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## **HENRY WARD BEECHER.**

In a recent issue we called attention to Mr. B.'s theology, criticizing it sharply, but not unkindly. A reader of the TOWER thinks we were misinformed through the meagre press reports of Mr. B.'s recent utterances before the Congregational Association, and has kindly sent us a full report of the same, revised and corrected by Mr. B. himself. It is our desire to do justice to all. We have examined said reports and here make some extracts and comments.

Mr. B. says: "I believe miracles are possible now; they were not only possible, but real, in the times gone by – especially the two great miracles – the miraculous conception of Christ and his resurrection from the dead. When I give those up, the two columns on which the house stands will have to fall to the ground."

On the subject of the atonement he says: "I am accustomed to say that Christ is in himself the Atonement; that he is set forth in his life, teaching, suffering, death, resurrection and heavenly glory as empowered to FORGIVE SIN, and to transform men into a new and nobler life who know sin, and accept him in full and loving trust." "The Scriptures declare that the sufferings of Christ SECURED the remission of sins." "The Apostles continually point to Christ's sufferings. They inspire hope because Christ has suffered. They include in their commission that their joyful errand is to announce remission of sins BECAUSE of Christ's work." "I regard the statement in Rom. 3:20-26 as covering the ground which I hold, and as including all that is known." [Please read.]

If we consider Mr. B. from the standpoint of these remarks alone, we should have some reason to say that he is sound on the subject of redemption through the blood of Christ. But when we notice that throughout the whole statement of his views, the oft

repeated Scriptural terms – ransom, bought, redeemed, propitiation (satisfaction) – are conspicuously absent from his confession of faith; that in the statement quoted he refers to the sufferings and work of Christ as the cause of the remission of sins; and that he says that nowhere does he find in Scripture statements of why the sufferings of Christ were necessary, or how they opened a way for sinners, it causes us still to doubt whether he appreciates the value of Christ's death as a satisfaction for sins, and causes the less wonder that reporters never correctly represent his views.

We are still in doubt as to whether Mr. B. believes that "Christ died for our sins;" that he "gave himself a ransom for all;" that we were "bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ." We wonder from his own expression whether he believes the text he quoted (Rom. 3:20-26) as covering the ground which he holds. Does it cover all and more than he believes, when it says of Jesus, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation (appeasement or satisfaction) through FAITH IN HIS BLOOD to declare his righteousness for (in) the remission of sins that are past"?

Again, Mr. B. says: "Man is a being created in imperfection, and seeking a full development. Second, I believe him to be sinful." "No man ever lived, and no man ever will live, that is only a man that was not a sinner." Thus he charges the sin to the Creator and not to Adam, through whom the Scriptures affirm all were made sinners, and on account of whose disobedience all were condemned. (Rom. 5:18,19.) This Scripture doctrine of hereditary taint and condemnation he characterizes as "spiritual barbarism" (page 5), while on page 20 he makes what seems to our mind a complete contradiction of this when he says, "It is far easier for some to rise than others. Heredity has a powerful influence."

We think we see the cause of this stumbling in Mr. B.'s case. As a man he is noble, fearless, reasonable and benevolent. We see

him struggling manfully with the theology of to-day, vainly endeavoring to patch it up, and make it conform to his sense of justice and benevolence. Personally we can but admire and love such a character, but we would that he, and all such, would lay aside all theological creeds and begin afresh the study of these subjects, using God's Word as the only standard.

We suggest that he might find, as we have, that God CREATED only our first parents, and that they were perfect and sinless as narrated in Scripture. That our imperfection, and consequent sin through inability to observe God's perfect law, is chargeable, not to God's having imperfectly created our first parents or ourselves, but to the fact that we derive our existence in a natural way from Adam and Eve since their fall by God's arrangement, and hence we have the hereditary taint and imperfection originally from Adam, increased or decreased by each generation, but without hope of ever being able to extricate ourselves from this condition of sin and death.

With this view it is easy to see why Christ died. It is easy to see that he came into the world, not to patch up God's imperfect creation and help to get it into good shape, but he came into the world to redeem from sin and its specified punishment – death – the race which, in its progenitor, God had created perfect and upright in his own moral likeness, but which, through sin, had lost all right to life. Since Jesus paid the very penalty which was against all – death, the sacrificing of his perfect humanity – how clear it is that all men are redeemed, or bought back from death, and re-established in a right to life (resurrection) through the ransom price given by our substitute, even the precious (valuable) blood (life) of Christ, which was "shed for the remission of sins that are past" – Adamic sins.

How much in harmony with this are the statements of Rom. 5:12,18,19. "By one man sin entered into the world and death by (as

a result of) sin; and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned." "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation (condemning them as unworthy of life), EVEN SO by the righteousness of one (Jesus) the free gift came upon (to) all men, unto justification of life. (Life became a free gift because we had as a race forfeited our right to the life originally given to Adam.) For as by one man's disobedience many (all) were made sinners, so by the obedience (even unto death – Phil. 2:8) of one shall many be made righteous." Paul regarded this fact that God had condemned all in Adam and justified all in Christ as a master piece of wisdom, and we should so mould our faith according to God's Word as to have it so in our estimation. If our theology does not make it appear so, we should conclude that something is wrong with our theology, and at once set about the prayerful closet study of the Bible to have it made right. God will reveal his gloriously harmonious plan to every diligent and fully consecrated searcher. "Light is sown for the righteous."

If Mr. B. considers himself misstated, and desires to correct our present understanding of his views, we shall be glad to furnish him as much space in a future issue as this article occupies. "Let God be true."

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