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ARTICLE I.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING MIRACLES.

Some have claimed that what we call a miracle is an impossibility. But He who created and continually upholds nature, and everything in nature, must be competent to modify it, or add to it at any time, and in any way He sees fit. Where is the proof, or reasonableness of thinking, that the making of the universe so exhausted His powers, or so bound His omnific freedom, as to disable Him from doing anything else, or in any other way, than what we see in the workings of nature? Is there not great absurdity in the thought of a powerless Almighty? If God is verily God, He must be able to do whatever He may see proper to do. Even Rousseau has said: "The question whether God can work miracles, seriously treated, would be impious if it were not absurd." Nor can any one with an adequate idea of God, rationally question the power of the infinite Author of all things to manifest Himself in a thousand ways differing from those which we find in the ordinary processes and laws of nature; for no new manner of working in the universe can ever be less possible than the making of it at the first.

ARTICLE III.

AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF DR. HODGE TO DR. S. S. SCHMUCKER, ON CHRISTIAN UNION.

The publication of the following letter of Dr. Charles Hodge will hardly be attributed to a spirit of hero-worship, to which every line written by a great man is worthy of preservation and presentation to the public, nor to the gratification of a love for the old and curious. Nor can it be regarded as a betrayal of confidence, in bringing into print a private letter. This letter has an intrinsic value of its own, and is pertinent to-day, perhaps even more so than it was sixty years ago. The opinions it expresses also are not in contradiction with those held and published later by Dr. Hodge himself, though he may never have expressed them in briefer and clearer form. On one point only his view may have undergone a slight change. In an essay on "The Principles of Church Union, and Reunion of Old and New School Presbyterians" (Princeton Rev. 1865, p. 272; republished in part in "Church Polity," edited by Rev. William Durant, chap. V., pp. 88-100) he seems to modify his position with reference to the length of a confession. "It is a question of delicacy and difficulty," he writes, "how minute a confession of faith for an extended organization should be made. It may be too concise and latitudinarian, or it may be too minute and extended, requiring a degree of unanimity greater than is necessary and greater than is attainable. Fidelity and harmony, however, both demand that the requirements of the standards, whatever they may be, should be sincerely adopted, and enforced so far as every thing essential to their integrity is concerned." (Ch. Polity, p. 97.) In the main point he coincides exactly with the view expressed in the letter here presented: "When men differ, it is better to avow their diversity of opinion or faith, than to pretend to agree,

or to force discordant elements into a formal uncongenial union" (p. 95).

It is almost needless to say that this position, however sound it seems to us, was not popular in those days. Comparatively few men would have sided with Dr. Hodge. Dr. Schmucker had caught the spirit of the age and knew how to foster it. The movement in favor of Christian Union by no means began with him, but he was one of its ablest advocates. Were the materials at hand, and did space permit, it would be most interesting to trace the influences at work and the results produced in both Europe and America, before the days of Dr. Schmucker. But we must content ourselves with a few facts connected with the influence of Dr. Schmucker in this movement.

In his "Popular Theology," first published in 1834, he writes: "We are not advocates for the Utopian scheme of those who would immediately merge all denominations of Christians in one external visible church. At present we do not see how it could be effected. Even amid the splendor of millennial light and glory, there will probably not be an entire similarity of doctrinal view and ecclesiastical organization. But in that auspicious era, when Zion's watchmen shall see eye to eye, there will doubtless be much concentration of sects. There will be an ever-growing unity of feeling and action, until Paul and Apollos and Cephas, and Luther and Calvin and Zwingli and Wesley are lost in the Redeemer, and Christ is all in all" (p. 296). A foot note gives further hints as to his views at that time: "Among the most important and truly evangelistic suggestions which the writer has seen on this subject, must be ranked one of that radical and distinguished divine, the Rev. Dr. Ely, editor of the *Philadelphian*; who, speaking of the proposed union of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches of this country, advises the enlargement of the plan of union into that of an American Protestant Church, which might embrace all those of any orthodox denomination, whose views and feeling inclined them to such a step. It is obvious that every step of this kind ought to be sincere and cordial, in order to be either pleasing to God, or profitable to His church. And a

union of spirit ought to precede that of outward ecclesiastical organization."

What events occurred within the next four years to make the scheme of union more practicable, and the "union of spirit" more attainable I do not know. That to Dr. Schmucker's mind the time was ripe for further consideration and agitation of the subject is evidenced by the publication of his "Fraternal Appeal," in criticism of which Dr. Hodge's letter was written.

As early as May, 1839, the book had produced tangible results. The following extracts may tell the story:

"Thursday, May 9, 1839. Met according to adjournment; opened with prayer. In the absence of the Rev. Mr. Clark the Rev. Dr. Knox, of New York, was called to the chair, and in the absence of Mr. Labaru, the Rev. John Marsh was appointed Secretary.

"On motion, resolved, That it is expedient at this time to form and organize an American Association for the Promotion of Christian Union on Apostolical principles, according to the general plan proposed by the Fraternal Appeal to the American Churches."

Among the officers elected were the following Lutherans: S. S. Schmucker, W. D. Strobel, Benjamin Kurtz, Ernst L. Hazelius, Charles Demme.

"May 10. On motion Rev. Dr. Schmucker was appointed to prepare an address to the Churches, on Christian Union, to be printed in pamphlet form, and directed to forward it to the Committee for inspection and publication."

August 20, 1839, the Louisville (Kentucky) Evangelical Union was formed on the same general basis. What the later fate of these organizations was I cannot tell. Nor have I any detailed knowledge of the character of the work alluded to in the following notice, dated February 1, 1840: 'Rev. D. H. Ranney has in press a work of about 200 pages exhibiting the grounds of apostolic and millennial union in the church.'

With regard to the Fraternal Appeal it is only just to mention that an English edition appeared in 1845—the year before the formation of the Evangelical Alliance. We can

then judge with how much truth Dr. King, of Ireland, could call Dr. Schmucker the "father of the Alliance" (Wolf, Lutherans in America, p. 346).

While the Fraternal Appeal and its author were thus successful, Dr. Hodge's modest but admirable letter was carefully preserved among Dr. Schmucker's papers. Whether at any time the advocate of Christian Union was influenced by it, or any other considerations, so as to change his views, might perhaps be decided were his later book on the "True Unity of Christ's Church" accessible. Whatever effect it may have had upon him, Dr. Schmucker evidently did not and could not think lightly of the honest criticism of his former fellow-student.

But this letter is more than a book review or critique; it is a criticism of a widespread tendency, and a characterization of our century by its weaknesses. Its answer to a false effort for Christian union has lost none of its force after sixty years; and his characterization of our century has found abundant corroboration in history. If to the unhealthy individualism and the dangerous indifferentism which he points out, we were to add that feature which Carlyle emphasizes in his essay on "Signs of the Times," written ten years earlier (1829), we would have a tolerably exhaustive outline for the study of the philosophy of the last hundred years of history—the age of individualism, indifferentism and mechanics. Three things men seem to have unlearned while priding themselves on their advanced learning: That individuals depend for everything upon other individuals, and exist only by their dependence; that indifference to truth, to doctrine, must inevitably be either the sign or the source of the loss of all earnestness in life, and all spirituality in religion; and that not everything in the universe can be treated mechanically. The proposed Protestant creed appended to the Fraternal Appeal was not merely the Augsburg Confession amended by "striking out all that is objectionable to any Protestant Evangelical Church, retaining the remainder as the Protestant Confession" (Schmucker, quoted in Spaeth, *Life of Krauth*, p. 342 ff); it was an attempt to bring the confessions together af-

ter the fashion of mechanics; taking fragments from each, and making of them a new confession. As all such attempts must, it proved a failure. The next attempt was made by a man of different character and in a different method; its results still remain to be seen. Compare, however, Dr. Schmucker's proposed creed with Dr. Schaff's three large volumes of the "Creeds of Christendom." The one thought the problem already to a large degree solved; the other felt able to do little more than furnish the materials through a study of which a solution might perhaps some day be reached. Higher than both we may place Dr. Charles Hodge, whose suggestion as to the solution is correct; not from creeds already existing, but from a spirit grown harmonious must the union of the churches come. Until the spirit is one, the creeds cannot be one, even were they ever so little at variance with one another.

It seems almost an instance of poetic justice, that after the "Fraternal Appeal" has been virtually forgotten, and become almost inaccessible, this modest little answer should finally see the light and be appreciated.

W. A. LAMBERT, B. A.

THE LETTER OF DR. HODGE.

Princeton, February 22, 1839.

MY DEAR SIR—Ever since I received your letter I have been driven, as you know a man is driven who has the press lumbering at his heels. This is not a mere apology, it is the real reason that your letter has remained so long unanswered. As I am not able to sit without pain, writing is mechanically a difficult operation for me. I should, however, no doubt have written sooner, could it have done you any good, or have given you any satisfaction. I knew that I could say nothing which could be of the least service to you, and was therefore less in a hurry to say it.

I am so unfortunate as not to be a convert to the plan developed in your book. With the general object which you have in view no one can of course find it in his heart to quarrel. It is with the feasibility and desirableness of your plan

for the attainment of that object, that I am unable to satisfy myself. Had I a quire of paper before me and time to fill it, it would be very unreasonable in me to hope to make a convert of you to my opinions, seeing that a whole book ably and elaborately written has failed to convert me to yours. I have therefore no intention of troubling you with an argument on the subject. It will be sufficient simply to state the way in which I have been accustomed to regard this matter. I cannot see that external union is of any great value among Christians, except so far as it is the expression and evidence of internal union. The Scriptures enjoin on all the disciples of Christ τὸ ἀπὸ φρονεῖν, which of course includes a great deal. Where this is, there is true union, and external union should be carried just so far as it can be without endangering this spiritual union which is of so much more importance. Do you not suppose and feel that the union between you and me is closer, better, more acceptable to God than that which existed between Dr. Junkin and Mr. Barnes when members of the same Synod? And is not our union with evangelical Episcopalians and Congregationalists far better than it would be were we all with our present opinions in the same ecclesiastical connexion? It is, I think, going the wrong way to work to bring people externally together before, or to a greater degree than they are in harmony as to views and feelings. All such attempts have not only hitherto failed, but have ultimately widened the breach. You may say that the union which you propose is so lax as to allow room enough for the play of sectarian peculiarities without their coming into collision. It is there that I unfortunately differ from you. To show the grounds of this difference it would be necessary to go into detail, and show what, as it appears to me, would be the practical working of your plan. For this I have not space, and I am sure it would do no good.

I fully believe that there is a great deal of sin committed by narrow-minded, sectarian Christians, who make mountains of mole-hills, and rend the body of Christ for mere trifles. I know no class of seceders in Scotland, for example, which according to my views had even a decent pretext for their secession. In all such cases, however, the main evil lies in the state

of mind. And while that exists, external separation is one of the best means of spiritual union. I believe too that our Reformers made a great mistake in making such long creeds. Your Augsburg Confession, for example, is tremendous. It is almost as bad as having to adopt four volumes of sermons and a whole commentary as is the case with the Wesleyans.

There is one respect in which I fear the tendency of your book will be unhappy. It falls in with the faults of the age. Two of the most prominent evils of the present time, as it seems to me, are indifference to the truth and disregard of authority in church and state. Liberality, when it springs from charity and enlarged views, is a great virtue; when it is another name for indifference, it is just the reverse. With some honorable exceptions, the liberals of our day are, I fear, liberal because they are indifferent. It was not the Rationalists of Germany who opposed the union between the Lutherans and the Reformed. As to the other evil, the evidences are occurring every day and in every part of the country. The laws and constitution are trampled under foot first by one party and then by another, just when it suits their purposes. There is scarcely regard enough for authority or law to hold the country together. It is little better in the church. Now, you are obliged, from the nature of your object, to depreciate the importance of differences of opinion in matters of religion and the legitimate authority of ecclesiastical judicatories. And on this account I apprehend the tendency of your book will not be good.

As to your creed—I would remark that not one of the men whom the old school part of our church have been fighting against, could honestly sign it.

I fear you will think it was hardly worth while to give you the trouble to read such a long letter for nothing. I hope, however, it will show that I am not disposed to treat any request from you slightly.

Very respectfully and affectionately yours,

C. HODGE.