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I. LITERARY.

DAYBREAK ON THE NILE.

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A green ribbon a thousand miles long, and ten miles wide; striped with a central line of silver; ravelled at the northern end and the threads spread like a half-open fan; this ribbon of verdure stretched directly south from the Mediterranean upon a limitless expanse of scorching, dazzling sand,—that, says Dr. W. B. Wright, was Egypt, the land “in which it seemed always afternoon.” By others the shape of Egypt has been likened to a lily with a crooked stem. At the upper end is a broad blossom, two hundred miles wide, more commonly called the Delta because of its resemblance to the fourth letter of the Greek alphabet; while a button of a bud projects from the stalk, a little below the blossom, on the left-hand side. This bud is the Fayoum, “a natural depression in the hills that shut in the Nile valley on the west, which has been rendered cultivable for many thousands of years by the introduction into it of the Nile water through a canal.” The long and crooked stalk of the lily is the Nile valley, which is a ravine ploughed through the rocky soil in prehistoric times by the great river itself. Well may Rawlinson say that no other country in the world is so strangely shaped, so long compared to its width, so hard to govern from a single centre.

And yet here was established one of the earliest governments known to history. When the curtain goes up on antiquity, it discloses a venerable civilization in the valley of the Nile with political institutions already organized. The fact that

SHOULD ORTHODOX CHURCHES ABANDON ORTHODOX CREEDS ?

REV. A. W. PITZER, D. D.

The painter who hung a beautiful creation of his art in the market place, with a notice requesting all persons who found any defects in his picture to indicate them on the canvas, was surprised and mortified to find on his return that his picture was ruined by the many marks of disapprobation made by his critics.

Having a duplicate, he hung that in the same place requesting all who noticed beauties in the picture to point them out on the canvas—and so on his return again, his work of art was covered with marks of approval.

The Evangelical Church of Christ has hung up in the market place of the world the Confession of her Faith in God, and calmly and solemnly invites the judgment of all men upon her statement of her beliefs touching Divine and eternal truth.

The various branches of this one Christian Church may not agree in all the details of statement ; some denominations may exalt one truth out of the proportion of Faith ; other denominations may scarcely notice the same truth : the Confessional statements may err in the matter of length or brevity ; some may be too long, others too short. Some may have too much of Divine Sovereignty, others not enough : for all these Creeds and Confessions are the work not of an Infallible God, but of fallible men ; hence none of them are perfect ; and so all are liable to alteration and amendment.

But still there is a "System of Christian Doctrine" held in common by all orthodox denominations, in their Creeds and Confessions. Without pausing to define that "SYSTEM," it will perhaps serve the purpose of this article to say that this "SYSTEM" is not held by Non-Evangelical bodies, it is not held by Pagans, Romanists, Mohamitans, Mormons, Swedenborgians, Unitarians, Universalists,—individuals in these classes may hold it, but the classes as such do not.

However much all believers in our Common Lord may unite in deploring the rivalries and jealousies of different sects, yet it will be remembered that these things are not new in the Christian church, nor are they peculiar to the present era ; divisions

existed even in the Apostolic church, and some were for Paul, and some for Cephas and some for Apollos.

Different views of Divine truth were held by men and parties in the Christian church long before the Apostles Creed was propounded as the faith of the Saints.

Plainly, therefore, the Creeds and Confessions of the Orthodox churches of our day are in no wise responsible nor to be blamed, for the present sharply defined and not always friendly Sects of Christendom. If every Creed on earth were blotted from existence the different opinions of Christians embodied therein would continue as sharply defined as before.

Nor were Confessions ever formulated with the view of winning to their support defence and propagation, intellectual ability, exact scholarship and æsthetic culture.

Nay, so far from this, the Creeds and Confessions of the church grew out of, and were made necessary by, the malignant and bitter assaults made upon that COMMON FAITH delivered once for all to the Saints, by intellectual and cultured unbelief, by the enemies of the Cross of Christ. Pharisaic Sacramentalism, Sadducean negation, Stoic fatalism, Epicurean Materialism, Speculations of Science falsely so called by their persistent attacks on the Cross of Christ, compelled the church to state and defend the Faith delivered as a sacred trust to her by the crucified and risen Redeemer. The object of the Creed is not so much to win the approval of science, of learning, of culture and character, as to state and defend the Truth of Scripture.

Perhaps we take too much for granted when we say that the objection of the "*non-evangelical*" is simply to the *mere form* of the Confessional Statement. In the great majority of cases, it will be found that the objection is not to the form of the Creed Statement, but to the truth taught. The Sadducee does not care for your "*form of statement*" of the resurrection, what he denies and hates is the resurrection itself; the Jew does not care for your "*form of statement*" about Christ, what he denies and hates is the Christ of Nazareth. The Arian whether ancient or modern does not care for your "*form of statement*" of the Deity of our Lord, what he denies and hates is the Godhead of Jesus the Christ. The "probationist" does not care for your "*form of statement*" of retribution, what he denies and hates is any Retribution, either here

or hereafter. The Agnostic does not care for your "*form of statement*" concerning God, what he denies and hates is any God whatever. The cultured Moralist does not care for your "*form of statement*" of Regeneration, what he denies and hates is the New Birth. We do not merely point out the weak places in the walls when we affirm that the objection of the "Unevangelical" is only to the "*forms*" of statement; but we throw wide open all the gates to our citadel, and invite the enemy to enter.

So long as the "carnal mind is enmity against God" (nor does the amount of culture possessed by that carnal mind diminish one iota its enmity against God) any form of Statement that truly and faithfully presents God's truth will be hateful to it. That carnal mind hates the Evangelical Creed because that Creed contains God and God's truth.

The Evangelical System proclaims in clear and scientific terms, to an unbelieving and hostile world, precisely where the Evangelicals stand and what they believe.

It is a strong point to define one's position on any question in unequivocal language; it is a strong point to have a positive faith; it is a strong point to state it clearly and boldly.

The Ocean of this life is filled with crafts of all kinds, piratical and otherwise; it is well for all ships carrying "Evangelical" cargoes to run up the Evangelical flag—the flag may be very long or very short—it may be the "true blue" or only "sky blue" but all the Evangelicals rejoice to see it at the mast-head, and every Christian will joyfully salute the Christian colors.

Pointing to the Orthodox Creeds, the Evangelical church says—"After centuries of conflict, after ages of experience, after much prayer and guidance of the Holy Ghost, there is here promulgated what we hold to be the teachings of Scripture concerning all questions pertaining to Salvation and eternal interests." "These Creeds embody the results of varied scholarship, of profound learning, of diligent research, of tireless toil, of patient investigation, of mature reflection." These Creeds are thus offered to the world as aids to the honest seeker after truth: and the assertion will not be denied, that, if in any other department of knowledge such helps and aids were proffered to men, they would be gladly received. What a boon to men were a brief yet comprehensive

statement of Scientific truth by the wisest of Scientists? or of medical truth by medical experts; or of legal truth by lawyers? Nor does the Orthodox church say to those without, "You are required to believe all the affirmations and details of this Evangelical System on pain of perdition;" she does not even say, "You shall believe this 'System' or be damned." She does not even say, "You shall believe the "*Substance*" of this System or be damned."

The Evangelicals say, "We are travelling in the direction of this System; if you refuse to go with us, we cannot truthfully say that you are travelling in our company."

"If our 'System' commends itself to you as containing a fair exhibit of God's truth we shall be glad to have you go with us: if not, we cannot walk together for we are not agreed."

If men of their own free will and accord come *inside* the Orthodox church, and then find that the bed is too short and the covering too narrow for their comfort, common sense would dictate that they find a longer bed and a wider covering in some more congenial place. No man is compelled by force *ab extra* to stretch himself on the Evangelical bed and to wrap himself in the Evangelical covering. If the strength of the Evangelical System is to be measured by results, then here again there is nothing to be dreaded by a comparison of the work accomplished by the churches with and those without creeds. The creedless jellyfish churches have made few converts, and done but little for the welfare of a lost world. That branch of the orthodox Christian church with the most stalwart of Confessions, with forty millions of members and adherents, may confidently challenge comparison with any or with all Creedless, non-orthodox unevangelical sects. And the strength of the Calvinistic church is marvellous when the pressure it has resisted is considered; to say nothing of the number of times it has been taken to pieces, and the number of funeral orations delivered at its burial.

The ramparts of Orthodox Christendom have successfully withstood too many broadsides of multitudinous enemies to topple over and fall flat on the earth at the horn blowing of the brethren of the "Broad church" and "New-departure" Schools of unbelief.

The Orthodox System is fearless and truthful in its state

ment of the character of God, and the actual condition of man.

The Evangelical church may boldly challenge all forms of false, corrupt, and apostate religions to produce their Gods, and place them side by side with the Scriptural and Confessional God of Orthodox Christians; and let the honest and candid inquirer after truth say what God is most worthy of his supremest allegiance and devoutest adoration. "Their Rock is not as our Rock, our enemies themselves being the judges." On this portion of the Common Salvation, the creeds of all evangelical Christendom are absolutely agreed; there are no discordant voices in the proclamation of God's Unity, Spirituality, Wisdom, Justice, Holiness, Goodness, Mercy and Truth. Who will by no means clear the guilty; tho' he forgiveth iniquity, transgression and sin.

The God of Orthodox Christians is quite other than an Infinite Being of simple benevolence; whose only thought, through ceaseless ages is how to make all creatures, the good and bad alike, happy. True, his Benevolence is both infinite and eternal; and He so loved us lost men that He gave His only Son to die for us; and love greater than God's love for our race, the mind of man cannot even conceive. But a being whose only moral attribute is Benevolence, if such a being can be imagined, would be a moral monstrosity; and a universe governed by such a God would be not Cosmos but Chaos. It goes before and above all else that the Judge of all the earth shall do *right*; and a God without righteousness as an essential element of his being means a world without law, and a universe without order—in short it means Heaven for none, but Hell for all.

I do not know that the Evangelical church is anywhere required by the Almighty to vindicate to an unbelieving world the reasonableness of God's punishment of sin. Certainly there is no record that Noah demonstrated the reasonableness of the Flood to the Antedeluvian World; or that Moses satisfied the Egyptians of the righteousness of their punishment; or that Joshua persuaded the Canaanites that they deserved extermination; or that Daniel enabled the Babylonians to see that great Babylon *ought* to be destroyed. However much men may here and now complain of the righteous punishment of sin; God assures us and all men that the day is coming when

in the light of God's countenance, and in the light of eternal realities, all cavillers will be speechless.

As to the ceaseless clamor and cant of the non-evangelical world touching the Fatherhood of God, the positive and absolute affirmation is made that the orthodox church taught the world all that the world knows of that Fatherhood. Christ revealed that precious truth to the church, and the church taught it to the world. And yet if we listen to the *Non-Evangelicals*, the New Departures, the Broadchurchmen, *et id omne genus*, one would conclude that they only believed that God was a Father and that the Evangelical church denied the doctrine as a device of the wicked one. The Fatherhood of God as proclaimed by many of the modern progressives is utterly destructive of his Righteousness as Ruler, and of his Justice as Judge; and the Evangelical Faith as commonly stated teaches men not to dishonor Him as Ruler and Judge, because He is also our Father in Heaven.

If the Orthodox System has any strength whatever, it is just here in its statements concerning God.

Nor is it less strong in its statements touching the ACTUAL CONDITION OF THE HUMAN RACE.

That the race is *one* is a fact established by many converging lines of evidence; Orthodox Christians accept as authentic the Mosaic account concerning the creation of Adam and Eve, and the descent of all men from the first human pair. By the original constitution of man and by the law of Heredity or Reproduction in kind, children inherit the general qualities of the parent. Nor could Adam transmit to his descendants what he himself did not possess, *viz.*, a *sinless moral nature*. But as the natural head of the race he did transmit to the race what he himself had, *viz.*: a corrupt nature; and this corrupt nature is common to the race and to each individual of the race. This inherited nature is designated in the Scripture as the "flesh," "*the natural man*," the "carnal mind": and this carnal mind is enmity against God.

When the Evangelical Creeds speak of the "sinfulness of man's estate," or the "corruption of his nature," or "his native depravity," they always mean the sin, not special to any individual, but common to all men; and when they affirm that *this*

sin became the sad heritage of the race through Adam the head of the race, they teach what is confirmed by science, by history, and by universal experience.

There may be and doubtless are great differences among the families, tribes, and communities of the race, as regards education, civilization, culture, natural morals, amenities of life, &c., &c. The difference between the inhabitants of an American village, and the wild and naked savages of Manyoema is immense; and yet the Evangelical creed does not hesitate to say that the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit is just as necessary to fit the cultured and scholarly American for the Kingdom of Heaven as it is to fit the impure and besotted African; the natural or carnal mind, whether found under the white skin of a New Englander, or the dark skin of an African, is in either case enmity against God; not subject to His will neither indeed can be.

There is no germ of right character, no seed of eternal life, to be found anywhere in the broad field of that nature common to all the children of Adam. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and nothing but flesh, and can never produce Spirit, nor eternal life.