

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger. Luthardt's Apologetic Discourses.

Translated from the German for the Christian Messenger, by Professor D. M. Welton, Acadia College.

FIRST DISCOURSE.

THE CONTRARIETY OF THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE WORLD IN ITS HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT.

V.

Out of these elements Rationalism has sprung, which makes the human understanding the measure of Christianity. For a long time it has controlled the pulpit and the Professor's chair, and still variously maintains its place in general religious thought. It has something of moral honor, though in a high degree restricted,—if one may so speak, narrow-minded. It proclaims a God, but a God who, separated from the world, only looks upon it to see how the laws which he once impressed upon it, are obeyed. Miracles, and prophecy, and direct revelation generally, it does not and cannot accept. God cannot immediately interfere in these things. Also Christianity is not, in a real sense, a revelation; Jesus Christ is no wonder, but only the wisest and most virtuous man that ever lived, and through his teaching, which he sealed with his death, the benefactor of mankind.

If Socinianism left anything supernatural in the Person of Jesus, Rationalism has expunged it, and narrowed down all to morality. Still it allows a personal God, moral freedom, and the immortality of the soul to remain. But these three fundamental truths of a religious-moral consciousness, are cancelled by Pantheism. Upon the period of Rationalism follows that of Pantheism. And of necessity one could not hold by a God who only moved the world from without.

Was war ein Gott, der nur von aussen stiesse, Im Kreis das All am Finger lauter liesse! Ihm ziemts, die Welt im Innern zu bewegen, Natur in Sich, Sich in Natur zu hegen. So dass, was in Ihm lebt und webt und ist, Nie Seine Kraft, nie Seinen Geist vermisst.

God is himself the cosmical (world) life, or the universal reason in things, not essentially distinct from the world; God and the world are only two expressions of the same thing, two sides of the same world, the inside and the outside. Consequently all religion is annulled. For to this God there is no personal relation, because he is not a person and sustains no relation to us. There may be a certain religious frame of mind, in which the particular rises in the general, but there is no faith, no love, no hope, no prayer. For there is no free will. Everything proceeds from inner necessity. No man can disengage himself from its power. He only supposes himself to be free; "One imagines that he is moved and he is moved." The more sagacious one is, the more clearly does he perceive that all actions are conditioned by circumstances. Accordingly there is no moral accountability, no retribution, no life after death, but only a merging of the life of the one into the life of the all.

Spinoza (a Portuguese Jew in Holland, died 1677) had connectedly given utterance to these thoughts; through Philosophy they have been started anew in our century. They have, indeed, been set forth under another form by Hegel; but at bottom they are the same. The inferences from them for religion and Theology have been drawn by David Strauss.

In his so-called doctrine of faith everything supernatural is throughout persistently denied. He concludes with these words: "The world to come is to all the the one last, but future, enemy which speculative philosophy has fought, and, where possible, sought to conquer." Since that time he has become still bitter.

Following close upon Pantheism came Materialism. Ludwig Feuerbach marks the transition from one to the other. "God was my first thought, reason my second, man my third and last:" in these words Feuerbach gives brief and definite utterance to the descending movement of his philosophical thought. He means man, however, in his empirical sensuous reality. Philosophy is with him the science of this sensuous

man, is Anthropology. All religion is self-deception—a disorder of the human spirit. The idea of God is only the idea of man which man has made objective and condensed for the representation of a peculiar existence, upon which he has then heaped in enlarged measure the qualities of his own nature. Accordingly when he thinks of God he thinks simply of himself. "Man created God in his own image." With man, however, the senses are everything: they are reality and truth. Upon these philosophical positions Materialism rests; and it thinks itself able to establish them through its facts. There is no spirit, no soul; everything is only matter in motion: this is its wisdom.

This is the end of the development. To go beyond this is not possible. The slough of matter is now arrived at.

The ruling thought now is a product of all these different elements, which have shown themselves one after another, and have settled upon the mind of the present generation, and have left traces of their existence behind. Now one of these elements, then another comes into the ascendancy. However many-sided the ruling thought is, it has a common tendency and a common principle. Wherein consists this? Guizot makes it to be the denial of the supernatural. And indeed, the question of the supernatural is the question of the present. Renan says: one must by no means meddle with the supernatural; one must be done with it. The chief concern is with the natural order of things. We may say: the meaning of this thought is that we hold the world, the cosmos, as the principal thing.

The world, however, is two-sided: spirit and matter. Consequently now the spirit is more emphasized, then the matter; now the course is more ideal, then it is more real; now it is nobler, then more common. But ever the cosmos is the principal thing. This shows itself more and more decidedly in its historical development. Deism has permitted God still to exist, but it has put him in a silent position; Pantheism has mingled him with the world; Materialism has entirely denied him. What really remains is the world, the world-spirit, the world-life, the world-matter.

Herein lies the contrast to the Christian world-contemplation. This makes God the principal of all things, the principle of the world, of man, of his spirit and body. The Christian contemplation of the world is decidedly theistic. Consequently the question is, whether God or the world shall be the principle and centre of all things and consequently also of our thought. And herein lies the eminently practical significance of this antithesis. It is determinative for the whole circle of thought. The presupposition, however, and determining cause of diverse minds, is not, in the first place a diverse philosophy, a diverse thinking, but a diverse character. It is the sentiment and bias of the soul and of the heart, which in the last analysis is determinative of the direction of the thoughts of our spirit. For it is an antithesis of life-tendencies, whether man regards the world as that in which satisfaction is found, or the living personal God.

There is a tremendous dispute raging in Madras over a hair from the Prophet Mahomet's beard. This holy relic is enclosed in a case, guarded by an official, who has a Government pension of 100 rupees per annum, and six fanatical Mussulmans are disputing for its possession. The dispute has been taken before the Madras High Court.

THE CONFESSORIAL.—The Gloucester correspondent of the Daily Chronicle telegraphs:—"It is stated that a clergyman at Sharpness Point has requested his candidates for confirmation to retire to their closets and write down all the sins that they have committed since their fifth year for his examination. It is said that several candidates complied with the clergyman's request, but that the parents of the other children were so disgusted with this Popish assumption that they took them away from the class.

A QUEER SERMON.—An old preacher once took for his text, "Adam where art thou?" and divided his subject in three parts—1st. All men are somewhere. 2nd. Some men are where they ought not to be. 3rd. Unless they take care, they will soon find themselves where they would rather not be.

The following paper was read by Rev. Stephen March, at the late meeting of the Kings County Ministerial Conference. It was subsequently resolved, "That this Conference accept the paper now read by Bro. March, as the exponent of the sentiments of this Conference on the subject."

Death, the penalty of Sin.

For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.—GEN. II. 17.

The sacred historian has in the previous chapter given us a brief, yet concise and graphic description of the Creation of the Material Universe—"the heavens, and the earth." He describes in bold figurative imagery the condition of the latter, "as waste and empty;" or, "without form and void;" its subjection to the Divine influence, thus imparting to it active properties. The effect being, "the production of light, the separation of the fluid mass into the waters above and below the expanse—the separation of the fluid mass into the waters above and below the expanse, the separation of land and water into earth and sea; the breaking forth of the lowest orders of vegetation; the sending forth of the sun and moon upon their career of light, to be also for signs and seasons, days and years; and the stars upon their heavenly embassy, then, animal life begins with fish and flying fowl, then terrestrial animals in their several grades, finally, as the crowning act, man appears upon the scene. The opening verses of this chapter describe the marvellous "Rest of God," the institution of the Sabbath by himself, and the blessing he pronounces on it. Then follows a more specific statement of the creation of man, and of the position of Eden in which God "planted a garden," and therein placed the man to till it and keep it. And now succeeds the first intimation which the annals of time afford of,

A DIVINE REVELATION.

The first utterances of the Creator to the creature he has made, making known His law. The form in which it is delivered, as well as the terms, are of the most simple character, and in every respect perfectly adapted to the condition of the being for whom it was designed—simple as it is, nevertheless it contains all the grand principles essential to a complete system of moral government, recognizing the Divine Supremacy. The moral obligation of the creature to render perfect and absolute obedience to the Divine law. The truth that man's real happiness depended solely upon such obedience, and that any voluntary violation of it would inevitably be succeeded by consequences of the most bitter and distressing nature. "And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Dr. Conant's translation in loco.

Such is the primary law which God gave to man. Our object on the present occasion is not to enquire into the terms of the law itself, which appear plain, and unmistakeable, but into the purport of the penalty appended thereto."

It may aid us in our enquiry to dwell upon,

I. The nature of the being, to whom it is addressed. For, it is reasonable to suppose that the penalty which a perfect being pronounces upon his creature will be of such a character as comports with the laws and constitution under which he has been created, and the relationship of supremacy and subordination which subsist between the two.

What then is man? (the "thou" of the text before us). 1. He is possessed of a physical organism, a body, "formed of dust of the ground," v 7. Dr. Conant says, "Here we are taught that man's body is composed of the same substances as the ground from which it draws its sustenance, from which its waste is continually supplied, and to which its elements ultimately return. Chemistry detects in the animal frame the same elements as enter into the composition of the earth; this fact is here figuratively expressed." In this feature of his constitution there is no natural difference between man and the "beasts of the earth," whose bodies are of the same elements.

But man possesses another feature, II. The spiritual element, not evolved from created materials, as the plants,

herbs, trees, beasts, fishes, and birds, nor even as his own physical organism, "formed of the dust of the ground," but something above all these, in which the "workmanship of the Divine architect peculiarly displayed itself as expressed in the phrase, "We will make man in our image," "as our likeness," which is a probable rendering of the Hebrew, and "He became a living soul." By this expression the flesh [Heb.] is indicated, not only the animal life, common to men and beasts, but also the higher nature of man, the rational soul, by which he is distinguished from brutes." Dr. Conant in loco. This expression serves to shew that man's assimilation to God consisted in the rational, moral, and spiritual elements which entered into his constitution, and which fitted him for the pursuits in which he was to be engaged, and for the supremacy which he was to exercise over the creation around him.

III. These distinguishing features of man's physical and moral nature, must of necessity require a sphere in which they may be exercised; and objects of attention, and interest upon which they may be employed, which will promote and perpetuate his progress in moral and spiritual excellence. For these the Creator had made suitable and ample provision. Nothing was wanting. He was surrounded by objects to delight the eye, to instruct the mind, and to enkindle in the soul the holiest emotions, and the loftiest sentiments of adoration and praise.

IV. But as an intelligent, sentient being, he is a probationer, and must be subject to such tests as Infinite Wisdom may appoint, in order to prove his fidelity and give to his moral character a dignity and power, such as it could not otherwise possess. Hence, he must be in possession of a knowledge of the Divine will, and in subjection to the Divine law. Hence, also he is endowed with perfect freedom of volition and choice. The law he is under, "is the law of love," and it is no less the "law of liberty." But like every law it must have its limitations. Here there is but a single one. "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." One act, only is forbidden; everything else is permitted. "Of the principle of obedience, no test could have been more simple and direct, or more easily apprehended. Hence it was a perfect test." Dr. Conant in loco.

Here, then, is a being having and exercising, the most perfect physical functions; controlled and directed by a soul, or spiritual nature, possessing the highest susceptibilities, in perfect harmony with God; and with his environments; the Eden of nature around him, and the most exalted spiritual experiences within him—whilst the all glorious, and beneficent Creator condescends to commune daily with him, and to lavish on him the highest marks of his loving regard. He is a holy being, hence, he is perfectly happy. Whatever therefore is here communicated to him is designed to be understood as affecting the whole man, and in all his physical, moral, and spiritual relationships. We shall be further assisted in our enquiry if we consider

V. The nature of the Divine utterance.

It is of the nature of a threatening. It speaks of danger. It is the warning voice of mercy, which foretells the penalty of disobedience. "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." It is not easy for us to apprehend what meaning would be attached to such an utterance when first presented to the minds of our first parents in their innocence. It could not however fail to impress them with a sense of awe, and a conviction that some terrible calamity would inevitably ensue, in case of any infringement of the divine command. The real meaning of the penalty must be gathered, not so much from the words themselves, as from the punishment which fell upon the offenders, after the act of disobedience had been committed; and also from the divine intimations afforded by subsequent revelations and disclosures concerning the nature and extent of the penalty attached to human transgression against the law of a just and holy God.

And yet we think it fair to assume that the language employed conveyed to the minds of our first parents a definite

conception of the nature of the penalty foreshadowed in the words "Thou shalt surely die." They would understand that one act of disobedience would at once put them into a condition in direct contrast with that which constituted their present life, a life of pure and holy enjoyment, unmarred by pain or sorrow; a life of harmonious fellowship with God, to the continuance of which there could be no impediment or interruption so long as they continued obedient to the Divine will. No explanation, however, seems to have been given by the Divine Being of the nature and extent of the penalty until the sad event had transpired as narrated at length in the 3rd. chapter. And from this narrative and the subsequent disclosures of the Divine Word, we gather that the language "surely die," is a comprehensive expression embracing the idea of death in its three-fold aspects. I. Moral and Spiritual. II. Physical. III. Eternal.

I. ITS MORAL AND SPIRITUAL ASPECT.

This was the first, immediate, and conscious effect produced by the one act of disobedience. The moral and spiritual nature of man passed into a morbid abnormal condition. It was brought under the power of evil. Hence there was experienced an "opening of the eyes," to know good and evil. "shame followed, then fear, then an attempt to" hide themselves from the presence of God; then His manifest displeasure against them, their conviction, guilt brought home, punishment more solemnly and particularly pronounced; followed by their exclusion from the peculiar delights of Eden, from the tree of life, and the sacred fellowship with God which they had hitherto enjoyed.

The moral and spiritual death consisted in the sundering of the hallowed relationships which had subsisted between the creature and the Creator, the former breaking loose from the beneficent restraint which Divine love had thrown around them, giving heed to the tempter's wiles, and to the lust of the eyes, in preference to the well understood revealed will of God. From that moment, says Dr. Conant, the result shews that in the use and control of all his natural powers, man became estranged from God, that he was no longer in conscious and happy communion with Him as the source of his spiritual life and action, and his acknowledged and trusted Sovereign." He continues, "We are not to suppose, moreover, that the fruit itself had any effect. It was the transgression of the Divine command that wrought the change. As obedience was the conscious recognition of the divine authority, and the condition of continued connection with the source of spiritual life and peace, so their disobedience was the conscious rejection of that authority, and forfeiture of spiritual life and enjoyment. Man's natural reason, with his appetites and passions, was now in the ascendant, no longer under the control and direction of that spiritual element of his nature in which he bore the image of God, and lived in happy communion with him. Hence his dread of God, and conscious guilt and shame." Holiness and happiness have henceforth departed, and as these were the prime elements of their previous conscious life, so henceforth their absence involve a condition of moral and spiritual death. Man's spiritual nature henceforth is "void and empty;" a spiritual chaos. Henceforth he is amenable to a law, in direct contrast to the original one, under which he had been placed, viz: "the law of sin and death." As summarized by the Apostle James, i. 15. the situation stands thus: "Lust having conceived, brings forth sin, and sin when completed, brings forth death."

Hence we come to consider that this expression involves also,

II. THE IDEA OF PHYSICAL DEATH.

This is the interpretation which God himself puts upon the words. Immediately upon the manifestation of "man's first disobedience," spiritual evils begin to be experienced in man's inner consciousness, succeeded by evils in his outward circumstances, the curse fell upon him, upon the serpent, the medium through which the temptation came, and upon the ground on which they trod. Sorrow and pain were experienced, and the Almighty declared "By the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto