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ART. I.—DR. ASA BURTON'S THEOLOGICAL SYSTEM.*

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THE object of this Article is to call the attention of the theological world to a most able, but we fear neglected, author, who is not dead but only sleepeth. We are coming to the grave of Lazarus; we hope to witness a miracle. We trust the Redeemer is there; and, though some of the spectators may say he has been dead four days and by this time savors of oblivion, yet we are waiting for the voice, *Lazarus, come forth!* and the apparent death will be only a season of suspended animation. We believe, to have Asa Burton appreciated, he needs only be to read and known; and it would be the crowning act of a long life to bear some humble part in recalling his reputation and influence to their proper station.

To the prevalence of any literary performance two things seem to be necessary: first, merit and originality; and, secondly, a power of appreciation in the cotemporaries of the author. The shepherd, in Virgil, who sang to the mountains and woods—*studio inani*—could only hear a perishing echo. It was Virgil himself that recorded the music and prolonged the

* *Essays on Some of the First Principles of Metaphysics, Ethics and Theology.*
By ASA BURTON, D. D., Pastor of the Church of Christ in Thetford, Vermont.
Portland: Printed at the Mirror Office. 1824.

ART. V. DR. BAIRD'S HISTORY OF THE NEW SCHOOL.*

By EDWIN F. HATHFIELD, D. D., New York.

A history of that branch of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, known as "The New School," faithfully and fully written, is truly a desideratum. It should carefully set forth from what small beginnings, and under what providential auspices, it was called into being; what were the exigencies of the Church, and what the necessities of the times that evoked it; what great end it was designed, by the Divine prescience, to accomplish; how it has fulfilled these ends; by what agencies and instrumentalities it has wrought; how, and in what directions, it has progressed; what errors it has corrected; what improper tendencies in doctrinal teaching and ecclesiastical operations it has averted; what impulses it has, possibly, imparted to thought; what influences it has set in motion, for the wider diffusion of sacred science, and for the more rapid spread of the gospel; how "the little one," outliving the suspicions, the evil surmises, the jealousies, the accusations, the calumnies and the hostilities, that sought industriously to crush and destroy it, at length "became a thousand;" how the little band, in short, became a compact, vigorous, fruitful community of believers, honored of God by special and powerful outpourings of the Spirit, compelling everywhere the respect of men, outliving the reproach of its youth, and so challenging the admiration of the Christian world as to be sought and courted by the very communion which had cast them out. Such a history would not be without considerable interest and value.

Is this such a history? Nothing of the kind. It makes no such pretensions, save in its name and running title. It was not possible for such a history to be written from the author's standpoint. It does not appear that he has ever had any connection with the people of whom he writes, or any peculiar opportunities of information respecting their doctrines and

* *The History of the New School, and of the Questions involved in the Disruption of the Presbyterian Church in 1838.* By SAMUEL J. BAIRD, D. D. Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen & Haffelinger. 1868.

doings. On the other hand, by birth, by education, and by professional associations, all his prejudices and prepossessions have singularly unfitted him for the work. His father, the Rev. Thomas D. Baird, first saw the light in the county of Down, Ireland, and was nearly thirty years of age when he came to this country. Originally a Burgher Secessionist, he afterwards became a Covenanter, and then again a Secessionist. A blacksmith by trade, it was not until his fortieth year that, after three years of preparation, he was ordained to the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina. Two years afterwards he removed to Ohio, where, and in Western Pennsylvania, he spent the remainder of his life. From the first year of his ministry he identified himself with the ultra-conservative party in the Church, and was among the foremost, in Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly, in caucuses and conventions, in private and in public, to sow the seeds of distrust and dissension that ripened in the Disruption of 1838.

The son, Samuel John, was but a youth, not yet of age, when the Excising Measures of 1837 were enacted. From a child, he had heard of the New School only as heretics, who had intruded themselves into the heritage of the Presbyterian Church, and of whom nothing but evil was to be expected. During a portion of his boyhood his father conducted the *Christian Herald*, of Pittsburgh, entering with all his soul into the embittered controversies of the period from 1831 to 1838, the forming time of the son's character. It is not strange, therefore, that the son of such a father, after such a training, should, on entering the ministry subsequently, identify himself with the Excisers of 1837, and be ever ready to sustain their measures. From an author of such antecedents, writing of the New School, what else was to be expected than ultra-partisan views and statements? As to an impartial "History," even of the controversy that resulted in the Disruption, no one could look for it from such a source.

The book itself confirms this view of the case. It proves to be a labored attempt to show that, while, almost from the first, an "Old Side" and a "New Side"—an "Old School" and a "New School," have divided the American Presbyterian

Church, more or less unequally, the "Old" have always been the true sons and champions of the Church. To prove this, he goes back to the Savoy Confession, and the subsequent declension of Presbyterians in England; reviews the history of the original Presbytery of Philadelphia, and claims that it was of Irish birth; discusses the Adopting Act of 1729, and rejects the idea of anything like compromise between the parties in the Synod on the question of subscription; maintains the validity of the Explanatory Act of 1736; treats of the Synod of New York, during its separation from the Synod of Philadelphia, from 1741 to 1753, under the running title of "The New Side *Schism*," including such men as Jonathan Dickinson and Aaron Burr, the first two presidents of the College of New Jersey, under the category of schismatics; and tries bravely to establish the position that the reunion of 1753 was effected on the *ipsissima verba* theory of subscription, maintaining strenuously that nothing less than this was intended by the phrase "system of doctrine," in the revised formula of 1788.

The author passes over into New England; glances cursorily at the history of their churches; gives his version of the Plan of Union; dissects the New England theology; pronounces Jonathan Edwards radically unsound in his speculations, and declares that "his influence has been most disastrous, leaving his disciples afloat on the deep, without guiding star or compass!" Dr. Taylor and his system are reviewed without mercy; the controversy in New England, growing out of the New Haven speculations, is briefly sketched, and the result of these speculations shown to be "practical Pelagianism," and all manner of fanaticism. The rise and progress of Hopkinsianism in the Presbyterian Church, some fifty years since, as viewed from the ultra-conservative standpoint, next appear; the consequent alarm of the "Old Side;" the agitation occasioned by "the Triangle;" and the evils growing out of the Plan of Union. The growth of the Voluntary System, and the strenuous opposition made to the Boards of the Church, form the next tableaux, the author, be it remembered, being, at the time of writing, himself an agent

of a Voluntary Society. In all this, he avers, was developed a deep-laid plot to congregationalize the Presbyterian Church.

Then follows, in detail, the oft-told story of the trial of Albert Barnes, the Foreign Mission question, the Elective Affinity struggle, the trials of the conservative party in the Assemblies of 1831-2-3-4; the Act and Testimony Convention; the utter failure of discipline in 1830; the glorious Deliverance of 1837, and the Disruption of 1838.

Throughout the book it is assumed that the right is all on one side. Never was there a more complete specimen of begging the question. In the very first sentence of his "Preface," we are coolly informed that "the *Pelagian* Controversy in the Presbyterian Church came to an end in the division of 1838." Of the Old Side, in 1741, he says: "None question their strict conformity to the Scotch type;"—pure orthodoxy that, in his estimation. The rigid subscriptionists are everywhere exhibited as actuated by the best of motives, conscientious in their convictions, and zealous, to the last degree, for the purity and the welfare of the Church. Their opponents are ordinarily represented as a sly, scheming, crafty, underhanded, double-dealing, dangerous class of innovators and speculators, ever plotting for the corruption of the true doctrine, and aiming at the subversion of the constitutional order of the Presbyterian Church.

In the adoption of the Plan of Union of 1801, he tells us, p. 159: "The Assembly was seduced by the siren of union and peace, . . . and the way thus prepared for corrupting the doctrines of the Church, the utter defacing of her order, and the introduction of protracted controversy and strife and final schism." He speaks (p. 262), "of the fixed purpose of our New England brethren to acquire possession of the Presbyterian Church, its institutions and resources;" and (p. 263) of "a design to sap the foundations of Presbyterianism, by systematic, underground approaches." He represents (p. 283) the American Education Society, as "putting forth its energies to possess and control the Presbyterian Church;" and (p. 292) as carrying forward "a succession of persistent plans designed to bind our Church hand and foot, to liberalize and

corrupt her divine and saving theology, and to enervate and subsidize the resources and efficiency of her scriptural polity." "The congregational element" in our Church, he tells us, (p. 327) "engaged in the most strenuous, varied and persistent exertions to accomplish the transformation of the church in doctrine and order, and to deprive her of her evangelic office." Such is the *animus* of the book throughout. So jaundiced is the eye with which he ever looks on the movements of the New School.

In the presentation of documentary evidence, the historian acts the part of a pettifogging attorney, bringing forward, for the most part, such papers only as tend to substantiate the propriety of the measures pursued, and the views entertained, by the Old School; while he either omits entirely, or exhibits imperfectly, such as were designed to justify the views and measures of the New School, and vindicate them from unjust aspersions. One of the most important documents that found a place in the Records of the Assembly of 1837, was the "protest" of George Duffield and others, exhibiting, in contrast with the errors with which they were charged, the "true doctrine," in every particular, as understood and received by the New School; a paper which, better known as the *Auburn Declaration*, has acquired no little historical significance, and the orthodoxy of which has been sustained by the highest authority of the Old School branch of the Church. Of this paper, so essential to a right understanding of the controversy, all that the historian has to say is couched in less than six lines, as follows:

"In the protest against the testimony on doctrinal error, the minority arrayed, in opposing paragraphs, the errors condemned by the Assembly, and the doctrines embraced by the protestants. The profession of faith thus presented was, on some essential points, ambiguous, and on others palpably erroneous."

Strange that the Old School Assembly of 1868 should not have discovered these palpable errors in points essential to the true faith of the gospel!

The *History* terminates abruptly with an account of the

Disruption of 1838, and a few extracts from the New School Declaration of 1839, which is characterized as "a tissue of extraordinary inaccuracies." What became of the New School branch after that, the historian affirms not, nor can it be gathered from his book. Thirty years have passed since the Disruption—thirty eventful years—full of materials for a deeply interesting chapter, at least, in the history of the New School, but that chapter Dr. Baird had neither the candor nor the honesty to append to his partisan narrative.

Much as the author claims for himself in respect to a thorough acquaintance with the materials for such a history, the work bears the marks of a hasty production. Indeed he rather prides himself on having written it *currente calamo*—"chiefly during a month's midsummer vacation." This may account, in part, for the inaccuracies and errors with which some portions of it abound, some of which are amusing enough. He ventures the affirmation, (p. xi.) that "Dr. Dutton in his history of the North Church in New Haven, states himself to have been informed by the younger Edwards, that, in 1777, there were in Connecticut three parties, etc." "The younger Edwards" died in 1801, and "Dr. Dutton" was born in 1814. Does Dr. Baird believe in "spirit-rappings?"

Again, in his account of the Assembly of 1836, which elected an Old School Moderator, he says, p. 488: "But the arrival of a steamer, crowded with commissioners from Illinois and Missouri, turned the scale, and gave the New School party the absolute control." The whole number of commissioners in that Assembly, from those States, was just fourteen, five of whom were present at the opening, seven appeared on the third, and two on the fourth day. A remarkably small "steamer" that must have been, that could be crowded by seven backwoodsmen! Or possibly they were men of remarkable corpulence.

His account of what took place in the Joint Committee of Thirty is entirely unreliable, and abounds with incorrect statements, as shown by the Rev. Dr. Monfort, (a member of the Committee) in the *Presbyter* of October 14, 1868. In quoting the Resolutions of the Old School Assembly of 1866

on reunion, nine mistakes are made in twenty lines, besides the omission of an important clause of six words ; and yet it appears as a *verbatim* quotation—a strange proceeding for a believer in the *ipsissima verba* theory of subscription.

The truth of the matter is, that the author is bitterly opposed to reunion, and has done his best to show that there is a fundamental and irreconcilable difference between the bodies on the “subject of doctrinal divergence from the standards,” and that, in assenting to the reunion, the Old School must be prepared “to enter into covenant to abandon the precious doctrines of grace to the mercy of every theological empiric who may fancy that his free inquiries have found a new and better way.”

In thus outraging the convictions of nine-tenths of his own communion, and raising an issue known to all the world to be utterly false, he has entirely overshoot the mark. The Disruption era has passed away with its bitter strifes and animosities. A better era has dawned. A new generation has come into power, fully resolved to bury the dead of past controversies, and to join hands with their brethren in the great work of building up the kingdom of their Lord and Master. Dr. Baird's book is an anachronism. It belongs to the buried past.

ART. VI. THE CANON MURATORIANUS.*

By WM. G. T. SHEDD, D. D., Professor in Union Theological Seminary, N. Y.

In the year 1740 Muratori published an ancient Latin fragment containing a list of the books of the New Testament. He derived it from a kind of common-place book which he had discovered in an Ambrosian library at Milan. The entire volume seems to have been a receptacle for extracts, which some industrious monk, perhaps, was in the habit of making from ecclesiastical writings. The common-place book itself, from internal evidence, such as the chirography, color of the ink,

* *Canon Muratorianus.—The Earliest Catalogue of the Books of the New Testament.* Edited, with Notes and a fac-simile of the MS., by Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, LL. D. Oxford, Clarendon Press. 1867.