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ART. I.—NOMINALISM AND REALISM.*

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NOT many years ago, that period of human history which, in round numbers, may be said to extend from the sixth to the sixteenth century of the Christian era, was almost universally known as, "*the Dark Ages*." Many persons, who were otherwise well informed, implicitly believed, that those unhappy ages were destitute of even a single ray of intellectual or religious light, to break the gloom of their Cimmerian darkness. The poet Coleridge, however, as early as half-a-century ago, ventured to assert, in opposition to the reigning sentiment, that "the Middle Ages are dark only to those who themselves have not light enough to read them." Yet perhaps this bold assertion touches an opposite extreme. In one sense, the Middle Ages were indeed dark, and must remain obscure to every modern student. It could not well be otherwise, than that there should be much darkness in the period that immediately succeeded the subversion of the ancient civilization of the Ro-

* REALISMUS UND NOMINALISMUS in ihrem Einfluss auf die Dogmatischen Systeme des Mittelalters. Ein Beitrag zur Dogmengeschichte und zur Geschichte der Philosophie, aus den Quellen dargestellt von H. O. Koehler, Pastor zu Gr. Vielen in Mecklenburg. Gotha, verlag von Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1858. 8vo. pp. 192.

ARTICLE VI.—"THE WISDOM OF GOD IN A MYSTERY."

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IT was a lamentation in the time of the Apostle, and so it is yet, that so many who are truly born of God, remain "babes," who must be "fed on milk." Though they are safe, because "born of the Spirit," yet the spiritual is so imperfectly developed, or they are so far from being "perfect," in Paul's sense, that they do not apprehend or appreciate "the deep things of God," though they are "freely given to us" and embodied in the words of Holy Scripture, which the Holy Ghost taught holy men to use, and put on record. "These deep things," in distinction from "the first principles of the doctrine of Christ," constitute what Paul calls "the wisdom of God in a mystery, ordained before the world unto our glory." These "spiritual things" can be received and enjoyed only by spiritual persons or powers. These Paul says, "we speak among them that are perfect;" those whose spiritual tastes and capacities, prepare them for their reception, whom he contrasts with "babes" or "carnal," who must be "fed with milk," because not able to bear or digest stronger food. We have no reason to suppose that persons of this latter class were not Christians. Still they were not "perfect," or full grown. They were not "of full age, who by reason of use, have their senses" or spiritual capacities, "exercised," trained as gymnasts "to discern good and evil." Pastors and teachers, like Paul, should always patiently, give suitable food, "milk for babes." But they should do this, with constant reference to the development and perfection of their spiritual susceptibilities. Especially should those who are set for the defence of the Gospel, be ready to "speak wisdom among the perfect," and from their own attainments, be able to show, that in the "unsearchable riches" of wisdom, there is food

for men, were they only fitted for its reception. Though we have to deal, to a large extent, with "babes and children," because "they are yet carnal and walk as men," yet we should not shrink at proper times, from saying even to "the princes of this world," however intellectually developed, that there is a wisdom, which they do not comprehend, because they are destitute of that discernment or judgment, by which alone it can be perceived; because "these things are spiritually discerned," and not by mere intellect, though mighty as archangel ruined. The reason why men of profound erudition and intense æsthetic cultivation, see no wisdom where Paul saw so much, is not in the nature of the objective truth, but in the subjective condition of the recipient faculty. It is a wisdom, "which none of the princes of this world knew" in Paul's day, and alas! there are living illustrations of the same melancholy fact in our's. The wisdom which Paul was ready always to "speak among the perfect," was not indeed "the wisdom of this world;" nevertheless it *was* wisdom, adapted to exercise the loftiest powers of man, yea, which even "the angels desire to look into," and which "in the ages to come," the manhood of our intellects, will continue to be "unsearchable." It was purposed in the "yesterday" of a past eternity: it is the great idea of "to day," and will be the theme of adoring contemplation "forever."

The large mind and heart of the apostle, though he was a model of a patient "instructor of babes," delighted to dwell on this "wisdom of God in a mystery." Having a clear spiritual intuition of it, in "the full assurance of understanding;" having embraced it, in "the full assurance of faith and hope," as an actual reality, it was his joy and the great labor of his life to bring others to the fellowship of this mystery; and his grief, that he could not make "all men see" it as he did himself. In one of his epistles, he speaks of "the great conflict," literally agony of desire, he had that his converts might come to "all riches of the full assurance of understanding," which he considers equivalent to "the acknowledgment" or full recognition of this mystery. No doubt, he often wondered at and wept over their slowness of heart; hence he prayed so much and

earnestly in reference to this point.* He was especially sad, that those who had begun aright, were "bewitched" and seduced to go back to "the beggarly elements of the world;" instead of going forward to higher attainments.

We may learn Paul's conception of the term "mystery" from the explanatory phrases he uses in connection with it, in his Epistles generally, and especially in the passage which has suggested these thoughts. He calls it that "which from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God;" "which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men:" "hid from ages and generations;" "kept secret since the world began." Here he calls it "the hidden wisdom," "ordained before the world" or ages "unto our glory." Along with these expressions, however, he connects another aspect very distinctly, viz: that it is now "made known," "manifested," "revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." It was something, therefore, perfect in the Eternal idea and intended ultimately for full development, but gradual in its evolution: "Hid in God before the world began," but which was to have the cycles of our time, as the period, and our world as the theatre of its manifestation: ordained in His wisdom "for our glory" as well as His own.

This mystery may be viewed in two aspects, of a Person and a plan, though these mutually involve each other. The plan, having primary reference, in all its parts to the person. This constitutes what in our version is called "the intent"† for which God created all things, that there might be a theatre for the gradual manifestation, of the mystery of a Person, according to an Eternal plan.

* See the prayer in Ephesians i. 15, 18,—where he prays that they may have "the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge," acknowledgment, or as before full recognition "of Him." And also Colossians i. 9. 2 Thess. ii. 11.

† This seems to be the true meaning of the particle used by the apostle, "in order that"—or "to the end that." Certainly Creation had an end, beyond the manifestation of power, or a medium through which "His Eternal power and Godhead," might be "understood," though this is one of its uses, and proves atheism or pantheism to be irrational.

So far as this mystery relates to a person, the apostle leaves us in no doubt as to his conception of it. It was "the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." The glorious forth-shining and perfect representation of the invisible and otherwise incomprehensible Jehovah. "The pillar and ground of the truth," and beyond all question, the great mystery. This divine idea, this decree or purpose,* according to the Westminster Catechism, or "the good pleasure of His will," according to Paul, is actualized or executed, in the works of Creation and Providence, but the ultimate ground of all, is the self-manifestation of the Godhead, in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord. In this "the wisdom of God in a mystery," centres itself and by this it is revealed. "The Gospel of God, which He promised afore, by the prophets," is, "concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord," in the mystery of His person in two natures, "made of the seed of David according to the flesh," or human nature, and "declared to be the Son of God, with power, by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of Holiness," or the Divine: "manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit." It is noticeable that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in deploring their incapacity to comprehend, what he was anxious to communicate, refers especially to this mystery of the Person of Christ; "of whom," he says, "we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered," or unsuited to your present capacities, "seeing ye are dull of hearing." Then, in urging them to go on to perfection, he proceeds to set forth the mystery of His Person, as prefigured in Melchisedec. From the use of this particular personage, as prefiguring the Person of Christ, we easily arrive at the generalization, that, not only all the representative personages, of the old Economy, but all its types and shadows, predictions and promises, have the same reference. The substance of all is Christ, the central object, which threw back a dim shadow, even to the gates of Eden, and then more accurate resemblances of the reality, even to "the fullness of times."

* "His Eternal purpose, according to His good pleasure, whereby, for His own glory, He hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass."

He was "the seed of the woman," "the seed of Abraham, in whom all nations were to be blessed," "the Shiloh" of Judah's line, "the Lord and Son of David." The genius of prophecy, is "the testimony of Jesus," not always fully comprehended by the prophets themselves, to whom this much was revealed, that all was to be real and actual in the future. In a word, the Person of Christ, as the manifestation of the hidden wisdom, is the end of Creation, the key of Providence, the sum of Revelation. He is "the first-born of every creature," having the right of primogeniture to the whole creation; "in all things" and over all beings "having pre-eminence;" "the head of the body, the Church," and "head over all things, to the Church;" "Alpha and Omega, beginning and end." Whatever manifestations of His infinite perfections, it may have pleased God, to make in the ages preceding our world, the Eternities of the past, and whatever it may please Him to manifest hereafter, in the Eternities of the future, this is "the good pleasure of His will, according to the purpose He has purposed in Himself," in reference to our world and our age; "The Eternal ideal ground," on which "the world as an actual, temporal world rests," as one has beautifully suggested.*

So far as "the wisdom of God in a mystery," is regarded in the aspect of a plan, it has reference in every part to this person, either in His first or second coming. "The mystery of His will, as made known," and to be accomplished in "the dispensation of the fullness of times," is the recapitulation of all things, in Him, who was "made of a woman, made under the law," "made for a little while lower than the angels," but ultimately to have all things put under Him. "The intent for which God created all things, and for which he pre-arranged all the cycles,"† was "in Christ Jesus our

* On this thought of Lange, Tayler Lewis remarks, "We have placed this sentence in italics, as containing a truth of vast importance, transcending all science, on the one hand, and all theology, that places itself in antagonism to science on the other."

† This is rendered "the Eternal purpose:" more literally, the pre-arrangement of the ages or cycles, as in Hebrews, "the ages were framed," fitted into each other, "by the word of God."—HEB. XI. 3.

Lord," that "now," in our time, "might be known, His manifold wisdom, unto principalities and powers in heavenly places, through the Church,"* the body of which this Person is the Head. "Whatsoever comes to pass:" whatsoever exists in Creation, or occurs in Providence, has reference to this purpose. All was formed, is sustained and controlled, in subordination to this end. The wheels of Providence, in the evolution of this great plan, are so "high," and their motion so slow, that even believers, amidst the clatter and clamor of secondary agencies, sometimes become impatient and distrustful. But as this plan, after being hid in God, for thousands of years, was actualized in the first manifestation of Jesus Christ in the flesh, so "in His time," He will show its consummation, in His second coming; "the regeneration," "the restitution of all things," when "the mystery of God shall be finished," according to the original idea; when the temple, made of living stones, taken from the ruins of the apostacy, in successive ages, shall be completed from foundation to top-stone: when the Bride shall be prepared for the Eternal Bridegroom and the praises of this plan and its author, shall occupy the coming Eternity, and all else be forgotten.

From this view of the meaning of the apostle in the use of these terms, we may see how fully he was justified, in saying "Howbeit we speak wisdom." We are thus able, also, to place "the wisdom of God, in the riches of the glory of this mystery," in contrast with "the wisdom of the world," in the adaptation of each, to exercise and develop the profoundest intellects. The wisdom of the world, regards nature, "the things that are made," Creation. The wisdom of God, regards the Person, "by whom and for whom, all things were created and in whom they all consist;" have their centre of unity and great End. One studies the building, the other the builder. So

* It is "a false idea that the Church is for the world, and not the world for the Church," as false in theology and the philosophy of history, as the geocentric theory distinguished from the heliocentric in astronomy. This false hypothesis, in one case, will as little explain the mystery of God's plan, as the other theory, the solar system.

again, the wisdom of the world studies history, the events or occurrences of time and their secondary agencies and human factors. The wisdom of God leads us to the knowledge of a great plan, in accordance with which, these events take place. One deals with facts, the other with ideas. In ignorance or rejection of the wisdom of God, the events of our world in the history of our race, seem like a succession of mighty abortions, from the builders of Babel down to our times; from the Nimrods of the immediately post-diluvian age, down to the Napoleons of to-day. Without the light derived from the wisdom of God, what a phantasmagoria is the past, where the glory of Egyptian wisdom, the treasures of Grecian art, and the majesty of Roman power, appear as transient figures in the field of vision, and pass away "like foam on the water." Hence, how utterly baffled is "the wisdom of the world," in attempting a satisfactory solution of the ever recurring question of the *wherefore* of the world; why it ever came into existence, and is continued, and what is to be "the end of these things." The wisdom of the world makes everything of man, and his glory. In the other wisdom, God only is great and His glory everything. In the wisdom of the world, the end of Creation and Providence, if recognized at all, is universal liberty, perfection in science, social enjoyment or civil institutions. In the wisdom of God, these are incidents, collateral results, secondary agencies. If subservient to His great plan, and used for His glory and the service of His church, perpetuated, otherwise, like besoms or axes thrown away or superseded. "All nations," except as its individuals are united to the person of Christ and become living stones in the great temple, "are less than nothing and vanity," scaffoldings to be put away, the chaff of the threshing.* In the wisdom of the world, our age, the life time of the race,

* "To the divine eye or to the mind that guided the Biblical inspiration, human politics, whether of monarchies or republics, and all human political changes in themselves considered or out of this visible relation" (to the church), "must be very insignificant things. Judged by this rule, Trojan wars, Peloponnesian wars, or the wars of Buonaparte, fall in importance below the wars of Canaan, or Hiram's sending cedar rafts to Joppa to aid Solomon in the construction of the temple."—*Taylor Lewis*.

and each of its successive circles, is magnificent and glorious. In the wisdom of God, the whole is a little episode in the eternities; our thousands of years, are "but as yesterday when it is gone, or a watch in the night." "A thousand years as one day." Our revolutions and catastrophes, so mighty to us, are but transient elevations or depressions in that flood, by which we are all carried away, by Him who "is from everlasting to everlasting." The glory of one age, and its achievements and its actors, are forgotten in the following. "All flesh is grass." Systems, schools, human projects, flourish and fade, and pass away. But "the word of the Lord," "by which we understand, the ages were framed," so that the invisible might appear in the phenomenal, the Eternal plan, "endureth forever," stretching from beginning to end; all-embracing, all-controlling.

The apostle Paul, most probably, was acquainted with the wisdom of the world. We infer from his education, and his incidental references and allusions, that he had studied what "the princes of the world" had taught. He was, therefore, prepared intelligently to compare its wisdom and the wisdom of God and thus to prefer what on examination proved excellent or superior; and after this comparison, he not only affirmed the "excellency" of this wisdom, but was willing to count all things, loss for its attainment; not only as a sinner, as we all are, who needed salvation as we all do, but as a man of intellect, who needed food for his mind he found satisfaction. in the mystery unfolded in revelation, and only there. Such ought to be the case with all who believe in the wisdom of God and would be if it were fully comprehended.

But do not professed believers in this wisdom of God, and sometimes even its chosen advocates, shrink from a comparison of it, with that of the world, in the point of view presented by the apostle, viz.: its adaptation to exercise and develop the powers of human intellect and to fill up our instinctive cravings after knowledge? This has the appearance of modesty; but may it not, in some cases, spring from a consciousness of our imperfect attainments? May it not be, from a failure to comprehend "the length, and breadth, and depth, and height" of this wisdom ourselves, that we admire, but so seldom really occupy the

attitude of the apostle in his triumphant challenge, "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" by the revelation of His own. Should we not always be ready to say to the boasters or the scoffers, who parade "philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, the elements of the world," "Howbeit we speak wisdom?" And if we are not able to do this, should we not inquire into the reasons of our incapacity, and see whether it is not our sin as well as misfortune?

In this connection, it may be well to recur to the apostle's explanation of the carnality and consequent spiritual incapacity of the Corinthians. He says, "Whereas there is among you envying and strife, and divisions or factions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" And more specifically. "While one saith I am of Paul, another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?" hence he "could not speak unto them as to spiritual, but as unto babes in Christ." In this undue magnification of unessentials and glorification of human names and authority, this exaggeration of points of difference, practically overshadowing points of agreement, have we not a portrait of the spirit of the sect, which now says, I am of Luther, I am of Calvin, I am of Wesley? And if the same essential spirit pervades alike the older, and new phrases, do not they equally evidence carnality and serve to explain the incapacity for the reception of the higher forms of spiritual truth, manifest in those who have a bigoted attachment to their own peculiarities? It seems to be a law of our nature, that absorption in trifles begets mental triviality or dwarfishness, as microscopic habits make a myops. If the body of Christ ever comes to keep "the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace," there must be an increase of spirituality, and thereby of capacity to appreciate the great vitals, in which Christians agree, and consequently a diminished estimate of points of distinction, and mere human authority. When Christians become "perfect" in Paul's sense, "strong men," they will become "one" in a blessed sense, also; the sense of the Saviour. Whatever may be the result of these yearnings after union, like "the earnest expectation of the creature," it is certain that *unity* which is a different and more

excellent thing would be the issue of greater spirituality, and deeper insight into "the wisdom of God in a mystery." Unity in the knowledge of the Son of God, the common possession of Eternal life, would bring us into fellowship with each other.*

Analogous in influence to the spirit of sect, is that of undue verbal criticism and systematizing in theology. Paul says, "We have not received the spirit which is of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the things which are freely given us of God." Just so far then, as the spirit now alluded to, is of the world, worldly—its tendency is to incapacitate us to know "the things of the Spirit." And have there not been, and are there not now, illustrations of the possibility of the combination of keenest powers of verbal criticism, and admirable capacities for systematizing, with the saddest lack of spiritual apprehension? "The letter killeth, the Spirit only giveth life." "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," largeness of view and deeper insight into the meaning of the words, which the Holy Ghost uses. "*Qui hæret in litera, hæret in cortice.*" There is both a shell and a kernel in Revelation. So too in the process of systematizing, very important in its place, there is almost necessarily, a narrowing down of the immensities, to logical forms. Hence, in giving systematic form to the truths which lie scattered through the field of Revelation, "the spirit of the world," through the love of logical symme-

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- * "Be it truth or be it fable
That in thousand books is shown,
All is but a tower of Babel
Unless love shall make them one."

Göethe as quoted by Lange.

† The special peril here is, the substitution of demonstrative or speculative faith in a beautiful and harmonious system, which commends itself to the logical faculty, as beautiful demonstrations in mathematics, for faith in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have known instances in which the ground of personal safety was placed in the "belief of the doctrine of justification by faith." Yet it is possible to believe that this is the true and only ground of salvation without exercising justifying faith, "by which we receive," not a doctrine "but a person;" the Lord Jesus Christ, "and rest upon Him alone," and not on the orthodoxy of our creed, "for salvation." So there is a true and false theory of atonement. Yet a true theory of the atonement may be held and vindicated with great logical power, without personal faith in Him who made it, and we can imagine that a man whose theory of the atonement is erroneous or defective according to Anselm, may yet be actually conciled by embracing its glorious author as his Saviour.

try, may unconsciously usurp the place of "the Spirit which is of God."* The wisdom of God is seen not only in the words which His Spirit has selected but in the mode of His teaching. Without being caught up into paradise; while consciously "in the body" and yet "in the spirit," in communion with the spirit of revelation, the words of Scripture may have a meaning, which no forms can adequately express. We do not suppose that all truth, besides all necessary to salvation, is contained in any system elaborated by ourselves or elaborated for us by our fathers. If Paul himself, the deep thinker, said, "I count not myself to have apprehended," does it not seem arrogant, to assume or assert, that the whole wisdom of God, is embodied in any of our confessions of faith or systems of theology.* We do not plead for novelties in doctrine, but we do, for deeper insight into the mind of the Spirit, in the unsearchable riches of revelation. The deep things of God, are in the field of revelation, incarnated immutably and sufficiently, in the words which the Holy Ghost taught, all there, as stars in the immensity of space. But if the increased appliances for penetrating space, have revealed what was hidden, in one department of God's works, may not deeper study and profounder insight and increased spirituality bring out more of what hitherto, even till now, has been "hidden wisdom," in the other?

There may be peril too, in such absorbing interest and even activity, in the machinery of Christianity, as leaves no time or disposition for contemplation. There is it is true an extreme of monastic seclusion and a foolish aspiration after angelic perfection and mystical absorption in the Divine. But surely there is an extreme the other way. The true secret of sustained activity may be lost, for the want of meditation. We may here apply the apostle's idea: "Thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." Healthful activity must have its root in deep spirituality, which demands meditation. An age of in-

* Since writing this, I have found an illustration in Tayler Lewis' remarks on "the gift of tongues." Speaking of "the diversities of ecstatic idea or emotion" he says, "Even the utterers could not translate it, into the common logical language of the understanding. They were spoken in the Spirit and only in the Spirit could they be understood." Here I would express my profound sense of obligation to this author, for the notes and excursus with which he has enriched his translation of Lange in Genesis

tense activity, hurry and bustle, first in disposing and then incapacitating teachers and taught, for profounder spiritual apprehension, will sooner or later degenerate into one of carnality, formalism and mechanism. There is danger that "the spirit of the world," through this plausible channel, may come into the Church and thus make our activities useless, with all their noise, by losing connection with their root. Symmetrical piety, is only attained by the harmony of the inward and outward, the activity which springs from fellowship with the things of the Spirit, working and walking in the light.* Paul was a model of earnest activity: "in labors more abundant," than any other apostle or Christian of any age. "His was," as one says, "the calmness of intensity, the nature of the human mind, forbidding it to be more and the character of the individual forbidding it to be less." But this marvellous activity, was prompted and sustained by deep acquaintance with the mystery of God, spiritual apprehensions of spiritual things, by which he judged all things and all forms of professed wisdom, and yet was judged by no man, and could be understood and imitated only by those who had drunk deep from the same fountain.

We are persuaded that the best antidote to the spirit of sect and the best means of promoting genuine catholicity of feeling; the best corrective of undue literalizing and systematizing, would be found in deeper study of this "wisdom of God in a mystery." So too the person who has laid hold of this great plan of God, and has it entrenched in his convictions, and feels himself privileged to be a worker together with God, will be a patient and active worker, in any sphere however humble whether his visible influence be great or small. Likewise he will be in little danger of being plundered of the steadfastness of his faith, or diverted from his patient labors by the plausibilities of human "philosophy and vain deceit." He will not be moved from his steadfast hope, by the hosannas offered to

* In the Spirit breathed and the utterances made, in some of our popular conventions, there is enough to awaken apprehensions on this point, among thoughtful minds. Yet there is so much to commend in the zeal and earnestness of such persons, that it is hard to protest, and still harder to oppose. It is to be hoped, that while some are called to work the machinery, there are others less noticed, that are faithful in pleading for the power of God.

the science of the age and the discoveries of men, who are weaving the spider's web or hatching the egg of the cockatrice in popular literature. With full conviction in his understanding and faith in his heart, as to the objective truth and infinite excellence of Revelation, he can smile with compassion, and will need grace to keep him, from a feeling of derision in view of the cavils and "higher criticism" of the age, which would legislate from the world a personal Jehovah and from the word a personal manifestation of God in the flesh, the modern anti-christ, "denying the Father and the Son." He will be prepared for even the incarnation of "the mystery of iniquity," which we are led to expect will be coincident with the last appearing of the glory of the great God even our Saviour and the full actualization of "the wisdom of God in a mystery." In the "perilous times" yet to come, the day of trial when that wicked shall be revealed, "whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and deceivableness of unrighteousness," by means of perishing objects, plausibilities addressed to the taste or ambition of men, those only will stand the test, who are vitally united to the person of Christ, "rooted and built up in him," "steadfast by faith." Others, with no such anchorage, childishly delighted with mere forms or fighting for unessentials, will go with the current and course and spirit of the world, whatever direction it may hereafter assume. As "the mystery of godliness," in its eminent sense is the person of Christ, so, in the sense of personal salvation, it is vital union to Him, through the medium of the word and a participation of His life, by the power of His indwelling Spirit. "Christ in us the hope of glory."