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REV. DR. I. E. BILL & R. THOMSON, A. M.,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth Peace, good will toward Men."

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[For the Christian Visitor.]

GOD IS LOVE.

Hymn, C. M.

BY REV. J. D. CASEWELL.

The orb of day that brightly smiles,
The unruffled deep above;
With freshening beam our care beguiles;
And preaches God is Love.

The Earth, which golden harvests bear,
Breathes incense to her God;
And flowers, and fruits, and all things fair;
Proclaim, that God is Love.

The balmy sigh which zephyrs breathe,
Soft as the harmless dove;
And silver beams that nightly gleam;
All say, that God is Love.

The sleeping world, curtained with night,
Watch'd by bright stars above,
And angels, with serene delight;
Say, sweetly, God is Love.

When o'er the wonders of the Cross,
My thoughts delighted rove;
My ransom from unending loss,
Preaches that God is Love.

And those events that darkest seem,
Will still his goodness prove;
And from them will his brightness stream;
And preach that God is Love.

DR. D'AUBIGNE OF GENEVA.

The name of this eminent Scholar and Divine is of world-wide reputation. The following deeply interesting address delivered by him, at the inauguration of the General Assembly's College at Belfast, is replete with wholesome instruction and evangelical sentiment:—

Mr. President, Professors, Students of the Presbyterian College, and Christian Brethren,—Everything around me fills me with astonishment—Ireland, which gave birth to the devoted pioneers who penetrated, for the preaching of Christ, into our Swiss forests, full of wolves and beasts. St. Paul exclaimed, "If God be with us, who can be against us?" This Province of Ulster, my friends, is not less remarkable for its Giant's Causeway and its caves, than for its Presbyterian population, which, transforming Ireland, wherever it takes root, changes idleness into industry—instead of robbery and murder, inspires respect for life and property—instead of insurrection and rebellion, submission to the law and loyalty to the Queen—because, in place of superstition and Romish traditions, it teaches everywhere the Word and the grace of God. This fine town of Belfast, with its industry, its commerce, its factories, and its college—this new hall, for the inauguration of which I am come, and which we have just left—these professors, these students, this assembly itself, showing so deep an interest in the proceedings of this day—all amaze me. But I must say what astonishes me most is to find myself here—I scarcely know the English language, and in which, notwithstanding, I must address you. I, who live at the foot of the Alps, and have come 1,000 miles to pass one hour with you,—I who must recognize, not only among the brethren in England and Scotland, but among you, the Presbyterians of Ireland, so many more able divines than myself—men who could have added power and *clat* to this ceremony, which I can in no way bestow upon it.—I ask myself if it is indeed I who am speaking to you, or whether it is a dream. I feel among you, doctors, like a horse I saw lately joked at a railway station, who bowed his head, as if ashamed before such powerful

engines. Doubtless, you experience the same astonishment I feel at seeing me here, and I must explain the strange circumstance. [The Rev. Dr. here explained the circumstances under which he had been invited to be present on the occasion.] If I asked for the reason which fixed your choice, I can find one. You wished for a man from the city of Calvin—(applause)—Calvin, who founded the Academy of Geneva—Calvin, the great theologian, the great reformer—but alas! the giant form of Calvin which attracted you is what alarms me; for seeking for a giant, you have found a child.

The question that now suggests itself to my mind is, how can British Christians, and especially Protestants, accomplish the task which God has placed before them, not only in the United Kingdom, but throughout all the people of the universe? Oh, British Christians, you have a vocation from on high; and be well aware of it, you can only fulfil it by making use of the arms which true evangelical divinity places in your hands. But what are these arms? They are two primitive laws of our nature. First of all, there is a law in man which imposes on him submission to an infinite being. An illustrious German theologian has defined religion as consisting in an absolute dependence on God. But besides this law there is another—that of liberty—of the independence of mind with respect to all created things. Religion consists of these two essential laws—the first, the duty of obedience to God—of faith to his Word—of subjection to the Father of Spirits; the second, that of submitting all that proceeds from the creature—from man—to examination, and of rejecting all we do not find conformable to the law of God. (Hear, hear.) The greatest theologian of the British Isle, the most celebrated Archbishop of Canterbury, says, "*Ansem per fidem ad intellectum.*" Let us, then, begin by faith as the first duty of true, evangelical Christians. The greatest danger which is to be feared from it by protestants is the freedom which it gives to the human mind. Accordingly, to some, the essence of Protestantism consists in not receiving the truth as it is revealed to us, but in first submitting it to the judgment of our individual reason; therefore, they say no commandment receives any authority in Protestant nations. Everywhere we send the child to his father, the scholar to his master, the citizen to the judge in the law court. Why so? Never was an accusation more triumphantly contradicted by history. If we desire to know the different consequences of the Protestant and Romish systems in the order of socialments, let us ask where there is more submission to the law, more order, more loyalty, in Great Britain, for instance, or in France or Italy? (Hear, hear.) It is Socinus and his followers who have made reason the judge of the Scriptures, and what is not conformable to human reason is revealed in vain. They say there is not a tendency against which Protestantism has waged, and does wage, a more decided war than it does against this. Dependence, submission—this is according to Protestantism—this is the position of man with regard to God. The first act of dependence of submission, which Protestantism imposes on man in every nation, consists in coming to the Bible as the source of religion. The Bible is the only source of religion. Whence came the Reformation? From the Bible. Luther sought peace for his soul in a convent; he found it not there. He sought it in fasting, and watching, and in all the exercises of an ascetic life; he found it not there. He sought it in the writings of scholastic divines; he found it not there. It was not till having laid his hands on a folio volume, in the library of the College of Erfurt, and till he opened the book and read a passage, that the peace of God—oh! yes, the true peace of God, which

he had never been able to find—was bestowed upon him. His faith had made him free, and he proclaimed the truth to the world. Biblical theology is, then, the theology of Protestantism. Insist on it dear brethren, because the opposite system is the great danger of the British Churches at the present time. Young, noble, but incautious minds like to maintain their liberty. Conscience, they say, must be our only leader. I have heard that many times in France and in Geneva; but, dear brethren, Protestantism did not free the Scriptures from the tomb to domineer over them, but to obey them. Let us go, then, again and again to the fountain head—that is, to the Holy Scriptures. If you cut off a brook or a river from the source from which it springs, it dries up; and if you bow your head before the new rationalism, and separate Christian doctrine from its source—the Bible—then, in place of living waters, we shall only find in the British isles the barren sands of humanity. (Hear, hear.) But to address ourselves to the Bible is not enough. Respect for the sacred writings is nothing else than respect for Christ himself. To interpret the Bible not according to the Spirit of the Bible, but according to the spirit of the age—not from the meaning of the Bible, but from the meaning of the times, is to revolt against God. The principle for the interpretation of the Bible is in the Bible itself.—The upraisings of all wrong systems of theology have commenced in a departure from this.

Let us consider another duty which Protestantism prescribes to man in every nation. We must respect the Scriptures, not only as a whole, but also in detail; not only in those great teachings upon which our eternal destiny depends, but on the smallest word Scripture is a temple.—"Put off the shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." In the Romish Cathedrals you may feel the presence of awe, and be seized with a feeling of the beautiful, some great figure may strike you, and you may neglect the details; but in the temple of Scripture there is not the smallest thing which does not command our attention. God is everywhere. His train fills the temple, and the whole earth is full of His glory. In all, even in the least important parts, salutary teaching is given. The faith of the Protestant Christian must not be vague or without character. It must be decided, and it must separate clearly between light and darkness—between truth and error. Some pretend, for instance, Continental road-way Unitarians—that faith may believe indifferently that Christ is the Creator or the creature. Such a faith as that would not be an act of submission to the Most High. The faith of the Protestant Christian must be internal and living.—The Romanists, to draw people into their net, say there is more piety in the Roman Catholic Religion than in the Protestant. It is quite the contrary. The celebrated Roman controversialist, Dr. Muller, himself confessed that the culture of Protestantism is to be essentially an internal religion. So it is. Humility, love to Christ, internal religious life is far more characteristic of evangelical Christianity than of Romanism; for Romanism leaves the soul in a state of death, from the very fact that it throws upon an ecclesiastical mechanism—upon external forms—upon cisterns without water. This is no act of submission to the Most High. The faith of the Protestant Christian must respect and adore the mysteries of God. Romish controversialists assert constantly, on the Continent, at least, that Protestantism is afraid of mysteries. Strange accusation! Protestantism believes even more in the mysteries than the Roman Church. The latter weakens most of the mysteries I have just mentioned, while the Reformed Church, more than all, believes in election, the most sublime of all the mysteries, and in righteousness imputed—the

righteousness of Christ imputed to the believer by faith—a most glorious mystery. The Romish doctors reject the first, and change the second of these great mysteries into the incomprehensible doctrine of righteousness infused, as they call it. That the sinner is justified according to the eternal counsels of God, by faith in righteousness which is not his own, is indeed a mystery which no man can fathom; and yet a mystery of which the Christian soul has a perfect assurance, because God has said it, and he believes God. Absolute submission to the Father of Spirits is the first duty of man, according to the Protestant belief; this separates it from the Romish system, which, by preaching obedience to priests, and submission to human tradition, takes from God that which is due to Him alone. True authority and true obedience are not within the pale of Rome, but these characterize Protestantism. Young men who listen to me, there is a crisis in the Christian life, and especially for the student. The crisis which approaches is drawing near for you and the only means to meet it is by complete submission. I remember in my young days being in Germany tormented by rationalism more than I have just been by the stormy sea which encompass your island; and I only found peace by prostrating myself at the feet of Jesus Christ on the cross, at the feet of the Father of Spirits in His Word. Silence, obedience, adoration, are, I say, incumbent upon us.

Dear brethren, if every man finds in himself the law of absolute submission to God, he has also the consciousness of his liberty with regard to finite beings; and if the obedience of faith results from the first of these conditions, examination and decision follow from the second. Liberty and independence are essential to evangelical Christianity, and these characteristics must distinguish it from the Roman system as well as obedience and faith, "Ye are bought with a price," says the Scripture. "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not again entangled with a yoke of bondage." If our duty is to submit to the revelation of God in the Bible, necessarily we must reject all that is not conformable to that revelation; therefore, what is faith with respect to God becomes criticism with respect to man. Only let us remember, that if there is a true criticism, there is also a false one. All that God does, Satan imitates. True criticism springs from faith; false criticism starts from doubt. The former walks in the pure light of Divine revelation—the latter in the darkness of fallen intelligence. True criticism seeks above all things the truth—false criticism prefers its own researches to truth itself. The former searches, purifies, receives—the latter desolates, weakens, and destroys. True criticism, the fruit of spiritual love, produces joy, peace, faith, holiness—wrong criticism, the fruit of the flesh, produces sadness and unbelief, and loses the bonds of morality. The first is that of the Reformation—the second that of rationalism. Courage, then evangelical theologians! Grasp the sword of sound criticism and begin your combat by examination—the examination of yourselves. What was the origin of the Reformation? The struggles which took place in the cell at Erfurt, when Luther, examining himself, was terrified at finding no righteousness within—no righteousness without. That is the first criticism which Protestantism demands—knowledge of sin. This criticism will show you the special features of our nature, and correct that enthusiasm, that love of divinity in humanity, and these facts and privations which the Roman Catholic religion—a dead sea of corruption—for want of criticism, considers to be sterling piety.