

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Luther's Apologetical Discourses.

Translated from the German for the Christian Messenger, by Prof. D. M. Walton.

FOURTH DISCOURSE.

The Creation of the World.

VII.

In the third place scripture says that the earth was formed by a gradual advancement from the general to the particular, from the imperfect to the perfect, from the non-free to the free, ever approaching nearer to man, till she found in him the crown and goal of her formations. This is of religious significance, because from it it becomes clear that man, as the end of God's creation, was also God's true and last thought, and therefore his first thought, that God had man in view and His relation to him. Of this Natural Philosophy knows nothing, and of it there is nothing for it to know. For it is a question of religion. But that which it presupposes, the gradual advancement of earthly formations by successive stages to man, is most strikingly confirmed, and every step in their investigation is a step towards this confirmation. When in Scripture the earth is represented as first covered with water, after which the mountain-chains and continents appear, then the earth is covered with vegetation, and the water swarms with fishes and birds fly in the air, after which land-animals follow, and the whole concludes with man, it is the same development-process—only in great features and general outline, whereby only the principal traits are made prominent and the minor ones passed over—which Geological study has disclosed.

A cause of stumbling has indeed been found in the circumstance that light is represented as existing before the sun, and the sun as younger than the earth. But whatever Natural Science in general knows of these questions—and it can do little more than utter conjectures concerning them—it admits at least the probability of the scripture statement. At the present time light comes to us, indeed, through the medium of the sun. But it is known that substances can be luminous under different conditions; by an intense and sudden combination of two substances, or by the setting free of electricity. What was the character of that first light we know not; but we know that light is possible without the sun. Concerning the formation of the heavenly bodies, however, there is but one theory, which, after Kant's example (1775) the great Herschel propounded and La Place more particularly applied to our solar system,—the so called nebular theory, according to which, from a great gaseous fluid diffused throughout space, immense coils (vapor balls) were produced, which then took the form of planets, and that our Solar system was such a vapor ball, in the middle of which first the outer and then the inner planets were formed, and finally the sun, so that the sun as a distinct body would of course be younger than the earth. Of the fixed stars however and their formation nothing can be said. So that all this is consistent with itself.

There is only one thing which Natural Philosophy demands, namely, that we allow great periods of time to the creation of the world and not restrict it to six days of 24 hours each; for this were utterly impossible. In this connection it is sufficient to refer to the great coal fields, which were formed from a great vegetable world through the lxxivious agency of water, and which, for example, occupy in North America alone, according to H. Rogers, a space 6250 square miles, or which in the Saarbrück District reach down in some places 19 or 20 thousand feet below the level of the sea; or to the immense brown coal beds of a later time (as Hartig, for example, fixes the age of a huge fossilized Cypress trunk found in Siebengebirge at 3100 years—and at the present time in Siebengebirge not fewer than 13 brown-coal strata are found piled above one another—); and still it is not to be supposed that God created all this at once and then impressed upon it the appearance of a gradual becoming, and that consequently we are

deceived in our inquiries and go astray when we are convinced of the gradual origination of these formations. And indeed when we take all into account we find it necessary to admit, if not the billions of years with which the school of Lyell is so liberal, at least very great periods of time. This thus is what Geology demands of us. As to the question of the days, not even Theologians and believers in scripture are agreed,—for the reading is also of days before the sun. Whether now we understand great periods, for a thousand years with God are as one day, so that great world-days and not human days may be meant; or consider the days as only a kind of representation in which the subject is brought down to the capacity of man, the facts of the Creation-history may not be otherwise conceived of—however that is understood, this is certain: the question of the days' work concerns itself not with the days but with the work. For not the time but the fact is a matter of interest in religion. And the fact which religion emphasizes is, that God created the world by the power of his will in free love, in a gradual progress through individual formations up to man, that in him God might find the end of his creative work and bring him into a bond of spiritual fellowship with himself.

Is the world a creation of God, then is it certain that we have in it a mirror of the divine power, wisdom and goodness. Natural Science sees in it a place for the operation of natural forces and natural laws. And rightly so. But it is not this alone. In the results of these forces and laws divine attributes have been made conspicuous and divine thoughts have been realized. This religious method of contemplating the world is inwardly sound and rests on a solid basis,—it has not only a subjective but also an objective authorization—and comes no more into conflict with the scientific method of contemplating the world than does the proposition that God is the Creator of the world with the scientific investigation of its several formations. This method of contemplating the world is one which man cannot divest himself of, and without which the world would be poor and cold. It is the joy of our heart and mind that everywhere we meet with embodiments of the thought of God. Nature is a world of symbols, a rich hieroglyphic, which we should and can decipher and read. Everything visible conceals a mystery, an invisible mystery; the last mystery of all is God.

Has the world been created with reference to man, then it is not something foreign to us, but we meet in it a related life and it touches us sympathetically. We feel it: here surges a life which points to us; we are the solution of its enigma; on this account all the voices of nature—sound in the human breast and man is the tongue of creation. In his spirit the universe mirrors itself, and he utters its mystery. The word however which voices the acknowledgement of his soul should be turned to praise in his mouth, and thus should he glorify the Creator of the world.

For the Christian Messenger. College Matters.

Mr. Editor,—

In your comments upon my strictures of your hasty formula,—“if Acadia College is on the right track, Woodstock College (Institute) is surely on the wrong; but if Woodstock is right, then Acadia is wrong.”—you have challenged the correctness of one, and only one, of my statements. I think that statement is essentially correct, and that your quasi-contradiction is misleading. I said that ‘the several denominations were led to believe that unless the college which they controlled should co-operate with the Halifax University, the provincial grant would be withdrawn from the College.’ At the time of the legislating of all the chartered colleges of Nova Scotia into the paper university, an act was passed giving to each of these colleges provincial grants for the period of five years. The readers of the Christian Messenger of that year, and the delegates to the Sackville Convention, will bear witness that it was gravely and earnestly attempted to lead the Baptist denomination to believe that co-operation with Halifax University and the receipt of the provincial grant were correlatives. This statement cannot be

gainsaid. If the other denominations were not led to believe that practical affiliation and provincial grants, near and remote, were interdependent, I leave it to you, Mr. Editor, to explain how it came to pass that the Baptist body was sought to be misled.

Permit me another observation. You invite Prof. Wells to decide whether your views of the Ontario Baptists' policy is correct or not. It matters little what our esteemed brother's views may be of the policy of our brethren in Ontario, so far as the avowed object of your recent editorial is concerned. I think I have made it sufficiently clear that your dissatisfaction with the policy which preserves Acadia College in the independent exercise of her functions, derives no support, but the reverse, from the course pursued by the Colleges of Ontario, and that the position of the Woodstock Institute is quite analogous to that occupied by the Methodist and Roman Catholic Colleges of Nova Scotia. If the facts of the case led you to characterize the policy of our Ontario brethren as one of “expediency,” I think you should be merciful and indulgent toward them, as long as you adhere to the following full-blown policy of expediency for Acadia College:—“Observe carefully the drifts of educational currents in the Maritime Provinces, and in the whole Dominion; but let Baptists hold on to the course (policy) congenial to their views and sympathies, shaping their course (policy) from time to time according to the exigencies and the necessities of circumstances. . . . It may be the duty of the Baptists to favor Halifax University, or to seek its extinction, or to neither help nor hinder it?”

I take that to include, among some good things, a very rank and dangerous policy of “expediency.” It is essentially a weak policy; and I take the liberty of saying that it is the outcome of a mistaken view both of the object of the body in supporting the College, and of the means by which the institution is to command the unwavering confidence of the denomination for the future. Acadia College has entered on the second half century of its existence. If you desire to cripple her resources and influence so that her hundredth year shall find her a second-rate college instead of the first in the Maritime Provinces, continue to scatter broadcast among her supporters, your doubts whether the denomination really knows what it is about, suggest the wisdom of a policy of indecision and drift, set great store by a provincial grant even though its receipt will alienate many warm friends, count little upon the development of denominational liberality as the one thing needful to supply all of Acadia's wants, and watch the University of Halifax. I have no faith in such a policy, or such means. Acadia is our College. The denomination has a settled policy, and there is a grave responsibility resting upon you, Mr. Editor, for failing to recognize all this. Let the University of Halifax “go on her way rejoicing” it is ours to devote our labor, and care, and means to Acadia College, the Baptist College of the Maritime Provinces, and the peer of them all. Come, Mr. Editor, give a warm and helping hand to the efforts of our brethren Day, McDonald, and March, as they labor to get all our churches fully alive to their privileges and responsibilities in and by supporting all our benevolent objects, and you will pour out upon Acadia College a blessing that will increase with the years, and serve its interest now and for all time, far beyond all the gold in the Provincial treasury, or all the wisdom that now resides or will ever reside in the University of Halifax. That would be a policy in which we could all agree, a policy that all the people could understand, a policy that is good for to-day, and to-morrow, and all time, and which would lift the denomination to the plane of its privileges.

And now, Sir, while it is well known that the questions you propound to me were in full view of the denomination at the Sackville Convention, and cannot, therefore, be properly addressed to me for reply, I suppose you will not be happy till I return you an answer, however brief and imperfect. You ask: “If a legislature gives a charter to a College, is it not bound to require the college (1) to yield to the said legislature the right to inspect the work done for degrees, and (2) to veto degrees given, if it is evident they are not earned?”

To each of these questions I would answer, no. I am not ignorant of the mysticism so often thrown around this subject. Space will not permit me to say more than that a careful examination of the subject will lead any unprejudiced mind to the conclusion that a college charter is not essentially different from any other charter. Its issue by the legislature does not confer upon a certain body of men rights that inhere in the government or sovereign in any other sense or degree than does a charter to any other corporation. As in the case of other corporations, its issue is but a declaration of the object and purpose for which incorporation is sought. If the lawful exercise by any corporate body of its powers becomes inimical to the well-being of the State, the legislature is bound to interfere, but only in such an event. If the Governors and Fellows of a chartered college in the legal exercise of their powers unfit or disqualify for citizenship those who are educated under their supervision, the legislature is bound to enquire into the case and to institute remedial measures, but only in such an event. Saving the rights of persons and property, the legislature (except as specified) not only is not bound to interfere, but cannot without committing a breach of faith interfere either with the subjects of study or the granting of degrees. These matters are the business of the body corporate. The legislature may seek by all lawful means to elevate the standard of collegiate education, but it is not open to it, without a breach of faith, to intermeddle with the free and lawful exercise of chartered powers. These may or may not be exercised in a manner well adapted to promote the higher education.—That is a matter which concerns the body corporate, and the results of their own acts will fall upon their own institution. I need not say that I speak of colleges enjoying, as does Acadia, a charter in which, in these respects, the legislature reserved no rights to interfere, nor need I add that the British North America Act has put it beyond the power of the legislature of Nova Scotia to commit a breach of faith with the Governors of Acadia College, even were it so disposed.

GOVERNOR.

For the Christian Messenger. The Convention Scheme.

SECOND ARTICLE.

Earnest effort on the part of the Baptists of these Provinces is a necessity. The forces of wickedness are multiplying. The seeds of error are being sown broadcast. Some of the most favored localities have poorer districts near them, for which they are doing little or nothing at all. Meanwhile the people are receiving the propogators of false doctrine—they would receive any who would seem to care for their souls. But there is ever a movement from the poorer settlements to the richer; and they will come from the back wildernesses to the front; they will pour down from the mountains to the plains. Those churches that neglect the poorer settlements need not wonder, if in course of time they are corrupted and deluged by hordes of errists as a righteous retribution for their indifference to those for whom they should have cared in their time of need.

Some of these settlements will yet become centres of population. The railway and the factory bring about changes in this respect; and we have need to be prompt in our efforts, lest we, as in too many cases already, fall in the rear, to follow after others whom we ought to lead in every effort for the evangelization of the land.

Baptists above all people in the world should realize their duty to preach the gospel to every creature. The injunction was first laid upon a company of Baptist evangelists instructed for the work, and endowed with all necessary gifts. Baptist missionaries first spread abroad the knowledge of salvation throughout Judea, and all parts of the Roman Empire. The Lord blesses their efforts more abundantly than those of any other body of professing Christians. It is a matter of fact that in proportion to the number of men on mission fields, and the funds at their disposal, more converts are made than are reported in those of any other Christian denomination.

“American Baptists,” we are told,

“give less than one sixth of the money that is contributed in America for Foreign Missions”; and yet the aggregate of communicants at their mission stations is larger than that of all the others combined. This is significant. God honors the means he has himself originated for the salvation of sinners, and for the upbuilding of his kingdom. What results would we not achieve if we possessed the same measure of consecration, and holy zeal that characterized our brethren of the apostolic age. As has been recently affirmed, “If Baptists were as conspicuous for their giving, as they are for their adherence to Scripture truth . . . we would soon see greater blessings than that which has so signally marked their history.”

In these Maritime Provinces alone, there is a loud call for labourers. Many of our churches are suffering for want of pastoral oversight. It is hard for a Baptist Church to die; but some, even of these, are dwindling and ready, we fear, to succumb to their hard lot.

The Provincial Wesleyan a year or two ago affirmed that Baptists in some sections were uniting with other denominations. Admitting the proneness of our opponents to exaggeration, on these and kindred points, we nevertheless cannot but perceive the inevitable tendency in those places where our people are neglected by those to whom they naturally look for aid, but are regularly supplied with preaching by ministers of other denominations. If we permit churches that our fathers planted to languish and die we shall be unworthy our lineage and our faith.

Our Missionary Board seeks to foster these feeble interests. The labor pays most richly. From them we draw some of our most efficient pastors. Our city churches are largely recruited from their ranks. In them many, who have prospered in business, and who have become the munificent supporters of our benevolent work, were first imbued with the spirit of Christian liberality. Brethren, suffer the word of exhortation. Strengthen the hands of your faithful servants in their effort to send the gospel to the weak and needy.

Large portions of our country are unsupplied with what we believe to be the institutions of the gospel in their entirety. Baptism, as commanded by the Saviour, a converted church membership, a church free from hierarchical or state control, are all necessary to the realization of a church founded after Christ's command. From the first it has been our mission to enunciate and enforce the teachings of the Saviour, and still the world has need of our testimony, and must ultimately receive it. This others, who are not of us, are not unwilling to acknowledge. Take for instance the words of Bishop Smith of Kentucky, quoted by Rev. G. B. Taylor, D. D., “God in his wise providence, has permitted the rise of the various sects of Baptists for the purpose of ultimately restoring the primitive mode of baptism.”

A friend, who has been recently travelling in the northern portions of New Brunswick, writes that he met with several who were hoping for the visit of a Baptist minister, as they were anxious for baptism; and these had but recently come to an understanding of their duty. It is not enough that we scatter Bibles and tracts, the Gospel minister is also needed to help those who like the Eunuch of old, are searching for the truth.

But why need I enlarge? There are many and weighty reasons why we should not only follow the old paths, but also arouse ourselves to greater diligence in pursuing the divinely appointed way. Brethren, are we not all by our profession solemnly consecrated to God? Do we not belong to Christ? Have we not enlisted for service? The whitening fields are all around; they are calling for the reapers. We ask, we entreat you, in the name of Christ we would,—I was about to say, prostrate ourselves at your feet,—but I will not say that—for Christ does not treat his disciples as though they were his superiors—he commands—His words have the force of absolute law—and he will visit with his displeasure those who do not obey Him. We do not assume to dictate as to what you shall do, or give. You must settle that question before the Judge of all—at whose bar you shall shortly appear. Do not ask “How little may I do and satisfy my conscience”; but rather, “how much can I give for the advancement of my Redeemer's kingdom in the