

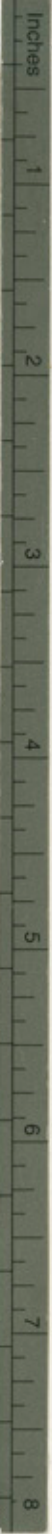
Answer to or remarks upon
N. Y. Herald's Editorial entitled

Our Heretic

Place & date of delivery unknown

no 70

Subject
our Heretic



James J. Thompson
Christie
James J. Thompson
James J. Thompson

1872

James J. Thompson
Christie

General Howard, did you notice the editorial in the "Herald" of this morning, entitled 'Our Heretic'?"

"Yes, it was read to me by a friend who sympathized very much with the "Herald's" views; but when he had read it to me aloud and expressed his sympathy, I said that I thought it ~~must~~ have been written by a man out of sympathy with vital Christianity.

"Why did you think that?"

"These are the expressions of the "Herald". 'The general mind runs a little loose, possibly, in matters of dogmatic theology. The great body of church goers get no comfort from a purely doctrinal sermon, and under its infliction are apt to doze. It is juiceless and wholly without profit. The average man does not want to be instructed in a creed, but in his daily duties.' ^{Now} I do not know what the Herald means by 'dogmatic theology', 'doctrinal sermon' and 'creed'. Our Savior's language takes different forms. Sometimes it is direct teaching and sometimes parables, and often quotations from the then existing Scriptures. There is not a complete sentence uttered by our Lord which does not contain teaching --for doctrine is teaching, and his teaching is doctrine. When Phillips Brooks lays down a Scriptural dogma as the basis of his sermon, and goes on to evolve it in his inimitable way, nobody dozes, nobody suffers an infliction. When Moody puts forth this doctrinal point, "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that ^{hath} not the Son hath not life", his exposition is full of fire, many a weary man shakes off his dozings, his eyes brighten and his heart is lightened

General Howard, did you notice the editorial in the "Herald"

of this morning, entitled "Our Heretic?"

"Yes, it was read to me by a friend who sympathized very much

with the "Herald's" views; but when he had read it to me aloud and

expressed his sympathy, I said that I thought it must have been

written by a man out of sympathy with vital Christianity.

"Why did you think that?"

"These are the expressions of the 'Herald'." "The General

mind runs a little loose, possibly, in matters of dogmatic theo-

logy. The great body of church goers get no comfort from a purely

doctrinal sermon, and under its infliction are apt to doze. It is

judicious and wholly without profit. The average man does not

want to be instructed in a creed, but in his daily duties." I do

not know what the Herald means by 'dogmatic theology', 'doctrinal

sermon', and 'creed'. Our Savior's language takes different forms.

Sometimes it is direct teaching and sometimes parables, and often

quotations from the then existing Scriptures. There is not a com-

plete sentence uttered by our Lord which does not contain teaching

--for doctrine is teaching, and his teaching is doctrine. When

Phillips Brooks lays down a Scriptural dogma as the basis of his

sermon, and goes on to evolve it in his inimitable way, nobody

dozes, nobody suffers an infliction. When Moody puts forth this

doctrinal point, "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that not

the Son hath not life", his exposition is full of fire, many a

weary man shakes off his dozing, his eyes brighten and his heart

is lightened

He soon comes into full sympathy with the speaker, for he realizes the fellowship, the sympathy, the heart union with the speaker, and so with Christ.

"When Dr. Taylor or Dr. Stoops takes this dogma, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest", and evolves its powerful meaning and applies ^{it to} to it those who are listening, many a dull heart is warmed, and many a weary head is rested. When Dr. Greer, Mr. Booth or his helper, Mr. Halliday, at the St. Bartholomew Mission, have gathered in from fifty to one hundred men who have lost all hope and are the outcasts of human society, and preach to them this dogma, "There is no name given under heaven or among men whereby ye may be saved; none but the name of Christ", and they are led to give up every false support, every foolish and deceitful anchorage, and throw themselves wholly upon the ability and willingness of the Savior to help them, there is no dozing amongst them. Their words are not juiceless and wholly without profit. It is a creed that takes hold of the inner man and gives him a new hope, a rope to catch hold of, a beginning of a new life that in time becomes rich in its fruitage.

"The herald writer says the sweep and drift of opinion is ~~test~~ towards what is called practical religion. That is true enough. All of the religion of Christ is practical religion and always has been. Whatever of it is not practical does not belong. It is 'an addenda.'"

He soon comes into full sympathy with the speaker, for he realizes the fellowship, the sympathy, the heart union with the speaker, and so with Christ.

"When Dr. Taylor or Dr. Stork takes this dogma, 'Come unto me,

all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest',

and evolves its powerful meaning and applies ^{it to} it those who are

listening, many a dull heart is warmed, and many a weary head is

refreshed. When Dr. Greer, Mr. Booth or his helper, Mr. Haffaday,

at the St. Bartholomew Mission, have gathered in from fifty to one

hundred men who have lost all hope and are the outcasts of human

society, and preach to them this dogma, 'There is no name given

under heaven or among men whereby ye may be saved; none but the

name of Christ', and they are led to give up every false support,

every foolish and deceitful endeavor, and throw themselves wholly

upon the ability and willingness of the Savior to help them, there

is no boxing amongst them. Their words are not fruitless and

wholly without profit. It is a creed that takes hold of the inner

man and gives him a new hope, a rope to catch hold of, a beginning

of a new life that in time becomes rich in its fruitage.

"The herald writer says the sweep and drift of opinion is ~~now~~

towards what is called practical religion. That is true enough.

All of the religion of Christ is practical religion and always has

been. Whatever of it is not practical does not belong. It is

an addenda."

"Well what do you think of the idea of trying such a man as Dr. Briggs for heresy?"

"I may answer that I think it a good thing to revise and correct mere human methods at any time and in any church. But it should be done with great care and in the spirit of tender love, lest those who are not very stable, nor very strong in their convictions be turned aside into by and forbidden paths, losing the little hope and faith which they now have to sustain them. If a professor enters a theological seminary and becomes a great historian, and indefatigable student, and thinks that he has made some original discoveries out of the depths of the Divine Word, there is generally joy and encouragement to him when he proclaims his discoveries. But if he contradicts the plain teachings of the Holy Scriptures, and puts forth a teaching diametrically opposite to that which his brethren have constantly believed and advocated from the days of our Savior till now, it appears to me that he ought to tender his resignation, that he ought to join some other society, one which is in full sympathy with him. For example, should one interpret baptism to be immersion, and set forth the belief that immersion was the only possible method of baptism, in a Baptist theological seminary he would be at home; he would be welcome; and there his work would be effective, whether he be fully right or not. But should the great student before mentioned find himself in the Presbyterian, Episcopal or Congregational seminary, it appears to me that it is plain that he should resign from such seminary and

me that it is plain that he should resign from such a ministry and
Presbyterian, Episcopal or Congregational ministry, it appears to
should the great student before mentioned find himself in the
work would be effective, whether he be fully right or not. But
ministry he would be at home; he would be welcome; and there his
was the only possible method of baptism, in a Baptist theological
baptism to be immersion, and set forth the belief that immersion
is in full sympathy with him. For example, should one interpret
restoration, that he ought to join some other society, one which
our Savior till now, it appears to me that he ought to tender his
brethren have constantly believed and advocated from the days of
and puts forth a teaching diametrically opposite to that which his
But if he contradicts the plain teachings of the Holy Scriptures,
ly joy and encouragement to him when he proclaims his discoveries.
discovers out of the depths of the Divine Word, there is general
indefatigable student, and thinks that he has made some original
enters a theological seminary and becomes a great historian, and
and faith which they now have to sustain them. If a professor
be turned aside into by and forbidden paths, losing the little hope
those who are not very stable, nor very strong in their convictions
be done with great care and in the spirit of tender love, lest
more human methods at any time and in any church. But it should
"I may answer that I think it a good thing to revise and correct
Dr. Briggs for heresy?"
"Well what do you think of the idea of trying such a man as

go to the Baptist communion.

"The word heresy is a hard word, yet it is an old word. Wooster defines it as an opinion not orthodox; and the word orthodox of course means right. An opinion not right. An opinion not proper to teach to young ministers. How could there be a more honorable thing, then, for the gentlemen who have the trial in charge, competent as they are acknowledged to be, to try and determine whether or not this novel, earnest thinker be teaching the truth as set forth in the Christian standard, namely the Word of God, or not? If they shall find that Dr. Briggs' method is all right, it will be a great satisfaction to him and his friends to be sustained. But if they shall find that greivous error has crept in, that the authority of the Divine Word itself is being undermined, and that its teachings which have brought to mankind joy and hope and heaven for ages are being so warped that they fail of their purpose, and that young ministers are being defrauded of the truth, their decision, even if it rends the body, will ultimately be wholesome in its effects."

"Haven't you similar troubles in what is called the New England Orthodox Body?"

"Yes, there has sprung up what is called the Andover Movement. The division created by it has had some ill effects, especially in the missionary field. The common mind to which the worthy Herald refers has formed its notion of future punishment more from Dore's pictures than from any teachings of the scriptures or of the div-

pictures than from any teachings of the scriptures or of the div-
ers has formed its notion of future punishment more from Dante's
the missionary field. The common mind to which the worthy Herald
The division created by it has had some ill effects, especially in
Yes, there has sprung up what is called the Andover Movement.
land Orthodox Body?"
"Haven't you similar troubles in what is called the New Eng-
be wholesome in its effects."
truth, their decision, even if it rends the body, will ultimately
their purpose, and that young ministers are being deluded of the
and hope and heaven for ages are being so warped that they fail of
minded, and that its teachings which have brought to mankind joy
in, that the authority of the Divine Word itself is being under-
sustained. But if they shall find that previous error has crept
right, it will be a great satisfaction to him and his friends to be
God, or not? If they shall find that Dr. Briggs' method is all
truth as set forth in the Christian standard, namely the word of
termine whether or not this novel, earnest thinker be teaching the
charge, competent as they are acknowledged to be, to try and de-
honorable thing, then, for the gentlemen who have the trial in
proper to teach to young ministers. How could there be a more
box of course means right. An opinion not right. An opinion not
Hooster defines it as an opinion not orthodox; and the word ortho-
The word heresy is a hard word, yet it is an old word.
go to the Baptist communion.

as intense wretchedness which ends in death does not alter the fact that there is wretchedness which ends in death. So that with plain, practical problems of life constantly before us, and not having discovered the glimmer through any other religion of better promises and better hopes, we should cling, and we do cling, to the Christian faith.

"You do not, then, hold to a liberal Christianity which Dr. Briggs and the Andover movement seem to favor?"

"Indeed I do hold to a liberal Christianity, if I understand the meaning of the words. There is nothing which can be invented more liberal than the religion of Christ. It is like the air we breathe, like the springs of water found all over the earth, free and open to whosoever will open his lungs or dip from the fountain. To take from us the teaching of Christ, to call it no better than the teaching of men, seem to me to be poisoning the atmosphere, and destroying the free fountains from which we drink."

as intense wretchedness which ends in death does not alter the fact that there is wretchedness which ends in death. So that with plain, practical problems of life constantly before us, and not having discovered the answer through any other religion of better promises and better hopes, we should cling, and we do cling, to the Christian faith.

"You do not, then, hold to a liberal Christianity which Dr.

Briggs and the Andover movement seem to favor?"

"Indeed I do hold to a liberal Christianity, if I understand the meaning of the words. There is nothing which can be invented more liberal than the religion of Christ. It is like the air we breathe, like the springs of water found all over the earth, free and open to whosoever will open his lungs or dip from the fountain. To take from us the teaching of Christ, to call it no better than the teaching of men, seem to me to be poisoning the atmosphere, and destroying the free fountain from which we drink."

ines who believed in them. When our Savior speaks of a 'great
 gulf fixed', nobody believes that he means an actual gulf; no more
 does he ever mean an actual fire or flame. The inner and spiritu-
 al things are of course exemplified by these well chosen figures.
 I have heard probably two thousand clergymen in my life, and I have
 never heard one preach whom I thought believed or enunciated a lit-
 eral fire. But the Scriptures do mean something. There is de-
 spair, hate, malignancy, discontent, which often ends in suicide;
 unhappiness; which grows as the days go by; misery, that shows
 itself in the form crippled or distorted, in the features from
 which hope and love seem to have fled forever. Scarcely a man of
 middle age can be found who has not seen a perdition more terrible,
 more wretched, more terrific, than any figures used in the Scrip-
 tures could suggest. It is the province of the gospel and of the
 churches to lift men up out of these conditions into their opposit-
 es; to give substance to this life, and growing substance to the
 life which is beyond. The Scriptures teach us that men are in the
 wretchedness, in the sorrow, in the despair, and every christian
 soul longs to get them out of the wretchedness, out of the sorrow,
 out of the despair, before these have sapped all the soul's energy
 and have become rigid and (as I think the Scriptures teach may be
 possible), perpetual. The object of religion is to make men
 happier and better for their entire existence, whether in the body
 or out of the body. The mere theory that there is no such thing

or out of the body. The mere theory that there is no such thing
happier and better for their entire existence, whether in the body
possible), perpetual. The object of religion is to make men
and have become rigid and (as I think the Scriptures teach may be
out of the despair, before these have asquipped all the soul's energy
soul longs to get them out of the wretchedness, out of the sorrow,
wretchedness, in the sorrow, in the despair, and every Christian
life which is beyond. The Scriptures teach us that men are in the
es; to give substance to this life, and growing substance to the
churches to lift men up out of these conditions into their opposi-
tures could suggest. It is the province of the Gospel and of the
more wretched, more terrible, than any figures used in the Scrip-
middle age can be found who has not seen a condition more terrible,
which hope and love seem to have fled forever. Scarcely a man of
itself in the form crippled or distorted, in the features from
unhappiness; which grows as the days go by; misery, that shows
despair, hate, malignancy, discontent, which often ends in suicide;
eral life. But the Scriptures do mean something. There is de-
never heard one preach whom I thought believed or enunciated a lit-
I have heard probably two thousand clergymen in my life, and I have
all things are of course exemplified by these well chosen figures.
does he ever mean an actual life or flame. The inner and spirita-
guilt fixed; nobody believes that he means an actual guilt; no more
ines who believed in them. When our Savior speaks of a great