

NOTICES OF RECENT PUBLICATIONS.

PLAN OF SALVATION.*

THIS book is brought forward in a somewhat peculiar manner. Its author conceals his name, and declares that even his personal friends will not probably be able to detect him. He professes to believe that the method of inquiry pursued in this book is the only one which can satisfy any intelligent inquirer of the Divine origin of the Christian religion; and that no other treatise which he is acquainted with, contains such a course of reasoning. "A very small edition has been published. There is one class of men into whose hands the author is not desirous that the book should immediately fall. Some copies will be distributed, and a few placed in the bookstores for sale. Should any be sold at the price asked for them, a portion of the money will be devoted to advance the interests of evangelical Christianity." The book is dedicated to Dr. William. E. Channing, and the author modestly intimates his hope that it may have the effect of converting him to the truth.

The work, thus introduced to us, we have read with attention. We find in it considerable power of intellect, but much narrowness, many acute thoughts, but no large or profound views. We should like to change the name of the book, and call it "An argument to show the adaptation of revealed religion to some parts of man's nature and circumstances." It contains very little philosophy, and its logic even is often weak, and rather plausible than convincing. It is a lawyer-like attempt at demonstrating certain points, having both the merits and the faults of special pleading.

The substance of the argument may be thus stated. "Take man as he is, with his present nature and circumstances, and the mode of operation ascribed to God in the Old and New Testaments is the only one by which he could be saved from sin and misery. The religion of the Bible is therefore worthy of God." Or, to state it syllogistically, the argument stands thus.

* PHILOSOPHY OF THE PLAN OF SALVATION. A BOOK FOR THE TIMES. BY AN AMERICAN CITIZEN. *Cupimus enim investigare quid verum sit: neque id solum, sed quod cum veritate, pietatem, quoque præterea erga Deum habeat conjunctam.*—SADOLET. New York: Published for the Author. 1841.

FIRST SYLLOGISM.

1. There is but one way by which man, as he actually exists, can be redeemed from sin.
2. But this one way is that taken in the Bible.
3. Therefore the religion of the Bible takes the only way to redeem man from sin.

SECOND SYLLOGISM.

1. The religion, which adopts the only way of redeeming man, must be from God.
2. But the Bible is such a religion.
3. Therefore the Bible is of God.

Now, supposing the major and minor propositions of the first syllogism to be proved, the rest follows necessarily. The whole stress of the argument is upon these two. No one will deny, that if our author can show that there is but one way of saving man, and that the religion of the Bible takes that way, that then it is a divine religion. But in order to do this, it would seem necessary that he should be acquainted with every imaginable plan of salvation, and able to prove all but one insufficient. But this again would imply a perfect knowledge of human nature, a knowledge which no one, we suppose, would claim to possess. Here, then is a fault which vitiates the entire argument of the book. There is no possibility for any being, not possessing a perfect knowledge of human nature, to prove the main proposition, upon which the whole chain of reasoning depends. Considered as a demonstration, therefore, the whole argument falls to the ground.

Still, however, the value of the work may not be essentially impaired. If it can be shown that the mode of operation, ascribed to God in the Bible, is a *good* way; is adapted to man's nature and needs; is in harmony with the course of divine providence in other respects; then, though we may not be able to show that it is the *only possible way*, we have done much to remove doubts and difficulties. Let us therefore look at our author's course of argument, to see whether he has accomplished this end.

ANALYSIS OF THE ARGUMENT.

"It is the nature of man to worship. But the character of what he worships will influence his own. Reason and history show that natural religion must always corrupt, and cannot improve man. History shows it, for heathen religions made their worshippers always worse, never better. Reason shows it, for man's mind cannot conceive the idea of a being holier and better than he already is himself. There-

fore, there is no help for man in natural religion. His only help is in having a pure object of worship placed before his soul, and this revelation being accompanied with power sufficient to influence him to worship it."

Having disposed thus summarily of natural religion, our author proceeds to show how the Deity brought before the human mind the idea of himself by means of the Jewish dispensation.

"The Jews were first bound together by strong ties, so that they could resist outward influences, and hold fast their own ideas and peculiarities. These ties were, 1st. Descent from a common parent, Abraham; 2d. Common Sufferings in Egypt; 3d. A common Deliverer from bondage."

The only way for a superhuman being to reveal himself is by superhuman acts—therefore miracles.

It was necessary that these miracles should be of such a character as to show the superiority of the true God to the gods of Egypt. Hence the miracles of Moses were directed against the serpents; the River Nile; the god of Flies; the cattle, which were objects of worship; Serapis, who was believed to protect them from locusts; Isis and Osiris, the sun and moon.

Man's mind can only receive truth by degrees—it is subject to the law of progress. Hence God revealed himself gradually—making known first, his existence, and calling himself I Am.

All happy obedience must rise from affection, and affection can be developed only by the sight of goodness. Hence God manifested himself to the Jews as a deliverer from Egypt.

Man cannot discover a perfect system of duty, but he needs a law, and that law to be freely chosen. Hence the Moral Law.

As there was no object in the material world from which the idea of *moral purity*, or *holiness* could be derived, it was necessary to institute some symbolic ordinances to convey it to the mind of the Jews. Hence the distinction of animals into clean and unclean, the purifications, the priesthood and holy places, &c. in the Mosaic system.

A sense of the evil of sin, and God's disapprobation of it can only be revealed to the human mind by the penalty affixed to it. Hence sacrifices, in which the death inflicted on the animal expressed the penalty to which the offender was justly liable.

Having reached this point, our author passes from the Old Covenant to the New. He says that the ideas being thus developed in a single nation can now be transferred to all others as spiritual truths by means of language. Therefore the old dispensation comes to an end. But as man can be taught spiritual

truth perfectly only by the life and word of man, therefore Jesus becomes the Teacher of the world.

He then goes on to argue that Jesus is the true Christ, from the idea he gave of the Messiah, from his lowly condition, from the nature of his miracles and teaching, from his making faith fundamental.

Affectionate obedience was produced under the old covenant by the deliverance of the Jews from temporal evils. Under the new it must be produced by a deliverance from spiritual evils. We must therefore be made first to feel the spiritual evil of our condition, and our inability to help ourselves. Therefore Jesus applies the moral law to the heart and thought, and so convinces us of sin, and then declares that infinite woe will follow it, and so convinces us of our danger. Then we must be delivered from this evil and danger by the hand of God, and so be led to love him as a Saviour.

We have now reached the central and vital doctrine of the PLAN OF SALVATION. God must in some way *suffer* and make *self-denials* for us, for this it is which awakens human affection toward a benefactor. Scripture testifies that he did so. The death of Jesus is said to remove the disorder of the world. But if Christ be not God, he and not God will receive our love. Therefore Christ must be God, and those who do not believe in his divinity cannot love God.

The effects of this faith on the nature of man and on society prove it to be from God.

Having thus endeavored to state our author's train of thought, we shall now proceed to offer some criticisms upon it.

We object, first, to the phrase "Plan of Salvation," and to every equivalent mode of expression, as calculated to mislead the mind. To speak of a *plan* of salvation or a *scheme* of redemption, is degrading Christianity to a mere expedient, a contrivance for getting over a difficulty. God does not plan nor scheme. These terms can with propriety be applied to the human understanding only, which being surrounded by limitations must use contrivance to attain its objects. But He, who sees the end from the beginning, looks on everything which he has made, and calls it ALL very good. There is adaptation certainly everywhere. The eye is adapted to the light, but no more than the light is adapted to the eye. Christianity is adapted to the nature of man, but the nature of man is also adapted to Christianity. We object to every view of revelation which considers it as a separate work of God, an interposition, a remedy, a patch on the universe. Nature and Revelation are parts of the same system, and proceed from one source.

Christianity is nowhere called in the Bible a plan or scheme.

It was a part of the Divine Decree in the beginning; fore-ordained before the foundation of the world; the way for it was prepared by law and prophets; its path was made straight by Jewish teacher and Gentile sage, by Moses and by Socrates; and it came in the fulness of time, a ripe fruit of the past struggle and thought and prayer of preceding ages; an end not less than a means; a result itself rather than a mere expedient or remedy; and its coincidence with the wants of the age was not contrivance, but harmony.

Let the great doctrine of Divine Decrees but once be understood by those who profess to believe it, and they will cease to speak of Christianity as an expedient. That doctrine teaches that Christianity lay at first in the mind of God as a necessary part of the great whole, and that neither sin nor redemption are casual, or unnecessary to the unity and harmony of creation.

We object, secondly, to the utter depreciation of natural religion from which our author's view proceeds; and we place our objection not upon philosophic but on theological grounds. It is easy to show that if there is no inward and universal revelation of the true God, no light which lightens every man who comes into the world, that then there is no possibility of knowing the true God in his outward revelation. But omitting all such considerations, we contend that the only intelligible view of the doctrine of the Trinity, the key-stone of Christian theology, requires us to admit a revelation of the true God in nature.

The doctrine of the Trinity teaches that God exists in one substance, but in three persons, and that it is a heresy either to divide the substance or to confound the persons.

But we *divide the substance* and so interfere with the doctrine of divine unity, when we make the Trinity to penetrate the essential nature of God. If then there is no Trinity of essence, then the Trinity must reside in manifestation or relation, which corresponds with the original meaning of *person*, both in Greek and Latin.

And accordingly we find as a matter of fact that there are three manifestations or revelations of God to man—three, and no more. God makes himself known to us in Nature and Providence, in the constitution and order of things—he makes himself known to us through Inspired men, and the fulness of this Inspiration is in Jesus Christ—he makes himself known to us finally in our own hearts by an Inward Influence. Besides these three manifestations of God there is no other. The first shows him as the Father, the second as the Son, the third as the Holy Spirit.

It is then "dividing the substance," to separate God's revelation through Inspired men, from his revelation in Nature, and not to perceive that one is the preparation for the other. To deny that God reveals himself in Nature, is to deny the first person of the Trinity, and to deny the Father. It is to fall back upon the Jewish error, and suppose that God is not a universal but a partial parent, to forget that he has never left himself without the witness of his works in the world, that he is no respecter of persons, that we are all his offspring, that his light lightens every man, that all men have the law written in the heart. This mistake is committed by our author in common with many others, who in denouncing nature, are not aware that they are denouncing the Almighty, and for whom we should pray in the words of Jesus, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."—And yet we may add in the language of Paul—"The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men, everywhere to repent." The time has come, in which men ought to perceive the harmony between all God's manifestations, and repent of opposing Reason to Revelation, Nature to Scripture, the Word spoken through the outward creation to the Word made flesh.

But if our author, with most of those called orthodox, still Judaizes and "divides the substance" of the Trinity; the opposite error of "confounding the Persons" is committed by many others, and should be equally condemned. Those who think Christianity only a republication of the religion of nature, and suppose the manifestation of God in Christ to be the same with his manifestation in natural reason, wishing to reduce the gospel to a mere summary of truths of the pure reason, discharging from it everything individual and peculiar, fall into this error. This is the mistake of the Rationalists. Those also confound together the separate manifestations of God, who suppose the inspiration of the natural light to be the same with the Influence of the Holy Spirit. This is the mistake committed sometimes by those called Transcendentalists. The doctrine of the Quakers is more correct, for they distinguish between the natural light, or universal inspiration, and the comforter or Holy Spirit, whose coming is conditioned by the reception of the man Christ Jesus.

The great truth, which has lain hid by the doctrine of the Trinity for a thousand years, and the importance of which, when truly understood, cannot be over estimated, is briefly this. It is one and the same God who reveals himself in natural reason and the outward universe, in Jesus Christ, and in the regenerate heart—yet these three revelations are not repetitions but completions of each other.

We object, in the third place, to the work before us, that its reasoning is very inaccurate. Of this we will give a few instances.

1. *Inconsistent reasoning.*

He asserts (page 169 and elsewhere) that "human nature, as at present constituted," could not be made to feel the goodness of God's mercy, except God should make self-denials for man's benefit. "Mercy can be manifested to man so as to make an impression in his heart, *in no other way* than by labor and self-denial" (page 170). Hence he argues that God did make self-denials in Christ, and deduces the important inference that those, "who deny the divinity of Christ, cannot believe in God's benevolence" (page 172). That this is "the soul-destroying heresy," because if we do not believe that Christ is God, we cannot believe that God suffered for us, and therefore cannot love Him.

But on page 60, our author shows that God gained the affections of the Jews by appearing as their deliverer from Egyptian bondage. He says, (page 61,) "Now it may be affirmed without qualification, that, in view of the nature and circumstances of the Israelites, no combination of means could be so well adapted to elicit and absorb all the affections of the soul as this wonderful series of events." But in this series there is no appearance of self-denial or suffering on their behalf on the part of the Deity. He simply interposes by miracles to deliver them. According to the reasoning therefore on page 169, it should have made no impression on their heart at all. Our author is placed in this dilemma. He is either wrong in asserting so strenuously that "mercy cannot be manifested to man" except by self-denials, or else in declaring that God took the best possible way to gain the affections of the Israelites, when he rescued them from Egypt without self-denial.

2. *Sweeping Inferences.*

It is very common with our author to show that a certain course of conduct is *one way* to a particular end, and then immediately to infer that it is the *only way* to that end. Examples of this abound through the whole volume.

In the argument just referred to, in Chap. 15th, our author shows that self-denial and labor on the part of a benefactor tends to produce love in him who is the object of it; and then immediately infers that affection can be created in no other way, so that those, who do not believe in God's self-denials for the sake of man cannot love him, and therefore cannot be saved.

But if this is so, it is somewhat remarkable that the Scripture, which nowhere alludes to the suffering or self-denial of God, should constantly assure us that his love was manifested by giving his Son to die for us. "God so loved the world, that

he gave his only begotten Son." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son the propitiation for our sins." That the sight of suffering borne for our sake has a tendency to produce affection is certain, but that this is the only source of affection is surely a very sweeping assertion. Is not love, true and high, produced also by the sight of noble and lovely qualities, though not manifested toward ourselves?

Again, after attempting to show that the Jewish nation was prepared to worship God purely by his various providences, he infers (page 37), that "a nation could have been prepared by *no other* agent, and in *no other* way,"—certainly a very far step from the premises.

Page 83, after showing that one effect of a penalty affixed to crime is to show the legislator's aversion to it, he immediately declares—"Penalty, therefore, inflicted on the transgressor, is *the only way* by which the standard of Justice, as it exists in the mind of God, could be revealed."

Page 98, after showing that one way, to convey the idea of holiness to the world, was by originating it among the Jews by a peculiar system, and then transferring it into other languages by a dispersion of the nation, he quietly adds—"there could be *no other possible way* of transferring ideas from one language to another, but by the methods above mentioned."

We have given a few instances to show the rash and sweeping style of argument and inference which prevails through this little volume. Of hasty assertions, such as that on page 140, "to obey a parent, or to obey God, from interested motives, could be sin," we say nothing, merely asking in this particular instance, what difference is there in moral character between an act of obedience, whose motive is interest, and one whose motive is an affection, based as it is (according to our author) wholly upon interest? Faults of style, such as the use of the word "happify" (page 186), "unholiness" (page 180), "righteousness and benevolence produces," (205), "no being can be happy in obeying one whom *they* do not love" (140), we refer to only as showing the general haste with which the volume appears to have been prepared.

There are, notwithstanding these errors and defects, many valuable thoughts, and a very honest and earnest, though dogmatical and narrow spirit, displayed in this production. We have, however, thought it best to point out these defects, as they are of such importance, believing that we could in no other way render so much service both to the author and to the public. If the former will enlarge the sphere of his vision, and learn to reason with greater severity and accuracy, he may produce an argument in behalf of Christianity, which, if less

original than he believes the one before us to be, will probably be on that very account, more profitable and more profound.

J. F. C.

Motherwell's Poems. Boston: Published by William D. Ticknor.

WE see an American edition of these poems with pleasure. They are mostly strains of a private and domestic beauty, and will be tenderly cherished by those who receive them at all. They are, however, of very unequal merit, and some of them will scarce find excuse for publication. Among those new to us, we do not find any to compare with the old favorites introduced to us years ago by Blackwood; "Jeanie Morrison"—"My heid is like to rend, Willie"—and "Wearie's Well," while we miss with regret one which we have seen attributed to Motherwell, and which has a simple dignity about it rarely seen to-day, beginning

"She was not fair nor full of grace."

We transcribe Wearie's Well, as the best recommendation to any who may not as yet have become acquainted with the volume.

"In a saft simmer gloamin'
In yon dowie dell,
It was there we twa first met
By Wearie's cauld well.
We sat on the brume bank
And looked in the burn,
But sidelang we looked on
Ilk ither in turn.

"The corn-craik was chirming
His sad eerie cry,
And the wee stars were dreaming
Their path through the sky;
The burn babbled freely
Its love to ilk flower,
But we heard and we saw nought
In that blessed hour.

"We heard and we saw nought
Above or around;
We felt that our love lived,
And loathed idle sound,
I gazed on your sweet face
Till tears filled my e'e,