

attempts, with evident intelligence and sympathy, to set forth the salient features of the new theology, he may be safely accepted as, in the main, its fair exponent.

1. What then are some of the distinguishing tenets of the new theology?

Those who are familiar with the writings of Rev. F. D. Maurice will recognize the new theology as something with which they are unfamiliar. It has become more fully allied with the doctrine of evolution, but in other respects it is largely the theology which pervades his writings. Evolution had not in his day come to the front as a ruling idea among men of science, as it has since; but although his theological views are not cast in the same mould as those of Newman Smyth and Mr. Munger, their affinity is easily recognized. It is the misfortune of those who embrace the new departure that they seldom convey their peculiar ideas with precision. Their conceptions seem to be afflicted with a congenital obscurity. They denounce vigorously the accepted views of theology, but they retain frequently the old terminology, without defining clearly the extent to which its meaning varies in their hands. Mr. Munger intimates the laudable purpose of giving to the new theology "so much definite form that it shall no longer suffer from the charge of vagueness," but it must be confessed that his success is not conspicuous. He writes with clearness and vigour, and yet an indefiniteness attaches to his conceptions as a whole which is somewhat perplexing. And when the intelligent reader has gone carefully through the author's essay, he need not be surprised if he finds it much easier to say what he rejects than to affirm definitely what he believes.

But while we are not insensible to the danger of mistake to which this peculiarity exposes us, we run no risk in signaling certain points on which the new theology which he expounds diverges widely from the old. (1) It rejects the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. The word inspiration is not discarded, but the idea which Christians ordinarily attach to it is set aside. It is easy to ascribe to the holy men who wrote the sacred books an inspiration to give to the world religious and moral truth, similar in kind to that which is ascribed to poets and men of genius in other departments, and yet deny to them any such inspiration as would clothe their productions with infallible truth and divine authority. Mr. Munger says the new theology "refuses to regard the writers as automatic organs of the Spirit—moved, indeed, but not carried outside of themselves nor separated from their own ways and conceptions," p. 16. This style of representation proceeds upon the assumption that if the Scriptures are human they must cease to be divine. It never seems to have dawned upon those who speak in this fashion that the Written, like the Incarnate, Word may be both divine and human. When this author scolds the notion that the Bible writers were "automatic organs of the Spirit," he is merely indulging in

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of which intelligent men should be ashamed. Plenary inspiration does not reduce the sacred writers to the level of mere machines who had no real part in the authorship of the books which they wrote. But in denying what no thoughtful man affirms, Munger evidently designed to reject what the Christian Church has held from the beginning, the inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures. And when he informs us that the writers were "not carried outside of themselves nor separated from their own ways and conceptions," he evidently intends to leave room in the sacred books for as much error as he may find it convenient to admit. To err is human, but we have yet to learn that it is impossible for a man under divine guidance to speak unerring truth, without for the time being ceasing to be human.

The view which the new theology holds of the nature of inspiration, of course, affects profoundly the style of interpretation which it feels itself at liberty to apply to the Holy Scriptures.

(2) It rejects the Catholic doctrine of the Atonement. The sufferings of Christ are not regarded as penal and vicarious. They have no necessary connection with the demands of law and justice in view of human sin. Maurice and Newman Smyth regard self-denial and self-surrender as the idea of sacrifice in general, and of the sacrifice of Christ in particular: and they hold that His work saves men not by expiating their sins, but by exerting a moral influence over them which leads them to manifest the same self-denying spirit. Others hold that Christ so identified Himself with men in sympathy, that He fully entered into their miseries and sins and made them His own, so that He exhibited a sorrow on account of them which had in it many of the elements of a true contrition. Some, again, represent the sufferings of Christ as the necessary result of the position in which He voluntarily placed Himself, of conflict and collision with the evil that is in the world. But all these phases of the new theology are at one in rejecting the idea that Christ satisfied the justice of God for human sins, or indeed, that there is any such attribute as justice in God which needs to be satisfied. Each in its own fashion seeks to show how the sufferings and death of Christ are fitted to exert a moral influence over men, which will lead them to a new life. Mr. Munger says the new theology holds "to the Atonement as a divine act and process of ethical and practical import—not a mystery of the distant heavens and isolated from the struggle of the world, but a comprehensible force in the actual redemption of the world from its evil," p. 9. This is his way of saying that Christ's atoning work did not satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God, but that it exerts a moral influence over men to lead them to exhibit a right character and life.

Justification necessarily undergoes a transformation corresponding to that wrought in our conceptions of the Atonement. If Christ did not satisfy the law and justice of God and obey in our stead, our justification cannot be based on His finished work. Mr. Munger accordingly informs us that he "accepts justification by faith in the sense of a faith that by its law induces an actual righteousness—a simple rational process realized in human experience," p. 9. This is justification by character and works. In the days of the Apostle Paul this simple rational process had not been discovered. He did not suppose that a man is justified by an actual righteousness which he had attained, but freely by grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. But then he did not understand the new theology.

(3) It need not surprise us to discover that while the new theology acknowledges the Trinity, it speaks in a somewhat halting fashion in reference to it. When the peculiar work assigned in Scripture to each person in the Godhead is denied or ignored, it is not likely that the doctrine of the Trinity will long continue to hold its place. Our exponent of the new theology assures us that it "holds to the Trinity, though indifferent to the Word, but not a formal or psychologically impossible Trinity." We presume that "a formal

and psychologically impossible Trinity" is the way in which the new theology describes the doctrine that there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. And when Mr. Munger can persuade himself to give more definite form to his sentiments, and free them from the

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it will probably be found that his Trinity has more affinity for the model Trinity of Sabellianism than for the personal Trinity of the Christian Church.

(4) Not the least distinctive feature of the new theology is its doctrine of future probation. It is scarcely pretended that this is gathered from the Scriptures, but a few isolated or obscure texts are laid hold of, and put upon the rack, and compelled to render a reluctant testimony in its favour. What they most appeal to is man's ethical nature, or Christian consciousness. This has been gradually developed or trained up to its present high standard under God's providential dealings and varied revelations. It is now, however, the regulative principle by which we are to be guided in judging both of the character of God and His administration of human affairs. It is assumed that His administration must in all things be such as meets our ethical approval. The fall of man and human sinfulness are not denied, but so far as the divine administration is concerned they are very much ignored. It is held that the proper way is to look upon men, not as fallen, lost and condemned already, but as children of the Heavenly Father undergoing a formative process, designed to make the best of them of which they are capable. This process never stops until character becomes fixed, either in this world or in the next. But as human free will is regarded by some of the adherents of the new theology as beyond even divine control, they appear to consider it uncertain whether character ever becomes fixed and probation ended. Munger assures us that "Probation will not be determined by the world-age, but by its own laws. It ends when character is fixed—if, indeed, we have any right to use a word so out of keeping with moral freedom—and it is not possible to attach any other bound or limit to it." "And character is fixed in evil, when all the possibilities of the universe are exhausted that would alter character," p. 43.

#### UNIVERSAL SALVATION.

is not affirmed, but it is held that no human being is given up to perish until all the resources of the universe and of God Himself have been exhausted for his salvation. It is usually held by those who embrace this theory that it is essential to a moral trial, or to the full probation of man, that the historical Christ should, at some time, be presented distinctly to the soul, either in this life or in that to come; and that probation cannot end until Christ has been consciously rejected. The Epistle to the Hebrews teaches that to neglect the great salvation is sufficient to render escape impossible, but the new theology has decided that until Christ has been consciously rejected the way of escape shall remain forever open. And as no one is likely to believe that either he or his friends have so rejected the Saviour, it is difficult to perceive wherein the practical influence of this doctrine differs from that of vulgar Universalism.

11. It is important to examine the sources from which the new theology is drawn. We should ascertain whether they are such as can inspire confidence in its peculiar teachings. We venture to think that it will be discovered that they are not. Were such a theology derived from the same rule of faith as the old theology, and were it ascertained that the rule had been interpreted according to the same general principles, it might almost lead us to despair of gaining any sure knowledge from such an ambiguous source of instruction.

There is no occasion for such uneasiness. It is not the same fountain which sends forth sweet water and bitter. The new theology differs so widely from the old, both as to the Rule of Faith and as to the manner in which the Scriptures are to be interpreted, that it is almost useless for any one to discuss with the friends of the new departure any particular article of faith, such as the Atonement or Future Probation, for a common standard of appeal seems wanting. When we encounter those who adopt another rule of faith than that to which we appeal, or who insist on principles of Biblical interpretation so diverse in their character as to make the Scriptures practically a different book, these are differences so far-reaching and fundamental that we must deal with them before we attempt to handle others. This is precisely the position in which we find ourselves placed. Our essayist informs us that, while the new theology "believes in the harmony of doctrines, it regards with suspicion what have been known as systems of doctrine, on the ground that it rejects the methods by which they are constructed," p. 8. This is candid. It is not systems to which it takes exception, but systems which differ from itself. This is probably what most intelligent persons suspected, but it is well to have it stated definitely by one who can speak with authority.

What, then, is the method to which Mr. Munger objects? How have evangelical Christians, who embrace the old theology, been accustomed to construct their systems of doctrine? They all profess to apply the inductive method to the study of Scripture. They endeavour to make a fair induction of what the Bible teaches; and when they have gathered the facts and the teachings of Scripture and arranged them according to their natural order and real connection, they have constructed their system of doctrine. The method followed is that pursued with such success in modern times by the students of physical science. The scientist goes to nature and gathers his facts from it, and Protestants, at least, have been accustomed to hold that the divine should not

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out of his own mind, but go to the Word of God to learn the system which is there revealed. This method presupposes a careful exegesis of the Scriptures. It does not recognize the propriety of building upon isolated texts whose words happen to jingle in with some preconceived notion. It requires the texts to be studied in their setting in the context, and to be read in the light shed upon them by other portions of the Word. This method, which all evangelical Protestants profess to follow, and which in reality they do follow, more or less successfully, is what the new theology rejects.

There are two points on which the new theology differs from the old in reference to the sources of Christian doctrine and duty. (1) The new theology refuses to the Holy Scriptures the position of the sole rule of faith and practice. Mr. Munger, indeed, speaks as if it followed the method of induction, but the induction is made from a very different field. The Bible is not regarded either as infallible or as the sole

informant in matters of religion. It is only one of many useful but imperfect sources of information. Mr. Munger says of the system for which he pleads: "It regards theology as an induction from the revelations of God—in the Bible, in history, in the nation, in the family, in the material creation, and in the whole length and breadth of human life," p. 8. He thus co-ordinates with the Bible, as equally authoritative sources of information, the revelations of God made "in history, in the nation, in the family, in the material creation, and in the whole length and breadth of human life." To him the Bible is not the rule of Faith and Practice, but one of many lights, all equally revelations of God, of which his reason must make the best use it can.

How, then, does the new theology come to assign to the Bible a position which, at least among Christians, is so novel?

It is largely due to the view which it takes of the relation of God to the universe. It asserts the immanence of God in the universe, and links it with the doctrine of evolution. "It admits," says Munger, "that science has anticipated theology in formulating the method of creation known as evolution, that it has corrected modern theology by suggesting a closer and more vital relation between God and creation, and so has helped it to throw off a mechanical theory and regain its forgotten theory of the divine immanence in creation," p. 26. "The divine immanence in creation" is a phrase sufficiently vague to mean very much what we construe it to signify. The force of the word merely indicates that God abides or remains within creation. If we wish to avoid the charge of vagueness and escape confusion of thought, we must elucidate the matter a little more.

There are substantially three views of the relation of God to the universe which are radically distinct. These are Pantheism, Dualism and Theism.

Pantheism holds that there is only one substance in the universe, and it is eternal, necessary and self-existent. "Substantia una et unica." This one substance reveals itself in all the phenomena vulgarly known as mind and matter. It evolves itself, by necessity, in all the successive stages of the universe, and in history, civil and ecclesiastical. All therefore that exists is God. This eternal substance which Pantheists call God is destitute of moral attributes, impersonal and comes to consciousness only in man. Sin, except as

#### A PHENOMENON OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS,

is unreal, as there is no personal God against whom it can be committed. Creation, in the strict sense, miracles and the supernatural in every form are ruled out as impossible. "Pantheism," says Van Oosterzee, "is that mode of thinking which emphatically recognizes God's immanence in the world, but denies His transcendence above it." Christian Dogmatics, p. 247.

Dualism assumes that there are two eternal necessary substances. By some they are viewed as persons opposed to each other from eternity, as the principles of good and evil; and by others these eternal substances are conceived of as related to each other as mind and matter, or as the active and passive principles.

Theism holds with Pantheism that there is only one eternal necessary substance, and, with Dualism, it distinguishes God from the universe. It asserts at once the eternal existence of God, and the distinct but dependent existence of the universe in time. It maintains that where once nothing was, there, by the will of God, the universe came to be. The Theistic conception of the relation of God to the universe assumes two forms. Deists hold that when at first God created all things He endowed His creatures with certain powers and capacities, giving to matter its properties and to rational beings free agency, and left them to themselves to work out their destiny, under the laws which he had impressed upon them. They regard the universe as a machine so perfectly constructed that it will run forever, if it is left alone. And the relation which the Most High now sustains to the universe is that of a spectator who looks on and observes how perfectly the machinery works. Deism holds God's transcendence above the world, but denies His immanence in it.

The Christian theistic conception of God's relation to the universe involves two things, viz.: (a) that when God willed the universe into being He endowed His creatures with certain properties which have a true efficiency of their own, on account of which certain things can be predicated of them which cannot be predicated of God, e.g., He can predicate extension and weight of iron, and sin and error of man. God is therefore distinct from the universe, and transcendent in relation to it. (b) God continues in existence, by the constant exercise of His power, all His creatures and all their properties. "By Him all things consist." "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." He is therefore immanent in the universe which He created. He is present not merely as a spectator, but "upholding all things by the word of His power." His constant presence and power sustains it in being, and controls and guides all its movements. The Christian doctrine has always embraced the two ideas of the transcendence and the immanence of God in reference to the universe. What, then, does Mr. Munger mean when he speaks of the immanence of God as a forgotten theory which the new theology is bringing once more to remembrance? The doctrine of the divine immanence has never been forgotten in the Church of God. It is distinctly recognized in all standard systems of theology. Living Christians have, in all ages, shown by their constant sense of dependence on God that it was a felt reality to them. It has been proclaimed all down the centuries with unbroken continuity in the hymns and prayers of God's people. It is in no sense a forgotten theory. It is evidently not this commonplace of the old theology which the essayist introduces as such an important factor in the new departure. We have seen that when he asserts the human element in the Scriptures he regards it as a denial that they are, in any supernatural sense, divine, and we have observed that to affirm

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of the Bible is, in his view, to shut out the human element, and make the writers mere "automatic organs of the Holy Spirit." For him to show that the death of Christ is "of ethical and practical import," or that it exerts a moral influence over men, is equivalent to a denial of the mystery of the expiation of human sins through the sacrifice of the Cross. It is true an intelligent child might have taught him that in none of these cases does the one exclude the other. But this seems to be a peculiarity of the thought and language of the new theology. Here by asserting the immanence of God, Mr. Munger evidently means to deny His transcendence, and to affirm that God acts only through the laws of nature. He never acts upon nature or apart from its laws.