

Antichrist; or the Spirit of Sect and Schism

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PREFACE

The subject of the following tract has been partially presented, in three different places, during the course of the past year, from the pulpit; and in each case a call was made for its publication. It is now issued accordingly, with new and more complete preparation, in its present form.

A review of my work on the "Mystical Presence," which has appeared in the last number of the "Princeton Biblical Repertory," attributed to the pen of Dr. Hodge, makes it proper for me to say a word here of my relation to Schleiermacher, with whose whole system that article has found it convenient to invest me, in the way of borrowed drapery, for the purpose of bringing my theology into discredit.

I have read Schleiermacher some, and consider him certainly a genius of the very highest order in the modern theological world. But I am not aware at all of having taken him, in any sense slavishly, for my master and guide. I am not so foolish, indeed, as to set up for an *original* in Christian science; the most I lay claim to is the exercise of some proper independence in thinking after others; and I am ready to acknowledge always my obligations, in this way, to the great organs of theological knowledge, wherever they may come in my way. I am debtor thus, with lasting gratitude, both to the English and the Germans, both to Princeton and Berlin. So, no doubt, I owe much to Schleiermacher. But it is simply in the way, in which all the evangelical thinking of Germany, at this time, is, more or less, impregnated with the deep suggestive power of his thoughts. Schleiermacher, it is well known, left no school behind him, in the strict sense of the word. But he left behind him a vast number of prolific ideas, which have taken root in other minds, and shot up in different spiritual creations, that own no farther common bond among themselves, and no fixed dependence whatever on his system as a whole. Such men as Neander,

Nitzsch, Julius Müller, Dorner, Richard Rothe, Ullmann, Umbreit, &c., all feel and own his genial influence, though in very different ways; just as the influence of Coleridge is felt, in England and this country, by hundreds perhaps, who have no other connection whatever as members of a common school. It is not possible to come under the influence of German theology at all, without some participation at the same time, indirectly at least, in the workings of Schleiermacher's mind.

But Schleiermacher was not orthodox; his system, as it is called, ran out, in his own hand, into gross and dangerous errors. Granted. It is allowed, on all hands, by those who most honor his memory. Does it follow still, however, that all his thinking was for this reason false, or that no part of it can be turned to account in such a way as to leave his errors behind? Princeton, I would say respectfully, has been too apt to deal in this sort of logic. At one time, all sympathy with the mind of Coleridge is denounced, because Coleridge himself was an admirer of Schelling, and an eater of opium; at another, the pantheism of Hegel is made the burden of the sweeping question, Can any good thing come out of Germany? I mean no apology for Schelling, Coleridge or Hegel; but such indiscriminate judgments serve not, in the end, the cause, either of religion or science. They are moreover particularly inappropriate to the case immediately in hand. Schleiermacher's ideas have already entered, as we have just seen, into various theological tendencies and systems, quite different at many points from his own. What could well be more unreasonable, in this case, than to charge all these with the errors of Schleiermacher himself, as necessarily involved in such correspondence? The "Repertory" might just as well denounce the whole system of Origen, on account of its acknowledged faults, and charge these as necessary consequences on all the great and good church fathers, who walked more or less in the light of his powerful mind, during the fourth and fifth centuries.

Let us be just to the memory of Schleiermacher. He stood in the bosom of a generation, which he found wholly destitute of faith in Christianity. Penetrated himself with the persuasion of its divine character, he sought to enforce its claims to rational respect, in the face of the learned and polite infidelity with which he was surrounded. In this mission his life was not passed without effect. It stands intimately associated with the process of theological regeneration, which is now going forward in the German church. Is it much to be wondered at, however, that he himself, in the circumstances mentioned, should not have been able to clear himself fully of the rationalistic connections in which he stood; or that his own ideas, in many cases, should be found leaving him behind, when brought to vegetate and expand, under more favorable relations, in other minds? Few of his disciples occupy now his own ground.*

* The great feature of Schleiermacher's thinking, is commonly considered to be his tendency to resolve religion into a system of subjectivity. In this view, he stands opposed to Hegel, whose philosophy makes all rather of the objective. Dr. Hodge then is rather wide of the mark, when he holds him up as the author of what he calls, in his review of "Bushnell on Christian Nurture," the German philosophical form of ritual or church Christianity. No doubt some of his ideas have had a wholesome influence, in this direction. But Schleiermacher is one of the last men to be charged with a disposition to trust in rites and forms. As to Neander, his style of thinking is unchurchly, almost to the extreme of Quakerism itself—a sore fault in that great master of church history.

This charge of holding Schleiermacher's system, brought against me by Dr. Hodge, has reference mainly, it seems, to two ideas, which run through the present tract as well as the "Mystical Presence." First, the *person* of Christ is made to be the ultimate fact of Christianity, rather than his doctrine merely, or work; secondly, the supernatural life which this included, is represented as coming through him into *organic* union with the life of nature, for the redemption of the world. But surely it is not necessary that either of these ideas should remain bound to the Rationalism and Sabellianism, which are charged by Dr. Hodge on the theory of Schleiermacher himself. To my mind at least, they fall in much more easily with the full doctrine of the Athanasian creed; and it is in this form generally, if not universally, that they come into view, in what may now be called, the reigning evangelical theology of Germany. This may be seen in the admirable article from Ullmann, which I have prefixed as a preliminary essay to my work on the "Mystical Presence;" where the posture of Schleiermacher in regard to Christianity is properly appreciated, while at the same time it is *condemned* as inadequate and unsatisfactory, on the score of its not doing justice to the ideas of sin and atonement; in consequence of which the whole theory is carried forward to higher and more orthodox ground. Still Ullmann is full throughout of the two great thoughts already mentioned, not dreaming, as it would seem, of any difficulty in the way of holding them in such form. In the January number of the *Studien und Kritiken*, for the present year, he has a fine article on the theological position of this widely influential journal, with which he has been connected for so many years, bearing directly and strongly on this very point. The theology, in whose service he and his colleagues stand, and in which he sees more and more the central movement of the age, he defines as resting in a new way, on the "ground-fact of Christianity, that God was *in Christ* reconciling the world to himself." All is made to hang on the mystery of the incarnation. "Christianity, more than before, is apprehended as *life*; as the life in which God and humanity are first fully united in an organic way, and thus a new principle is furnished for the restoration and completion of man's nature; and for this very reason, also, more than was the case ever before, the *person* of the Redeemer is recognized in its *central*, all conditioning, and all pervading *significance*, so that from this as its great spiritual heart, the Christian system is made to flow, in the living union of its parts."

Besides fortifying myself here with the preliminary essay, borrowed from Ullmann, I had taken all proper pains, as I thought, in the body of my work itself, to show that I stood in no fellowship, either with the errors of Schleiermacher on the one hand, or with those of Hegel on the other. I have been somewhat surprised, I confess, that in spite of all these precautions, I am set down by Dr. Hodge as a simple borrower of some "cast-off clothes" of the first, with a rag here and there perhaps from the second, just as though no such care whatever had been taken to prevent this very wrong. The only natural construction to be put on this is, that Dr. Hodge holds me incapable of seeing clearly to what issue my system necessarily runs, and feels himself authorized accordingly to load it with all these as he has them clearly in his own mind. Even in that case, however, he should have given me the full benefit of my ignorance, by noticing at least the honest endeavors it has made to keep clear of these errors. And how does it stand then with Ullmann? Is he too mistaken, in supposing that the theology of which he makes so much account, can by

any possibility be sundered from the rationalistic Sabellianism of Schleiermacher, or the pantheistic Mysticism of the middle ages? And must we believe the same thing of all his colleagues and associates, as represented in the *Studien und Kritiken*? Such would seem to be the opinion of Dr. Hodge.

But let us now, for a moment, look a little more closely at the two theological ideas which have been named, that we may see for ourselves how far this judgment is entitled to our respect. The case is such, it seems to me, that all may very easily bring it, in their own minds, to a satisfactory solution.

Take the first view, by which Christ's *person* is made the central fact of Christianity. Can any one see, how this should remain necessarily wedded to Schleiermacher's defective doctrine of the Trinity; and not rather acquire its highest force, when associated, as it is in the hands of Dorner, Ullmann, and Rothe, with the ancient faith of the church? For my own part, I know no more overwhelming argument against all Socinianism and Unitarianism, than the "History of the Doctrine of Christ's Person" as handled by Dorner. So also I can easily understand Rothe, that great master of Christian speculation, and sympathize with him too as speaking in good faith, when he says: "The foundation of all my thinking. I can honestly say, is the simple Christian faith, as it has ruled the world for eighteen hundred years. This is for me the last certainty, for which I am ready to sacrifice, unhesitatingly and cheerfully, every other show of knowledge that may stand in its way. I know no firm ground besides, on which to cast the anchor, as of my whole human existence in general, so also of my thinking in particular, save the historical manifestation which bears the holy name of Jesus Christ. This is for me the inviolable all-holiest of humanity, the highest that has ever entered the consciousness of man, and a glorious sunrise in history from which alone all other objects derive light."* In proportion precisely as the person of Christ is felt, in this way, to be the all in all of the gospel, we must be urged, it seems to me, to make the highest account of the history of the incarnation, as the only proper support of such world-momentous weight. It is just what is needed, to give to every article of the old Apostles' Creed its full significance and proper majestic intonation. Nor is it easy to see certainly, how it should wrong in the least a single function or act of Christ, as concerned in our salvation. It disturbs not necessarily the orthodox ideas of atonement, imputation, justification, the agency of the Spirit, &c.; but only provides for them a suitable basis in the deep Christological reality which lies beyond. It rejects neither the doctrine of Christ nor his work, but simply resolves their *value* into the constitution of his life. Can it impair at all the dignity of his prophetic, priestly, or kingly offices, to say that all these serve merely to unfold the full import of the "grace and truth," previously comprehended in his mediatorial person? Is it any more difficult in the end to combine the two views into one system, than it is to unite the doctrinal scheme of St. Paul with the more contemplative theology of St. John?

And then, as to the other idea, immediately flowing from the first. Will it be pretended, that the conception of an *organic* union between the natural and the

* Theologische Ethik. Preface.

supernatural, through the person of Christ, is not capable of being joined with full faith in the doctrine of his separate divinity and the reality of the incarnation? It is only in connection with such faith, it appears to me, that it can be steadily and satisfactorily held at all. Or must we be told, that God can come into no real union of this sort with the world, and that every imagination of the kind runs out ultimately to Naturalism or Pantheism? So Dr. Hodge appears to think and affirm. He objects to all such expressions, as that the divine has become human or the supernatural natural; and says that the view of a historical incorporation of the power of Christ's life, by the Spirit, with the actual constitution of the world, tends to destroy the doctrine of the Trinity, and leaves no room especially for the objective personal existence of the Holy Ghost. But now, is not this virtually to deny the fact of the incarnation itself? Either the supernatural entered into organic, that is, real and historical union, with the natural, in the person of Christ, or we must say of the whole mystery, that it was an optical illusion simply, or at most a passing theophany in the style of the Old Testament. The difference between such a theophany and a real incarnation, does not depend certainly on the measure of mere duration in the two cases. It rests altogether in this, that the last involves a true organic entrance into the stream of the world's life, which the other does not. And so it follows, that Christianity too is the perpetual presence of the same new creation, historically at work in the Church, and gradually assimilating the world into its own nature. This involves no such resolution of the Christian life into the force of a more natural law, as Dr. Hodge presumes to charge upon the whole theory. The difference between Adam and Christ, the old creation and the new, is still very wide, as I have endeavored at least always to show, in the "Mystical Presence." Adam was a "living soul," says the apostle; Christ "a quickening spirit." It is the *personality* of Christ precisely, as an active, conscious, all-present fountain of life, and not his mere nature as in the case of Adam, that carries forward supernaturally, from age to age, the life of his people under the same free personal form.

The ancient church fathers abound with this view, of the organic union of the divine life with the human in Christ; and through him in the Church, as lying at the foundation of all Christianity. Particularly is this the case with those, who occupy that most brilliant period in the history of theology, which immediately followed the Sabellian and Arian heresies. Such men as Athanasius, the Gregories, and Basil, plant themselves continually on this high ground, as the only secure platform of the Christian faith and salvation. They insist clearly on the distinction between the show and the reality of an incarnation. To make Christ a mere theophany or avater [*sic*], involved, to their apprehension, the overthrow of the gospel. They felt too, and say over and over again, that the incarnation was of force, for the race, and not simply for the single person of Christ himself. They speak of him always, not as the cause merely, but as the *principle* of the new creation, which is represented accordingly as flowing organically from his person, onward to the last resurrection. Dr. Hodge indeed declares the theory to be a departure from the faith of the universal Church; but without going to the original sources themselves, any one may easily see the contrary, who will take the trouble of reading what is exhibited on the subject by Dorner, in his Christology. "Not only one or two, but *all* the most distinguished church fathers," he tells us, "show one mind in regard to the real,

living person of the incarnate Word. With one voice they agree, that the personality of Christ has not simply a limited force, such as any other historical personality may claim, but that it holds rather an *essential* relation to the *whole race*; for which reason only, this person, though single in itself, is made the *object of an article of faith*, as of abiding and everlasting significance for all. Whether it be expressed, that he is the archetype, after whose image as existing in God, Adam was formed, and so our entire humanity; or that he is the principle, ἀρχη, for the whole new creation, in which first the old is made complete; or that he is the ἀπαρχη of the entire human mass, united to its substance, with all-pervading power; or that he is the everlasting head of humanity, himself a member of it indeed, but by the complete union of the divine and human in his person, at the same time, the plastic, organizing principle also, the universal soul, of its general organism; and on the other hand such a *head*, conveying life to all, only by being also in truth a *member*, essentially incorporated into this organism—of such universal significance, only in virtue of his individual personality, as comprehending the presence of the divine itself in a real way: however the general view, we say, might be expressed, one thing is certain, that the Church *in all this continued simply in the track of the apostolic faith.*”*

Dr. Hodge charges me with Eutychianism, because I affirm the divine and human natures to have become so united in Christ, as to constitute one undivided life. The proof, as he gives it, is short; one life, he tells us, is only another word for one nature or φύσις, under which term Eutyches taught such a union of the two sides of our Savior’s person as in fact reduced his humanity to a mere show; whence I am made to teach the same thing, or at least something no better. Words here, as we all know, are of most precarious force. I can only say that for me, *life* is not the same thing with nature, in the hypostatical mystery. I use the term rather to express, what I conceive to be involved in the idea of personality. But now, without pressing terms at all, is it not but too plain from the whole form and tenor of his thinking, that Dr. Hodge himself (I would speak it respectfully) stands fully in the system of Nestorius, by which the life of Christ was so divided as to fall asunder really into two persons? The constitution of his being was such as to involve, in his view, two lives; by which he must mean, of course, two forms of consciousness, that is, two subjects of thought and will, mechanically joined together in what he denominates the single person. But what is personality, if it be capable of this broad dualism? Is it not a unity, by its very conception, representing in the form of consciousness the inmost life of its subject? In what sense can the union of the two natures in Christ be *hypostatical*, if both are not brought to meet and rest in a strictly

* Entwicklungsgeschichte der Lehre von der Person Christi. p. 78, 79. First edition.—In the second greatly enlarged edition, the authorities are given in full, p. 837–840. 940–962. Ο λογος ενηθροωπησεν, says Athanasius, ινα ημεις θεοποιηθωμεν. Through the body of Christ, a divine life is conveyed into our bodies, making them immortal. They describe him as τον ολικον, and not merely τον τινα ανθρωπον, homo *universalis*, and not simply *singularis*. For one who has come to take any inward interest in the subject, it is indeed refreshing to commune with the deep christological ideas of this old patristic divinity. Better *such* mysticism, a thousand times, than the barren abstractions, which have taken the place of it, in much at least of what is called popular theology at the present day.

common centre? Would Dr Hodge admit a strict *ενωσις* in the case, at all, instead of the mere *συναφεια* of Nestorius?

His general theology, as presented in this article, if I understand it rightly, implies the contrary. It carries a decidedly Nestorianizing aspect throughout. This is shown particularly in what may be termed the bald abstraction, in which all doctrinal ideas are made to stand. The Trinity is taken as a logical formula, rather than a living revelation of God through Jesus Christ. The relation of God to the world, is that of an artificer over against the mechanism of his own work. The last principle of things, is an outward decree, which it is his business to execute in a like outward way. Man is no organic whole, evolving itself as a single process from first to last, but a vast multitude of living units placed on the same theatre, by successive generations, for moral trial. God imputes the sin of Adam to his posterity, not on the ground of any real unity of life between the parties, but purely of his own sovereign pleasure, just as he might have imputed the sin of the fallen angels to men, if he had thought proper. It is in virtue of his own arbitrary covenant simply, that it is said, metaphorically, "All mankind descending from Adam by ordinary generation *sinned IN HIM*, and *fell with him*, in his first transgression." They fell not so in the actual reality of life, but only in God's purpose and plan. Parallel with this mechanism of the curse, runs the mechanism also of redemption. The incarnation is an expedient, *contrived* to solve the problem of the atonement, and must be carefully held aloof from the whole process of the world's history under any other view, lest it should lose this "ex machina" character. Why it should have been delayed four thousand years, or why its action since should have been suspended on the common laws of our life in such a way as to move at so slow a rate over the face of the globe is not clear; such however has been the divine will. After all, no absolutely new order of life has been introduced into the world by the occasion. The Old Testament saints stood substantially on the same ground, as to consciousness of and inward relation to God, with the saints of the New Testament; though the least of these last *is* said to be more than the greatest of the first. The person of Christ itself, as such, forms not the specific revelation of the gospel, but simply his word and work as instrumentally disclosed through its agency. Divinity and humanity were indeed united in his life, but not in such a way as to be conjointly concerned at all in the same process of birth, growth, affection, work, suffering, and death. The humanity moreover, in this case, stood in no organic relation to our human life generally; it was simply the theophanic form, in which it was thought good that the Word should at this time appear. The second Adam, thus constituted, was made our representative again, like the first, by pure covenant and decree, and not on the ground at all of any real inward qualification he had, by the constitution of his person, to become a new organic root for the race. He was in truth no such root whatever, but the outward author simply of a redemption, which is to be made over to his people in a foreign way. Inspiration here, as before, rests on no life-relation established between the parties; to suppose any thing of this sort, is to fall, we are gravely told, into the error of mediate justification, as taught by Placaeus! The virtue of the sacrifice on Calvary is made over to us by sheer divine thought, just as we might have had the benefit of some similar sacrifice, for aught we can see to the contrary, had God been pleased to

order it in some other nature, and on some other planet altogether. Christ, now in heaven, is bound immovably, so far as his human nature is concerned, to the right hand of God, under the same general limitations that attach to our present existence in time and space; and communicates with the world, only as he did before his incarnation, in his divine nature or by the Spirit as his substitute and proxy. To conceive of him as present personally in the Church, εν πνευματι, under a peculiar mystical subsistence, of which the Holy Ghost is the medium, is said to involve virtually a denial of the objective personal existence of the Holy Ghost. Believers are indeed mystically united with Christ, as the Church has always believed; but only by the indwelling influence of the Spirit, as a wholly distinct agent; which moreover dwelt in good men, before Christ came, precisely in the same way, and is not to be regarded at all as coming into any new form of revelation for men in consequence of the Mediatorial mystery. Our mystical union with Christ in this view, is just like our mystical union at last with Moses, Abraham, and Isaiah, the animating life simply of one and the same Spirit which has dwelt in all. Dr. Hodge finds no particular mystery in the marriage relation, as noticed in Eph. V. 22–33, and just as little of course in Christ's relation to the Church, of which it is there made the type; the very judgment, which Calvin solemnly pronounced, in this case, preposterous and irreverently rash.

Such appears to me to be the general character of this theological scheme, as presented in the Repertory. I have tried to make the picture, not a caricature, but a bold outline simply of the system, as it shows itself to my mind. In view of the whole, I can only say: If *this* be Calvinistic orthodoxy, my soul, come not thou into its secret, and unto its assembly, mine honor, be not thou united.*

This is not the place, of course, to notice the argument of the article on the sacramental question, as it stands connected in the original proper faith of the Reformed or Calvinistic Church. Let it suffice to say, that so far as it may seem to have force, against the statements of the "Mystical Presence," it is by confounding two different things, which are there kept carefully distinct; the *substance* of Calvin's doctrine namely, and the scientific *form* into which I have tried to cast it, for the very purpose of escaping difficulties and contradictions that are acknowledged to accompany it as usually stated. What does it prove against the first and most material part of the work, to show that the second is not in full keeping with Calvin's

* The Rev. Albert Barnes, in his "Defence," representing New School Presbyterianism, as it is called, and the general divinity I suppose of New England, mentions three general theories of our relation to Adam (p. 196–218). First, the doctrine of "the abler Calvinistic writers," such as Edwards, Boston, Stapfer, Calvin himself, &c., that the human race is involved in Adam's condemnation, on the ground of a *real union* between them as the root and branches of a common life. Secondly, the doctrine of Princeton and the Biblical Repertory, that this is by mere arbitrary sovereign imputation. Thirdly, the view that simply admits the fact of our general human sinfulness, without any attempt to explain it. Mr. Barnes rejects both the two first views, and holds to the last. But speaking of the second, he says: "Whatever may be the defects of the old system, it has manifestly many advantages over this. It has the merit of consistency. It retains the Scripture use of language. It uses words as they are employed in common life. So the profound mind of Edwards saw; and greatly as I dislike that system, it has so many *consistencies* over that now under notice, that I should greatly prefer it to that which in our time has supplanted it."

position as a whole? That is assumed and confessed, in the book itself. The scientific statement there given, is a mere essay towards a satisfactory vindication of the sense contained in the old doctrine. If it should be found unsuccessful, let it perish. This can never change however the nature of the old doctrine itself. There it stands still, a matter of pure history, in all its force. Dr. Hodge has not shown at all, that Calvin and the Calvinistic symbols do not teach a real participation of believers in the life of Christ, by the Lord's Supper. The evidence of the contrary, as presented in the "Mystical Presence," is not disturbed or unsettled in the least, as it seems to me, by all he has said. It is agreed, by the most competent judges, that Calvin held in substance the same mystery that was taught by Luther, differing from him only as to the mode of its occurrence. This clearly too was his own judgment. He signed the Augsburg Confession, as this was accepted also in the beginning by the entire *German Reformed Church*.*

J.W.N.

Mercersburg, May, 1848.

* Dr. Hodge regrets that I should have surrendered myself so far to German modes of thinking. But am I not a teacher in the German church, and as such bound, in common honesty, to cultivate a proper connection with the theological life of Germany, as well as with that of Scotland and New England? Or is it meant seriously, that the *whole* evangelical theology of that land is false, so far as it may vary from our common English tradition? And yet at this very time a scheme is in progress in Scotland itself, and under the auspices as it would seem of all sections of the Scotch church, for a wholesale transfer of this same evangelical German divinity, into English form, and for English use! Surely it is high time for the Princeton Repertory to adopt a less summary tone, in disposing of its merits.