, mingled with their sweetness, more of the bitterness which springs from a sense of perishableness and imperfection, so that the advance of civilisation is likely itself to defeat the counsels of the philosophy which bids us fix our minds on life and not on death. The highest of our joys is affection; and the more intense affection becomes, the more bitter will be the reflection that if this world is all, love must die.”

Some of the “frank avowals” of Mr. Stephen’s book are the following: “There is no absolute coincidence between virtue and happiness. I cannot prove that it is always prudent to act rightly, or that it is always happiest to be virtuous.” “The virtuous men may be the very salt of the earth, and yet the discharge of a function socially necessary may involve their own misery.”

“Now if, according to Evolution, man has no God, and no future existence, what is there to enable him to be virtuous in those cases where it brings him only suffering and danger?” “We may doubt,” says Professor Smith, “in his opinion, whether it answers to be a moral hero.” The endeavor to supply, by the theory of altruism, the “Basis of Morality” here found lacking, is next examined. He likewise weighs this in the balances, and finds it wanting. “But is it possible to believe in the existence of pure altruism, that sort of altruism which alone can render martyrdom reasonable, as Mr. Stephen affirms it to be? Can my pleasure ever be really your pleasure, or my pain your pain? Is not this as impossible as that my thoughts or emotions should be yours? Social

pleasure, of course, we can understand; a Christmas dinner-party is a familiar instance of it; but while all the members of the company contribute to the sum of the enjoyment, and the cheerfulness is reciprocal, the pleasure of each member is as much his own, and not that of any other member, as is the pleasure of an Alexander Selkirk eating his solitary meal on the desert island."

Those who adopt the altruistic theory must be hard pressed indeed. It bears its absurdity on its face, for the very moment it becomes possible, virtue is *ipso facto* rendered impossible. To be operative as a motive, it must be perfect. But when it becomes perfect, individuality has been merged in the "social tissue," and lost. As every virtuous act is the act of an individual, dependent for its moral coloring on his relationships, it will be readily seen that when the thorough altruist has (according to this impossible theory) lost his individuality, his act is no longer that of a person, but the performance of a painful function by a cell of the "tissue" of humanity. *Sic itur ad absurdum.*

Let Evolution produce at least a few missionaries and martyrs before it begins to boast of its disinterestedness and self-sacrifice, while scornfully branding Christianity a selfish system.

Some few evolutionists have endeavored to supply a motive power for virtue and self-sacrifice by dreaming of a "Social Utopia" in the future through the working of Evolution. Of this Prof. Smith remarks: "If the coming of the Utopia could be certainly predicted, this would still be cold comfort to the shades of the myriads who had lived and died, and are now living and dying, in a state very far from Utopian." But Mr. Stephen gives this up. "Speculations," he says, "about the future of society, are rash." "We cannot tell that progress will be indefinite; it seems rather that science points to a time at which all life on the planet will become extinct, and the social organism may, according to the familiar analogy, have its natural old age and death."

Thus it would seem that Evolution furnishes no "Basis of Morality."

In considering the theory of such evolutionists as Spencer, Clifford, and Stephen himself—that Evolution after attaining

"the highest arc of the curve," must begin to make its descent— Prof. Smith concludes, "In the down-hill stage of Evolution, that action will be best which most conduces to the dissolution of society. From this conclusion I see no escape; and when we add to it the doctrine of necessity under the new name of determinism, the principle of morality will surely become difficult of expression to ordinary minds." That evolution is non-moral, some of its bold German hierophants at all events do, to use Bacon's quaint phrase, "ingeniously, and without fig-leaves confess." But Evolution is, in the contemplation of agnostic science, the supreme power of the universe, or at least the sole manifestation of that power. What footing, then, at bottom, has morality? May it not be destined to disappear before the advancing light of science like animism and other superstitions? May not those prove to be right who, with Dr. Van Buren Denslow, say that the commandment against stealing or lying is the law of the "top dog," and nothing more? When the belief that Evolution is all, and that Evolution brings forth but to destroy in the end, has thoroughly penetrated the human mind, will not the result be a moral chaos? We are still living in the twilight of religion, and the grim features of Evolution are not yet distinctly seen.

But it is time for us to turn from this futile search in a very barren field to one where we may hope for a reward of our labors. Christianity has been the object of much scorn of late years among those who have held the theory of Evolution. As a result, many of our popular writers, following the lead of scientific men, seem to have taken pains, on whatever subject they may have been engaged, to let it be known that *they* were not believers in Christianity. Orthodoxy has seemed to them more horrible than any "Gorgons or chimeras dire" that ever devastated the earth. Especially has this tone been observed in the utterances of what may be called the small fry, who in shoals follow a few scientific great whales who set the fashion to "swagger and bully." It would seem that to many of these the charge of being orthodox Christians would be more terrible than an imputation on their honesty, if we are to judge from the care they

take to let us know that they are nothing of the kind. It has been a sad thing of late years for any one who loves Christ to read some of our most popular magazines, and see how Christianity is either utterly ignored or made the subject of sneers.

Prof. Smith evidently has not entirely escaped this infection. He is likewise careful to inform us that he is not an orthodox Christian. In reply to a criticism of his article on "The Basis of Morality," by Herbert Spencer, he says: "If Mr. Spencer fancies that I am one of his orthodox persecutors, supposing such enemies of truth and beneficence to exist, he was never more mistaken in his life. I am no more orthodox than he is, though I should think it scarcely worthy of philosophy to court sympathy by ostentation of the heterodoxy which happens to be just now in vogue."

This utterance may have proceeded from a nervous dread of being regarded as a "Philistine" by his brother scientists; but, whatever its motive, it is certainly plain enough to assure us that he is not an interested witness, with all his prejudices in favor of Christianity. Let us see what he thinks of it as compared with Evolution. Of course his point of view is the same as that from which he examined Evolution—its fitness to meet the wants of man as a moral being.

The prime necessity in any system intended to elevate mankind morally is a moral ideal. This ideal may be only described or presented in the system through the rules for conduct which it lays down, or it may be practically set forth in the person and character of an individual who exemplifies its principles in his life. As mankind are naturally imitative, and generally prefer the concrete to the abstract, it will be readily seen that the system which presents such an exemplar, especially if it also furnishes directions for following the example set, and the hope that each individual will be enabled to attain the goal placed before him, has a great advantage.

How does Christianity, according to Prof. Smith, meet this demand? "To realise, by effort, a moral ideal embodied in the character of Christ has been, since his coming, the avowed object, and in no small degree the real endeavor, of the whole progressive portion

of humanity. The established belief has been that the ideal was perfect; that in proportion as it was realised, human nature, individually and collectively, would be raised and made like the Author of our being; that the world would thus become the kingdom of God; and that the spiritual society so formed would survive the physical catastrophe of the planet. This belief, so far as it extended and was operative, has hitherto been the practical basis of Christian ethics, and, whether true or false, has furnished a definite rule and aim, personal and social, of those who held it.”

Thus he shows that Christianity does most fully meet this requirement.

Again, no system of religion or morals can exercise a good and lasting influence if it has in it those qualities which oppose human progress. Hope is the mainspring of human energy, and any system which ignores it must become impotent. This is true of most, if not all, heathen religions. Their Golden Age is in the past; their faces are turned backward, not forward. Christianity, while indeed placing her feet on the foundation of covenants and promises made in the past, lifts her head in joyous hope, her features radiant with the glory of a future such as “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard”—such even as “hath not entered into the heart of man.”

Each individual Christian, looking to this future, can say: “It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

What effect has Christianity had on human progress? Hear Prof. Smith on this point:

“Progress, as was said before, is conterminous with Christendom. Outside the pale of Christendom all is stationary. There have been notable outbursts of material wealth and splendor, transient flashes even of intellectual brilliancy, as in the Caliphates and the Mogul Empire, though the light in these cases was mainly borrowed; real and sustained progress there has been none. Japan, to whatever she may be destined to come, has kindled her new civilisation with a coal taken from the Christian hearth.”

After referring to the progress of Greece and Rome, which the event has shown was transitory, and, as he says, “carried in it from the first its own moral death warrant,” Prof. Smith concludes this part of his subject with the following profound observation: “What makes the fact more notable is, that Christ appeared, not in the line of such material, intellectual, or political progress as there was, but out of that line, in a province of the Roman Empire which was materially poor, as the gospel narrative shows us, intellectually backward, and as a dependency devoid of political life.”

A moral system, to be practically effective, must of course aim at universality, and must, in its principles and institutions, be suited not to one tribe or nation only, but to all mankind everywhere and at all times. It must be, in the true sense, catholic. How does Christianity fulfil this requirement?

Says he: “Philosophers speak of four universal religions—Christianity, Judaism, Mahometanism, and Buddhism. There is only one. No religion but Christianity has attempted to preach its gospel to the world. Mahometan or Buddhist missionaries at London or New York! Mahometanism and Buddhism are more than tribal, perhaps, but they are far less than universal. Mahometanism is military, as its Koran most plainly avows; in conquest it lives; with conquest it decays; it also practically belongs to the despotic, polygamic, slave-holding East; it has never been the religion of a Western race, or of a free and industrial community; by arms it has been propagated, and by local influence and contagion, not by missions. Buddhism, if it is really a religion, and not merely a quietist philosophy, engendered of languor and helpless suffering, is the religion of a climate and a race; its boasted myriads are inclosed within a ring-fence, and it may have a prospect of becoming universal when an Englishman becomes a Hindoo; while in its heart Hindoos are becoming Christians.”

“Wonderful treasures of spiritual lore were supposed to be hidden in the sacred books of the East. Thanks to the University of Oxford and Professor Max Müller, they have now been opened, and after a perusal of the long series, I confess my profane reflec-

tion was that there had been no such literary revelation since Monkbarns constrained Hector McIntyre, with much hesitancy, to give him a specimen of an Ossianic lay.”

“Social and legal antiquities of the highest interest doubtless there are in these books; much, too, of the poetry of primitive nature worship; but of anything spiritual, universal, moral, hardly a trace.” “Sinful men are, he who sleeps at sunrise or at sunset, he who has deformed nails or black teeth, he whose younger brother was married first, he who married before his elder brother, the husband of a younger sister married before the elder, the husband of an elder sister whose younger sister was married first, he who extinguishes the sacred fires, and he who forgets the Veda through neglect of the daily recitation.” “This is about the religious level; much grosser specimens might be cited; and the consecration of caste is the perpetuation of iniquity. There is but one universal religion. There is but one religion of which Renan could say, as he says in his passage on the words of Christ at the well, that if there were religion in another planet, it could be none other than this.”

The changes which Christianity wrought, which have been both means for attaining its success, and, indeed, parts of that success, are next briefly mentioned; among these are:

1. The abolition of tribalism, and the proclamation of the brotherhood of men without distinction of race, “the transition being marked by the substitution of baptism for the tribal mark of circumcision.”

2. The proclamation of “hope for the future of humanity.”

3. The division of the “things of Cæsar from the things of God.”

4. The proclamation of the “spiritual equality of all men and of the two sexes,” the consequence of the latter being “the institution, in place of the marital despotism which prevailed in early, or concubinage which prevailed in later, Rome, of that real union, which without subverting the headship indispensable to the unity of the family, blends two lives into one higher than either, and has been the mainstay of private virtue and of moral civilisation from that hour to this.”

5. "The enunciation of the principle that morality is internal, that the true law is not *Do this*, but *Be this*, that the commandment ought to be directed not against killing, but against hatred, not against adultery, but against lust." •

6. The establishment of liberty of opinion. Of this he says, among other things, "It was the principle of the early Christians, nor did it cease to be so, I apprehend, for half a century after the union of the Church with the Empire."

After adverting to the objection drawn from persecutions of Romanism, he says, "There can be no doubt that, after the recovery of the gospel at the Reformation, intolerance gradually departed and tolerance returned, though nothing comes with a bound."

His conclusion from these facts is: "A scientific hypothesis is verified by comparison with facts. A moral ideal is verified by practical experience, individual and social. Each inquirer must judge for himself whether the characters and lives of the best Christians, those who have most distinctly formed themselves on the gospel model; the state of the communities in which the ethical mode of the gospel has most prevailed; and the general advance of society under the influence of Christianity, have not been such as to render it credible that the Christian ideal is the true ideal, that it fits the facts and meets the requirements of man's estate; that the attempt to realise it is the right line of progress for us individually and for mankind at large. This is the main question, the question by the answer to which it is to be determined whether we shall adhere to Christianity or look for some other guide of our moral life."

Space and time will not allow us to follow Professor Smith in his discussion of the objections which evolutionists have brought against Christianity as a moral system. We can do little more than mention them. The first charge is that it is *anti-scientific*. His reply to this is that "In Monotheism there can be nothing at variance with the conception or the study of general law;" that miracle, "instead of denying, assumes the general law, and Newton was a firm believer in miracle;" and that "prayer for spiritual help, however irrational it may be deemed, cannot possibly interfere with physical investigation."

He next takes up the charge of *asceticism*, and after refuting it, presents the evolutionary theory of virtue—that it consists in the highest physical development and enjoyment—in the following terms: “‘Nature,’ says Mr. Stephen, ‘wants big, strong, hearty, eupeptic, shrewd, sensible human beings, and would be grossly inconsistent if she bestowed her highest rewards of happiness upon a bilious, scrofulous, knock-kneed saint, merely because he had a strong objection to adultery, drunkenness, murder, and robbery, or an utter absence of malice or even highly cultivated sympathies.’ There is no reason why a saint should be scrofulous or knock-kneed; bilious, if his diet is spare, he is pretty sure not to be; and we know that he may be long-lived and intellectually prolific. But if what nature wanted was the set of qualities here enumerated, why did she not rest content when she had got it? In the Museum at Oxford are some of the bones of a Saurian which must have been so large as utterly to dwarf any creature now on earth. Here were bigness, strength, heartiness, eupepsia in perfection; here, too, were practical shrewdness and sense enough to make the best of physical existence; nay, the monster may be said to have reached the height of positive philosophy, for he was a real Agnostic, which hardly any human being is, and had never lapsed into Theism. Nature can hardly have attached paramount importance to the human form, so long as the essential qualities were produced. Why, I ask again, did she not rest content? Why did she retrograde to a weaker type, to say nothing of invalids such as Alfred, Pascal, and William the Third?”

He next easily disposes of the charges that Christianity is anti-economical, and that it is opposed to political progress and to art.

It will be seen that we have done little more, thus far, than to set before the reader the main points of Prof. Smith's article, our chief object being to give some readers who have not had access to the article the opportunity of seeing this portraiture of Christianity from a purely scientific point of view by one who utterly disclaims the imputation of being an orthodox Christian. We have aimed at little more than to set the picture in a frame and

place it in a light where more eyes could see it, and see it more clearly than they could have done in its original place.

At the same time it will occur to the reader that while this likeness of Christianity is in many points true and very beautiful, in others it is defective. Every true Christian who does deeds of pure self-sacrifice knows that his highest motive in doing them has not been mentioned. The Christian acts under a very high and pure motive indeed when he looks at the ideal and presses toward the goal, which is not only perfect blessedness, but likeness to Him who is his ideal. "He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." But there is another motive, if possible, higher, purer, and certainly more unselfish than this hope of personal perfection and glory. "The love of Christ constraineth us," is Paul's explanation of that self-sacrifice and earnestness which, in the eyes of many who beheld them, seemed madness. The love of Christ, pure, unselfish, and infinite to us, his enemies, displayed in coming to die for us, is that which awakens the noblest energies and unseals the fountains of the purest feelings in the Christian breast. No full portraiture of Christianity can be drawn without this feature—this charm of a Saviour's dying love which has led missionaries to bid farewell to home and loved ones, and robbed the stake and the gibbet of their terrors for the martyr.

The love of the brethren, that beautiful virtue seen in the keeping of the "new commandment," not only evoked the admiration of the old heathen lookers-on, as they observed the treatment which the early Christians received from and bestowed upon one another; but from it have, in large measure, sprung the hospitals and asylums, as well as the large proportion of the institutions of learning, which adorn and bless every land where Christianity prevails, while its perfect realisation in a glorious future forms no small element of the Christian's hope.

These motives are not only felt and acted on by Christians, but are clearly presented in the Scriptures, and hence should not have been omitted in any portraiture of Christianity as a moral system.

The humblest Christian knows, again, that however perfect the

rules or the ideal of the Christian system, and however powerful the motives presented for the observance of the one and the attainment of the other, all would be in vain if one other characteristic of Christianity were lacking. Both the Scriptures and experience teach the Christian that it is “by the grace of God” that he is what he is. Were it not for the regeneration of the Holy Ghost and his constantly sanctifying agency, the ideal might indeed have been presented, but it would have been to blinded eyes; the rules of holy living might have been written on the sacred page, but they would never have been written in the heart.

This is all plainly announced in the Scriptures, which present Christianity to the world, and without this it would not only have failed to do what it has done, but would not have accomplished the moulding of a single character into the likeness of him who is the ideal of the Christian. But for this, Prof. Smith would never have had the opportunity to pen the following eloquent words with which he pays a parting tribute to the system he has been examining:

“Since its appearance, the ideal has passed under many successive clouds of human opinion, from which there was no supernatural intervention to save it. It has passed under the cloud of legend, which among a primitive people in an uncritical age was sure to gather round the character of a great Teacher; of Alexandrian theosophy; of ecclesiasticism, and of sacerdotalism begotten of Pagan contagion; of Popery; of Monasticism; of Scholasticism; of Protestant sectarianism and the dogmatism which was left in existence, and perhaps in some respects intensified, by an imperfect Reformation. It has passed under clouds of political influence, such as Byzantine imperialism, feudalism, Spanish and Bourbon despotism, and has been obscured and distorted in transit. Yet it has always emerged again, and even, in passing, has filled the cloud with light.”

Had we a friend who held the views which Professor Smith has expressed, we could not refrain from saying to him, “‘Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.’ Why not enter?” We can hardly conceive how one can go as far as he has gone and

not go farther. How can Christianity be what he describes it as being, and have done what he shows that it has done, without being what it claims to be, the divinely ordained religion for man? If it be divine, it must be true, and also truthful in its assertions. It asserts that its Author performed miracles, which none but the finger of God could do, as evidences and seals of his Messiahship. Is it inconceivable, or strange even, that, if God gave a divine religion, it should be attested in this manner? Are the miracles of Christ and his apostles unsuitable to and in character foreign to the Christian system? Are they not, on the other hand, illustrative of its great truths, and part and parcel of the religion itself? Are they not attested by the depositions of eye-witnesses whose characters are so glassed in what they write that we cannot doubt their veracity? Were not the alleged miracles of such a character, and performed under such circumstances, that no intelligent eye-witness could possibly be deceived as to their reality? What possible reason, then, can there be for denying that they were done? Can one believe that Christianity has bestowed on the human race the greatest benefits it has ever received through the instrumentality of falsehood? As must be acknowledged by all, the great instrument by which she has wrought her beneficent work for the human race is the Bible. It is by the exposition and application of the truths of the Scriptures in Christian lands that the influence which lifts them so far above heathen countries is exercised and maintained. The Bible is the weapon of the missionary when he goes to meet the hosts of error and ignorance on pagan soil. This is attested by the fact that the Bible, in whole or in part, has been translated into nearly two hundred and fifty languages and dialects by those who are engaged in spreading the light of Christianity. The Bible is the lamp to the feet and the light to the path of every subject of the saving power of Christianity. Can these Scriptures, then, be false? False they must be, if not God-given and if not attested by miracles. And if this claim be false, the falsehood is more awfully iniquitous than any lie that human ear has ever heard or human lips ever uttered. Christianity has gone forth in our world, as has been acknowledged, the most salutary, beneficent, ennobling

power it has ever seen and felt. She has been the purifier, the guide, the almoner of the nations. Light has shone round her footsteps when she has gone into the deepest darkness. Health and healing have attended her touch whenever she has approached those most hopelessly affected with moral disease. She has stooped to man in the lowest degradation to which he has ever sunk, and raised him to the noblest height to which he has ever attained. In doing all this, was she false? Was her means of accomplishing it a lie? Who that reasons, who that believes in the distinction between virtue and vice, can believe this?

P. P. FLOURNOY.

ARTICLE V.

THE CHRISTIAN PASTOR, ONE OF CHRIST'S ASCENSION GIFTS.

BY THE LATE REV. DR. ROBERT J. BRECKINRIDGE.

When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.—*Ephesians iv. 8.*

I. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men." Such are the exalted strains of the Psalmist (Ps. lxxviii. 17, 18), predicting the triumphant ascent of Messiah into heaven. The Apostle, in our text, quotes and applies to Christ so much as asserts the fact of his ascent to glory; and the consequent distribution to men of his ascension gifts. Though in our English translation of that Psalm the rendering is, "thou hast *received* gifts for men," the words of Paul, he "*gave* gifts to men," are fully as just a translation of the Hebrew, and agree precisely with the Chaldee, the Syriac, and the Arabic. Our translators seem to have been misguided by the LXX.; and the example is a striking proof how little dependence is to be