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MELANCTHON AND THE PRESENT.

*Versuch einer Charakteristik Melancthons als Theologen, und einer Entwickelung seines Lehrbegriffs von Friedrich Galle. Halle, 1840.*

It is the professed object of the book referred to at the head of this article, to give a fair representation of Melancthon, as a theologian in the general acceptation of the term, and more particularly to point out his variations on the two most important subjects in Theology, the Lord's Supper, and the Freedom of the Will. The book indeed, as the author says, sprung originally from a previous article on his variations in doctrine, but as these constitute but a part of his mental history, it was a happy idea in the author, that led him to seek for those portions that remained, and to clothe them with life and beauty. In this he has happily succeeded, and we consequently have an internal history of Melancthon in all its parts, the only true history, which can be given of a scholar, who has spent his time in reflection, rather than in practical life. The book is thorough, that is, it quotes original authority for proof, and it may be regarded, we presume, as standard authority on all subjects connected with the life of the Reformer. In Germany it has taken its place in the theological literature of the day, as a "monograph," a

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selves. They cannot be untwined, like the lily or white rose from the red ; but like the blending of the hues of those plants, which Cowper speaks of, on the cheeks of the British Fair, their union is organic and complete. Of ballad poetry the Muse is a perfect blond, her eyes blue, her hair flaxen (though to the Scottish fancy she reveals herself with dark eyes and yellow hair) and in her guise as unassuming as was the Lady Clare that Tennyson sets forth, when she had doffed her ornaments :

“She clad herself in a russet gown,  
She was no longer Lady Clare :  
She went by dale, and she went by down,  
With a single rose in her hair.”

The incidents she meets with she depicts in touching simplicity of language without any garish decorations. A trait or two, however, of her lineage having been derived, in a slight degree, from a Southern clime, at times she manifests. Not always remains her manner outwardly composed. In proper fits her minstrelsy becomes somewhat animated and even passionate. The lilies of her cheek are not always most apparent, but across them comes occasionally also the warmer flush of the Norman or Provencial rose.

*Mercersburg, Pa.*

W. M. N.

#### BIBLE CHRISTIANITY.

1. *The Bible Alliance : or the Pen, the Pulpit, and the Press.* By T. H. Stockton.—Nos. 1-7. Cincinnati: 1850.
2. *The Unity and Faith of the Christian Church. A Discourse preached at the Dedication of the New Hall, corner of 23rd St. and 8th Avenue, New York, May 6, 1849.* By Austin Craig. Stereotype edition—Tenth thousand. New York: 1850.

Both of these publications are devoted to the same object. They take the ground, that the existing sect system in the Church is antichristian ; and that the only proper remedy for it, is an open abandonment of all sectarian distinctions, so far at least as they are in any way exclusive, on the part of the true followers of Christ, and a free reconstruction of the christian life on the broad and open platform of the Bible. They represent in this

way a tendency, which at this time particularly is by no means confined to themselves ; a tendency that may be said rather to lie deeply imbedded in the spirit of the age, as it finds vast encouragement also in the general growing ecclesiastical misery of the age ; the working of which well deserves the careful attention and study of all, who would rightly understand, or estimate to purpose, the true import of the Church Question. A circular was issued a short time since, calling a convention to meet at Canandaigua, N. Y., for the special purpose of considering the question, Whether all sectarian distinctions are not unchristian, and at the same time a vast social evil which ought to be abolished? Such public demonstrations reveal only to a small extent the difficulty that is coming to be felt on this subject, by hundreds and thousands throughout the land, who yet shrink from openly avowing what they feel, because they see no clear way of escape from their own embarrassment. We have besides various sects, the Winebrennerians, Campbellites, and others, (altogether a numerous body,) which started at least on the principle here offered to our view ; however they may seem to have been drawn themselves again, in their subsequent history, as fully as others, into the same great vortex that has been denounced by them as so dreadful in the case of all sects besides. It is to these mainly, we presume, that Mr. Craig refers, when he tells us, "there are already in the United States and in England some hundreds of thousands who *profess* to be occupying the same ground" that is assumed by the worshippers at the New Hall, lately dedicated in N. York.

Most of our readers probably have some knowledge of the Rev. Thomas H. Stockton. It is generally known too, that for several years past, he has been wrestling in his own way with the problem of Christian Union, endeavoring to effect a concert of worship and action among the different sects, though still retaining his membership and ministry in the Protestant Methodist body. His zeal in this cause has been all along of the most pure and noble character, and such as to entitle him to the admiration and respect of all who love the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He is a man whom we have long regarded with sincere christian sympathy and affection, though it has never been our privilege to know him personally. We honor him for his self-sacrificing protest against the sect system, and the untiring ardor with which he has been struggling for years to assert in opposition to it the proper liberty of Christ's Church. His soul has been kindled into flame with the ideal of what he calls *Bible Christianity* ; an interest clearly distin-

guishable in his view from the creeds, and confessions, and corporate associations, of the different sects; which all sects are bound accordingly to acknowledge practically as their joint heritage, in a brotherly way and with a regard surpassing their sense of sectarian separation; and to whose service, in such view, he has felt himself bound to consecrate property, health, life, and worldly credit, with a devotion equal to that of any missionary on his chosen field. He was not content to theorize merely, but labored to bring something to pass; gave his time and talents to the work; brought to bear upon it his popularity in the pulpit, and his dexterity with the pen; established a periodical, the "*Christian World*;" proposed a Common Christian Society, Chapel, and Press; sought the approbation of distinguished men in Church and State; and so long as it stood in words and fair speeches only, gained actually to his cause nearly all the backing in this form that he was pleased to ask. "While others were repairing to Washington, from all quarters" he tells us, "for the promotion of political purposes, (a. 1845,) I made a call upon the President and Vice President, elect, who were waiting for the day of Inauguration, and received their signatures in behalf of BIBLE CHRISTIANITY. To these were added others, from Congress, the Supreme Court, and the Post Office Department; and to these, after a while, about a hundred and forty more, from Ministers of the Gospel—Baptist, Presbyterian, Independent, Protestant Episcopal, Lutheran, and Methodist Protestant." Who could refuse, politician or ecclesiastic, to give his *name* at least, if nothing more, in favor of Bible Christianity? Mr. Stockton labored on, more or less in the fire, "hand and heart full of toil and anxiety;" with far less headway than he could have wished. In January, 1847, the *Christian Athenæum* was opened "at No. 40, N. 4th St., Philadelphia; in a small way, but not without hope of increase." In April, 1847, the *Christian Society of Brotherly Love* was organized; embracing some who had never been in any church fellowship, and others "connected with *fourteen different Denominations.*" The whole movement however was still most uncomfortably crippled, to the feeling of Mr. Stockton, by the supremacy allowed on all sides to these sectarian distinctions. Towards the close of the same year we find him settled in Cincinnati, full as ever of his amiable fixed idea, and teeming with projects and plans for carrying it into at least partial execution. Thus originated, *The Ladies' Committee of Instruction and Relief*; then the *Young Men's Reading Class*; then the *Good Boys' Band*. A Prospectus was issued for a periodical, to be styled *The Let-*

ter Press ; and a proposition followed to establish a *Bible College*, "in the midst of the People and for the People." The following record is characteristic. "June 3 : 1848 :—Spent the evening over Robert Hall's works : still seeking to understand the subject of False Authority in the Visible Church of Christ. In all these investigations, am deeply persuaded of the supreme importance of *faith in Christ* ; the *baptism of the Holy Ghost* ; *love to God and man* ; and the *freedom of the Ministry and the People*, in a Church duly honoring the *Bible and Private Judgment*, to the glory of God and the good of the world." In March, 1849, Mr. Stockton received a call to the Presidency of Miami University. There was something pleasant, he acknowledges," in the notion of finding time to issue a series of *American 'OXFORD TRACTS'*—not devoted, like the English series, to Puseyism, or the Newmania, as some call it, but to the Old Glory of the Christianity of the New Testament shining through the *Transfiguration of the Church of the New Testament*." But still the invitation, for good reasons, was declined ; and the champion of Bible Christianity went on as before, preaching and working as the Pastor of the Sixth St. Station, with one foot in the Methodist Protestant Church and the other foot fairly on the outside. A most uncomfortable sort of dualism, not easy to support either in walking or working. Finally, in the way of compromise, he proposed in form to open a new church, (without forsaking the old one,) where he might be free from all denominational trammels at least with half his ministry ; consenting to bear them still in the other half of it, and offering to relinquish at the same time one half of his salary, for the privilege of such partial freedom. The congregation was supposed to be itself deeply committed to the interest of Bible Christianity ; but this seemed to be going too far ; and the denominational spirit was roused at once into an attitude of remonstrance and rebellion. Mr. Stockton however refused to bow any farther to its demands ; having been held back too long already, in his own opinion, from a *whole* consecration to undenominational Christianity ; and we find him accordingly, since last December, preaching and working in a fully independent way, in the bosom of the Church general, without ecclesiastical patronage or help from any quarter. No account seems to have been taken of this irregularity in the body to which he belonged. He professes to belong to it still ; only taking his ministry into his own hands, and placing himself for the exercise of it under the guidance of the Bible, instead of the Quarterly M. P. Conference. The "*Bible Alliance*" is intended to give to a wider public, the preparations of

his pen delivered in the first place, as addresses or sermons, from the pulpit. The whole movement looks to the establishment in due time, of a *Bible Church*, a *Bible School*, a *Bible Asylum*, and a *Bible Press*; by which several interests, it is hoped, some proper beginning may be made towards the actualization of true Bible Christianity, in the way of needful supply for the natural, intellectual and spiritual wants of the world.

Of Mr. Craig's ecclesiastical history we have no knowledge. His location is Peapack, Somerset Co., in the State of New Jersey. The Religious Society, in whose service his sermon now before us makes its appearance, is not willing to be regarded, he tells us, as the nucleus of a *new sect*. It believes, "that God has but *One Church*; to which belong all who have submitted to him, and are striving to do his will." No sect then can be recognised as this Church, because no one is co-extensive with the entire discipleship of Christ. For the same reason, because there is but *one faith*, no particular sect can have this to itself alone in its separate confession or creed. "We acknowledge the Bible," says Mr. Craig, "as the *sole authority* in all matters of christian faith and life;" which amounts to a real distinction, he tells us, from nearly all the religious denominations in the world; as notwithstanding the familiar watchword, *The Bible alone is the Religion of Protestants*, it is but too notorious that every sect has its own rule of faith besides this, to which it requires assent and submission as the price of full christian brotherhood. The Church needs no such legislation; *Christ only* has a right to draw up articles of faith, or to make laws, for his people. "The moment a man takes upon himself to dictate to his fellow man what he must find in the Bible, and what he must not find there; that moment he receives the mark of the prophetic *Man of Sin*. The man who makes a creed, or draws up a summary of articles of faith, and says to his brother, *Subscribe these articles, or I will not fellowship you*, whoever he be, whether the Pope of Rome or a Protestant Minister, that man has usurped the throne of the lawgiver, and is Antichrist." This is the right of private judgment, certainly, to some purpose. "It is awful," says the New Hall preacher, "to meddle with the Word of God. That Word is the power of God unto salvation. The destiny of present and unborn millions is suspended upon it. God in his infinite wisdom has given us the amount of truth which the world needs; and he has given it in the best and most useful form. Man has no right either to change the faith of the Church, or to alter its form. Not only are the doctrines of the Word given of God,

but the form in which those doctrines are presented is also of God. Had God known that his truth could be more useful to some of his creatures in another form—say for instance in the form of the Presbyterian or Methodist creed—he would no doubt have given it in that form. But he has not. On the contrary, he commands us to receive and preserve his words in the form which he has given. ‘Hold fast the FORM of sound words,’ writes the Apostle to his friend and fellow laborer, Timothy. The form in which the *one faith* of Christ’s Church is embodied, is authoritative and divine. Neither individuals, nor churches, nor synods, nor presbyteries, nor conferences, nor councils, have anything to do with the ‘one faith’ of Christ’s Church, except to obey it.”—*P. 11.* Creeds, in the view of this system, are always wrong. They add to the Bible, or leave something out, wronging its authority seriously in either case. They are of the nature of chains moreover, such as the mind of one age has no right to impose on the mind of another. They stand in the way of freedom and progress; and it is a duty accordingly which the christian world owes to itself, to burst them asunder wherever they come in its way. A new era in this respect is proclaimed as near at hand. The very spirit which has seemed to some good men in Europe as the coming of Antichrist, or the letting loose of Satan, is hailed by Mr. Craig as the most favorable distinction of the age. “The Church is coming up from the wilderness! Who can doubt it? Compare the last half century with any of its predecessors since the Primitive Age. How striking and peculiar its characteristics! Look at its unprecedented progress, its mental activity, &c.—Truth-loving men are multiplying; they dare to question the dogmas which in darker times men feared to touch, and now the hoary errors are descending to the tomb. The conflict of the sects has come, and they are performing their God-appointed work of mutual annihilation. The enlightened and the good of all sects, are forgetting their sectarian distinctions and approaching each other in love. They are the Army of Reform. Upon their banners are inscribed PROGRESS and BROTHERHOOD.”—*P. 20.*

It is hardly necessary for us to say, that we allow a certain measure of reason and right to this “Undenominational Christianity,” as we find it arrayed here against the reigning *sect system* of the modern Protestant world. We too hold this system to be a great evil. In a special tract on the subject, (“Antichrist, or the Spirit of Sect and Schism”—N. Y. 1848), we have taken pains to show, that it forms indeed, in conjunction with its natural counterpart Rationalism, the very power of the

antichristian apostacy itself, as described by St. John, under its present Protestant form. It is against the Bible of course; but only as it is, before that, against the life and constitution of Christianity, as this comes before us in Christ. The unity of the Church flows, not simply from the appointment of Christ, but from his nature; and it is not possible for it to be denied, accordingly, either theoretically or practically, without a denial at the same time, openly or by implication, of the proper mystery of the Incarnation. This mystery is the real, and not simply *docetic*, "coming of Christ in the flesh;" his entrance truly into the general order of man's life; the incorporation of his higher nature, by indissoluble bond, with the substance of humanity in its universal view. Such a relation implies necessarily a deeper and more comprehensive force, than all that the world is found to possess in the way of power besides. It must underlie and rule, so far as it is rightly acknowledged, all other relations. No distinctions and divisions then can hold fairly among men, which are not carried in the bosom of this unity, the sense of what Christ is as the inmost and last meaning of man's life, the sum and comprehension of the world's history. Let the individual reason affect to make *itself* the fulcrum of truth, on the outside of Christ, measuring and settling in such extrinsic style the truth of his mission, or the credibility of his doctrine, and we have at once *Rationalism* in proper form. Let the individual will take the lead in the same way, and the result will be the development of *Sect.* In either case, the true universalness of Christ, the sense of Christianity as the real *whole* of our moral being, is subordinated to what in its own nature is but an inferior interest; the greater is made to serve the less; the "obedience of faith" sinks into the character of a mere satellite to authority under some other form. Antichrist in this way takes the place of Christ; speaking in his name, and pretending to represent his person; but in truth substituting for his actual presence falsely another conception altogether, and thus turning the mystery of the incarnation into a Gnostic figment. The sect *principle*, the idea of religion that leads to sects and justifies them as right and good, carries with it constitutionally this antichristian character. It may be joined with much that is good, but it is still in its own nature bad always and opposed to Christ. ~~It is the~~ ~~whole~~ ~~theory~~ ~~of~~ ~~Christianity.~~ The whole Christian world secretly condemns it; and where it may appear to be defended, it will be found always that regard is had in the case to some other interest rather than to the proper honor of Christ and his gospel. The truth is



however, as we all know that even the appearance of any such defence under a direct and open form, is for the most part carefully avoided. Our religious literature, together with our ecclesiastical policy, may be said to connive largely at the evil, quietly assuming its necessity, and frowning into silence all discussion of its merits as unprofitable, "agitation;" but neither of these interests is prepared ordinarily still, to give its weight openly and fully in favor of what is thus allowed. What theologian would risk his credit, by writing a book in vindication of the sect system? Who thinks of signalizing himself in this way, even by a tract or an article in one of our more respectable reviews? What minister feels it expedient to plead the cause of sects in his pulpit, as he would plead the cause of missions, or any other acknowledged christian interest? What ecclesiastical body would dare to take action of any sort, having for its object directly the encouragement and perpetuation of this system, as the glory of Protestantism and the promise of the millenium? The fashion, so far as outward talk and speech go, lies altogether the other way. All sects unite in deploring the misery of a divided christianity, and are ready on fit occasion to pass resolutions and make speeches in favor of unity, toleration, charity, and peace. All this means a great deal. It shows that the sect system is an abomination, and that the inmost voice of Christianity is against it, with all the pains that may be taken to disguise or forget the fact.

In a practical view, the mischievous working of the system, at this time particularly in our own country, is great beyond all that can be readily conceived or expressed. While its tyranny continues to be what it is now, we can have no vigorous theology, no sound and healthy piety, as the general privilege of the Church. On this subject however we do not care here particularly to enlarge.

We are glad then, in the case before us and in other cases, to see the tyranny of this system challenged and resisted. It is an evil that calls for rebellion. We confess moreover, that on the ground occupied by the sect system itself, we see not how it can make answer successfully to the protest of Mr. Stockton, Mr. Craig, or any other man who may be pleased to step forward in the same way as the champion of Bible Christianity; nor how it can pretend consistently to condemn them or call them to account in any way, for the assertion of such a principle as freedom. For is it not a fixed principle with all sects, that the free will is the only rule of faith and practice; and that the only sure and safe key for getting at the sense of this, is the mind of every

man left to study it for himself with the help of the Holy Ghost? Do they not all build professedly, from alpha to omega, on the same great Protestant watchword: "The open Bible and Private Judgment?" Is it not a settled maxim again with this system, that an old ecclesiastical communion may be forsaken, ought to be forsaken, and a new one formed, as often as the liberty of conscience, in the use of such private judgment, is found to require such change? Is it not the boast of the sect spirit, from time immemorial, to be the enemy thus of all church despotism, and the friend of the most unbounded spiritual independence? What plea then can it put in against the use of such liberty, to the full extent of a renunciation of *all* church authority, as we find it here exercised by Mr. Stockton and Mr. Craig? The Canandaigua Convention, denouncing the whole sect system as it now stands, and doing this on Bible principles, must be taken according to this theory to rest on just as good a foundation ecclesiastically, as any denominational convocation in the land. For what forms the ground of ecclesiastical right or power in any case? The Bible. And how is the Bible for this purpose, we ask again, to be interpreted and understood? By the ability simply that every man may have, with God's help, to get at its meaning. And why then should not the authority of the Canandaigua Convention be full as much to the purpose here, as that of any common sectarian organization. Or why should not the *exodus* of Mr. Stockton from the Methodist Protestant Church, and from the whole idea of church organization, be just as much entitled to respect, *on sect principles*, as the *exodus* of this M. P. Church itself from the Methodist Episcopal Church, or a little farther back still the *exodus* of the M. E. Church from the Episcopal Church of England? We see not, we say, how any effectual exception, in the sect world, can be taken to his course. The M. P. Church, it seems, is somewhat of the same mind; as he is allowed apparently to retire from its authority, and set up for himself, without any sort of ecclesiastical inquisition or account. So far, all right. The premises remain square with the conclusion. Mere toleration however in such a case, whether civil or ecclesiastical, is not enough. We may have that, and along with it only pity and contempt. To do full justice to the sect principle, as sects commonly make a boast of holding it, Mr. Stockton should not only be tolerated by the body he has left behind, as well as by other bodies, but cordially taken by the hand also all round, and welcomed into the circle of free and independent witnesses of the truth. Has he not made earnest with the great maxim, which

so many take to be the very palladium of Protestantism? Has he not cast himself fully on the Bible and Private Judgment, in opposition to all sorts of authority in every other form? Has he not made himself a martyr to the cause of Bible Christianity in this way, the rights of conscience, religious freedom, the authority of Christ in his own house over against all authority supposed to be false? And why then should he not be approved and applauded in his course? Why should we not rejoice to see others breaking away from all existing denominations in like style, and setting up every one for himself, in the name of the Bible, a truly *independent* standard? The more new sects and new positions after this fashion, it might seem, the better. And if it should come even to a complete disintegration of all religious communions, the full breaking up of the Church visibly considered, and a resolution of the christian faith and life into mere atoms or units, would it not deserve only to be hailed as the greatest possible triumph of the Bible and Private Judgment, the fullest possible allegiance of the christian world to the principle of freedom!

Such force undoubtedly this Bible Christianity has, over against the common posture of our religious sects. It is but a simple carrying out of their acknowledged principles to the end, towards which these run from the beginning. And yet it is a very easy thing, on the other hand, in the case of such an extreme, to show that it is full of contradiction and overthrows itself. It is indeed surprising, how a sensible man, like Mr. Stockton, should not see and feel this, in the mere exhibition, or at least with the shortest experiment, of his own favorite theory. The Bible has no life of its own, no voice, save as the truth it reveals is brought to live and speak in those who receive it as God's word. To be a creed or rule then, it must be reduced to some common understanding in the minds that embrace it, and agree to follow it, in such way. This may be written or it may be unwritten; but in the end it amounts to the same thing; it is a standard of belief and practice, in this respect a true church symbol and constitution, supposed of course to be taken from the Bible, but still as such out of the Bible and beside it. There can be absolutely no communion whatever, and no co-operation, on the basis of revealed truth, without some such common understanding and agreement, to at least a certain extent, in regard to what this truth teaches and requires. To give up one creed or confession then, so long as Christianity itself be not wholly abjured, is only to come under the authority of another. To pretend to give up all creeds, and to take simply the Bible in

their place, is an absurdity ; and if it mean anything at all, must signify the want of faith altogether ; since to have faith, is to believe some positive doctrine or fact, and this, though it may differ from all creeds besides, will then be to all intents and purposes itself a creed, as really as any of the systems it affects to reject. Mr. Stockton, of course, only deceives himself, and endeavors also innocently to deceive others, when he pretends to set Bible Christianity in opposition to all Denominationalism, and then claims to be himself the representative of the first to the full negation and exclusion of all that is comprehended in the idea of the second. Has *he* not also a theory of Christianity, a certain scheme of things in his mind, which he holds it necessary to preach and receive on the authority of the Bible? And what less is this, we ask, than the interposition of something, which is not of itself the written text and yet claims to be of force as authority, between the Bible and the minds of those to whom he preaches, or for whom he writes? He may please himself by styling it *true* authority, as opposed to authority that is false on the part of the different denominations. But by what measure, in this case, are truth and falsehood to be distinguished? Will he be so simple as to say: "I am but the echo of the Bible, and therefore worthy of confidence and faith ; while the several denominations evidently get their creeds from some other quarter." Does he not know, that each of these denominations claims to be the echo of the Bible as fully as himself, and has also full as much right to make this claim, and to be considered sincere in making it? By what principle or rule is it, that the Methodist scheme of Christianity, the Baptist scheme, the Presbyterian scheme, must be set down as the product of mere human thought and will forsaking the Bible, while the scheme of Thomas H. Stockton, singly and separately taken, is to be regarded as the true sense itself of the sacred volume? What better at best is such downright individualism, we may well inquire, than the mere denominationalism, under any form, from which it so graciously offers to set the world free?

"For years," says Mr. Stockton, "I have been trying to secure an honorable and useful position on the broad and lofty platform of Bible Christianity ; a position above all parties, civil, ecclesiastical, and social ; a position, in which—with real love for all persons, though in apparent opposition to many institutions—I might be allowed, by common consent and with common confidence, to speak out, in the hearing of all, and for the benefit of all, with unchecked but prudent liberty, either positively or negatively, for or against, according to my humble mea-

sure or ability, in all the relations of True and False authority. That, if there be any, seems to be the mission." For the accomplishment of this work, he thinks he has now found the right method. "A Teacher of Bible Christianity inquires: What does *Humanity*, just as we find it, *need*? He answers the question somewhat as follows: It needs the Bible—the Religion of the Bible, and the Social Institutions of the Bible; that is, it needs precisely what God has supplied. Next, he compares the Religion of the Bible with the Religion of the Age; and the Social Institutions of the Bible with the Social Institutions of the Age: and discovers great differences. Men have sadly perverted what God designed for their advantage." And so the business of such a teacher, having a mission to set the world right, is to meet the evil with which he finds himself surrounded on all sides, "in the family, in the school, in the store, in the society, in the church, in the state," with what he finds and sees to be the simple will of God as made known in the Bible.

The amount of all is simply this, that Mr. Stockton proposes to set his own views of what the Bible teaches and requires over against all other systems of belief, and claims in favor of the first the authority of absolute truth, while all besides is charged with at least partial error.

To be consistent, and true to his own principle, he is bound of course to extend the same right to all others. This, it would seem however, is more than he feels himself constrained to allow; as he evidently has a certain scheme of doctrine in his mind, which he takes to be the necessary proper sense of the Bible, and which he is ready to apply on all sides as a standard of evangelical orthodoxy. Here Mr. Craig shows himself more strictly in agreement with the general theory which both profess to hold. In his hands, we find the theory pushed out, without shrinking, to its most extreme consequences. The Bible must be allowed to rule the faith and practice of every man, in a perfectly free way; that is, without regulation or control of any sort whatever from the previous thinking of others, in the form either of confession or creed. He will allow no test or standard of orthodoxy. Enough simply, that men profess to receive and follow the Bible as God's word. We have no right to ask a single question in regard to what they find in it, or the use they make of it. The professor may be in sentiment a Trinitarian, Unitarian, or Arian, a Calvinist or Arminian, an Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist, or Baptist; still it matters not; let him only waive all reference to these distinctions, planting himself before us on the broad platform of Bible Christianity, and it

becomes the duty of all christians, according to Mr. Craig, to extend to him the right hand of fellowship, and to encircle him with the arms of love.

This looks catholic and liberal. But it comes just to this in the end, that Christianity is emptied of all positive contents as a distinctive revelation, and reduced to the character of religion in its merely natural form. It is a catholicity which stands wholly in negations; by which all that is affirmed as a distinguishing interest by the different denominations is either denied, or at least treated as something of no worth, while all material truth is made to lie thus in a few abstractions, that are of so general and vague a character as to carry with them no living force whatever. Christianity in this form is of no definite shape. It is a mere name to represent all religious truth; some portion of which is taken to belong to almost every sect; while for this very reason, as representing all, the one faith of Christ must be held to be something different and distinct from every such particular manifestation. "Simple *Christianity* is the 'one faith' of Christ's Church. Lutheranism is not the faith of Christ's Church; because Lutheranism is something distinct from Christianity. So is Episcopalianism; so is Presbyterianism; so is Methodism. To embrace *simple Christianity* does not bring a man into the Methodist church; nor into the Catholic church; nor into the Reformed Dutch church: but it does bring him into the Christian church — the One Body of Christ." This is plainly to turn Christianity into nothing, to rob it of all positive character, to make it just what it may suit the private judgment and fancy of this man, that man, and every man, to raise to such distinction and clothe with such name. The absurdity stands forth clearly to view in the representation of Mr. Craig; it is in truth however fairly involved, to the same extent, in the more guarded and qualified views also of Mr. Stockton, and in the whole theory of Bible Christianity to which he is so much attached, and which he holds it his special mission to advocate and recommend. All such Christianity has a tendency to lose itself more and more in general abstractions, to substitute what is negative only for what is concretely real and positive, to become wide by becoming at the same time flat, and to shut out nothing finally just because there is nothing which it can be said effectually to comprehend and shut in.

With all our opposition to the sect system, then, we make no common cause whatever with the anti-sect spirit in this style. The cure for Denominational Christianity is not just what is here called Bible Christianity, the religion of Christ emptied of all positive contents and made to be what to every man may

seem best, taking the measure of it simply and wholly from himself.

This may strike some as a contradiction. The truth is, however, that the things which are thus opposed, carry in them after all no such real opposition as is frequently imagined. The antagonism between them is at best but relative and partial. At bottom, they are found to agree more than they differ. Both affect to make the Bible exclusively the foundation and source of Christianity. Both in this way deny the proper power of the living fact of Christianity itself objectively considered. Both show themselves thus completely unhistorical, and in spite of all their pretended reverence for revelation fall over to the rationalistic posture, by which this is brought into subordination always more or less to the mind and will of those who receive it, inasmuch as they are allowed to make themselves separately the measure of its universal sense. This Bible Christianity is only the Sect Christianity itself carried out to its last legitimate result, in which it is brought fairly to overthrow and destroy its own life. As compared with such extreme of individualism and subjectivity, the sect system has on its side a certain amount of right; and this right will be found to lie moreover in the direction precisely, where we are required to seek and acknowledge what is needed in order to master properly the difficult knot presented to us by the whole case. It looks to the idea of the *Church*, and in this way recognizes the necessity of history and tradition, the real authority of what Christianity has been and still is out of the Bible and beyond it; even while the system itself, in another view, stands at open war with all such objective christianity, and to a certain point asserts in opposition to it only the claims of private judgment and private will. No sect as such has hardihood enough to follow out its own principle to the end; for in that case it must give up its own denominational character, and lose along with it all positive substance. The true christian feeling comes in to withstand this; and sects are impelled accordingly, while they resist the true idea of the Church and fly from it, to turn round again, with vast practical inconsistency, and assert the attributes and prerogatives of this idea in their own favor. Each sect allows itself to be only a part of Christianity, a narrow insular interest and not the true wholeness of Christ's kingdom upon the earth; and yet in the next breath goes on to affirm rights and wield powers which can have no possible sense whatever, except as they are taken to be of truly universal force, and not merely of force for any one section or division only of the christian commonwealth. Every

sect, within its own limits, plays itself off as the Church; not merely as *a* church, one amongst many, as the language at times goes; but as *the* Church, which by its very conception is one and not many, universal and not partial, catholic and not denominational. All this is much the same sort of inconsistency and contradiction, which we meet in the old heathen notion of national or local deities, gods pretending to be possessed of divine attributes, whose force at the same time stopped short with the boundary of a mountain or river. Still the gross inconsistency of the thing is not regarded; and a whole score of sects sit beside each other, all putting on the airs of Jupiter in their separate spheres, and smiling towards each other graciously in token of their mutual toleration and forbearance. Each of them has its own tradition, its authority, its keys to open and to shut, its prophetic, priestly and kingly powers and pretensions, the whole moral paraphernalia indeed of the papacy itself, only not on the same wide sweeping scale and not in the same bold open way. All this is a contradiction; but it forms at the same time an important testimony to the truth of the Church, and is in fact a standing acknowledgment on the part of the sects, that their own starting point is false and untenable; that the Bible and private judgment are *not* the sole factors of Christianity; that it must have the basis of a real historical existence besides to rest upon, in order that it may carry with it any true and proper authority in the world. In this respect Sectarianism is a witness for important truth, in the first place against itself, and then of course still more decidedly against all mere Bible Christianity, (its own natural and proper end,) as we have it here represented by Mr. Stockton and Mr. Craig.

The truth to which witness is thus borne is the objective being of the Church, and so in this view the authority which belongs to the living historical revelation of Christianity in the world, along with the outward letter and word of it contained in the Bible. 'To make the Bible the bearer of all necessary truth for the individual mind, aside from the presence of the living fact of Christianity itself, is virtually to deny this fact, and to fall into the plausible net of rationalism. There is always a grand fallacy then involved in the imagination, that we get nearer to the truth in proportion as we make use of the Scriptures for the purpose in an exclusive and independent way. That is in fact to wrong the inspired volume itself. This takes for granted throughout the living spirit of Christianity as a real revelation in the world, by which only from age to age its proper force and meaning can become fully known. A purely Biblical Christianity



can never be a complete Christianity. It must be at the same time historical, the result of the real powers of the new creation working out in a whole way, from generation to generation, the solution of its own great problem.

J. W. N.

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## THE BIRTH DAY OF THE CHURCH.

### §1. *The Miracle of Pentecost.*

Next to the Incarnation and Resurrection of the Son of God; the outpouring of the Holy Ghost and the birth of the Church constitutes the most important and influential fact recorded on the pages of history. As a miracle of the highest order which is daily repeated on a smaller scale in the regeneration and awakening of men, it entered the sphere of our human life attended and certified by phenomena of a supernatural character. Thousands who witnessed it on the day of Pentecost submitted to its conquering power. Over the entire surface of society it has scattered in rich profusion the seeds of life, and is destined, under the direction of Providence, to transform by the energy of the Spirit the whole human family into the image of Christ and unite it in close fellowship to God. For the subject now in hand must not be regarded as an isolated, transitory event whose impress has been worn away by the march of time, but as the generative germ of an infinite series of divine revelations in the course of history, as a fountain of life whose purifying waters flow with uninterrupted course through the channels of time into the bosom of a boundless eternity. The Holy Spirit who had hitherto enlightened, in a temporary and sporadic manner, a special class of men selected by Providence as the representatives of the Old Testament Dispensation, now appeared in the world as an integral, abiding member of its constitution, took up his residence in the hearts of a believing congregation, and has since manifested his power as the divine principle of light and life by means of which the redemption accomplished by Christ is to be made effectual in the conversion of men and the propagation of truth. Previous to his death our Lord expressly declared to his mourning disciples that the communication of the Spirit of Truth as an abiding blessing depended upon his going to the Father. "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if