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THEORIES, TRUE AND FALSE

In our January issue we criticized the peculiar and contradictory endeavors of an Inconsistent Contemporary Journal to hold on to Scriptural words and phrases, while denying the fact that we were bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ.

Its reply, is not a clear, bold, honest, advocacy of either side of the contradictory arguments which we criticised, but after an attempt at witticism in suggesting that the TOWER endeavors to fall on it, but that the fall of the TOWER would destroy itself, it proceeds to treat the criticism as a personal matter. We dealt not with a man, but with an inconsistent contemporary journal. Nor did we deal with its private affairs, but only with its utterances as a teacher. In this its course is childish. Every public teacher is open to public criticism and expects it. If this contemporary believed that its theory would stand criticism in the light of common sense and Scripture, it should have endeavored to show it. If its theory was manifestly incongruous and unsupportable, and its reasonings contradictory, it should abandon them. It is not manly, not Christ-like, but babyish, to seek to hide the justness of criticism by treating the matter as a personality. It is the error that we would overthrow, and not a man. We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with the darkness of error. It is the *false theory* of our contemporary that we would and do oppose. Truth invites criticism; the Author of truth says, "Come let us reason together." Fairness, candor, and reason, are the very life of truth—the spirit of it. Hence, our contemporary has either missed the truth, or the spirit of it, or, as we think, both.

Our contemporary attempts to draw attention away from its inconsistent statements, by suggesting that it is not very particular, nor very important which view or theory is correct, saying:—

"The truth that 'God was in Christ reconciling (atoning) the world unto himself,' is not dependent on, but superior to every *theory* as to *how* the work is done." And, it asks: "If a theory does not reconcile or save men, why plead for one?"

This is an easy and a popular method of disposing of statements which will not bear investigation. Our subtle adversary, Satan, is ever anxious to delude, and to make use of those once engaged in disseminating truth, and is always anxious to be *let alone*, that he might weave his web of sophistry to ensnare the saints, without interruption, and without having any one point out its snares. Faithfulness to the Master, and to the flock, demands that these errors be exposed by those who realize them.

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So error of every kind wants to be let alone. The Scribes and Pharisees and devils of Jesus' day, all wanted to be let alone; but Jesus and the Apostles would not let them alone. They exposed them, and declared it to be part of their mission to *bear witness to the truth* and let the light shine which reproveth the darkness of error. Every member of the body of Christ should be controlled by the same spirit of opposition to error from love of truth and of those who are made to stumble by the errors.

The term *theory*, as defined by Webster is:—(1st def.) “A doctrine or scheme which terminates in speculation.” (2d def.) “An exposition of the general principles of any science: as, the theory of music.”

If by the term *theory*, the first definition is meant, we fully agree with the statement of our contemporary. The fact, the doctrine of the atonement, *is superior* to any mere speculation concerning it. But will our contemporary claim that *its theory* as to *how* the work is done, which is constantly endeavors to elaborate and emphasize, and to wrest the Scriptures to prove, is after all merely its “speculation”? Speculation is dangerous work on such important questions, and would be much better let alone. But we apprehend that it regards its theory as of rather more weight than the definition—speculation—would imply.

If the second definition be taken—viz.: “an exposition of the general principles,” then the statement that, “God was in Christ (or was working through Christ) reconciling the world unto himself,” is not independent of, or superior to the theory. On the contrary it is *a part of the theory*, a part of the “exposition of the general principles” of God's plan—that his purposes are *all* to be wrought out in or through Christ; that He is the Alpha and Omega of it, the agent through whom Jehovah accomplishes all his will. The works of creation, redemption, and reconciliation—restitution, are all accomplished by Jehovah working in or through Christ.

But this is not the whole of the theory, or exposition of God's plan which the inspired Word presents. No, the Lord himself states it; prophets foretell it; types foreshadow it; eye-witnesses confirm it; and inspired Apostles cover every point of objection which reason can bring against it. Since then, the Bible theory is *an exposition* of the general principles of God's plan, and since it requires the entire Bible testimony to complete this exposition or theory, it follows that no fragmentary statement of Scripture, could be, either independent of, or superior to the entire exposition—the Bible. And the mission of the faithful servant of God is to stand as an index finger, helping the household of faith to trace for themselves on the sacred page, the great principles as well as the minor details of that Divine exposition or theory.

The idea that it matters not what we believe, if we only live right, is, alas, too popular to-day. Yet it is as absurd as to say, It matters not whether the Sun rises to-morrow, if we only have sunlight. It is as impossible to live up to the light, and opportunities, and privileges of our day without a correct understanding of the truth, as to have clear sunlight without the Sun. Truly the time has come when men will not endure *sound* doctrine—the Bible doctrine or theory—and if reproved and rebuked with patience and doctrine, and their theories shown to be absurd and contradictory, in their pride they regard the effort as a personal thrust, aimed by ill-will.

“If a theory does not reconcile or save men,” says our contemporary (assuming that it does not) “why plead for one?” We answer, Because we believe the *true Bible theory* does reconcile. It pleased God by the simple process of preaching the *true theory* of reconciliation through the death of His Son to reconcile and save them which believe. 1 Cor. 1:21. What should be preached but the truth—the true theory revealed in God’s Word? What should be believed but the truth—the true theory? What will sanctify *wholly*, but a knowledge of the truth—the true theory? “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth,” was Jesus’ prayer.

Our contemporary requests us to answer some questions. Certainly and with pleasure we will answer any questions bearing upon our faith in the teachings of God’s Word, remembering and heeding the Apostle’s injunction: “Be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” 1 Pet. 3:15.

It asks, “If he [Jesus] were only a man when he gave *himself* a ransom, how could it be the Lord that bought us?” For an answer we refer it to an article in our last issue—“The Lordship of Christ”—written by J.H. Paton.

Its query, relative to “A corn of wheat,” is also answered in our last issue in an article under that caption.

It inquires why we did not refer to and refute its “reference to Acts 20:28 and John 3:16, which show that *God* laid down *his* life for us and purchased us with *his own blood*.”

Ah! now we see what we failed to notice before: It is upon these *two proof texts* that it attempts to hang its *new theory* (*speculation?*) that the atoning blood was not the *blood* or *life* which was given for us by the man Christ Jesus, but *the blood of God*! Well, our dullness of comprehension is our only apology. The idea seems so absurd and far-fetched that it did not occur to us. We failed to get our contemporary’s meaning before, but now it speaks plainly—the blood of God. We answer with Paul, “To us there is but one *God* —*the Father*, of whom are all things ... and *one Lord*, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things” (1 Cor. 8:6); hence if our contemporary’s theory is correct—if as it

says, “*God* laid down *his* life for us and purchased us with *his own blood*,” then truly we have been much in the dark, for we neither knew that spiritual beings have *blood*, nor did we know that God died [“laid down his life”]. If this be *true light*, we have been kept in ignorance and darkness by giving heed to the teachings of the Apostles, who said that God hath *immortality*, hence could not die; who also said that flesh and *blood* could not inherit the spiritual kingdom, and who plainly declared that Jesus *became a man* that he might redeem men, that we were “reconciled to God by the death of *his Son*,” who “bought us with his own precious blood.” And further, If this theory (speculation?) be correct, all the saints have hitherto been in darkness on this first principle of the doctrine, which our contemporary has *just discovered* (?) at this late hour—the harvest of the age.

But is it possible that these two texts cited by our contemporary can overturn the numberless statements and types of Scripture which show Jesus as the Lamb slain? Let us examine these *proof texts*. We turn to 1 Jno. 3:16, and all is plain, for since childhood’s days we have known that *italicized* words in the Bible indicate that such words are not in the original Greek, but have been supplied by the translators. As in this text the word *God* is in italics, it must be evident to the merest child, that this one of the *mighty* proof texts is harmless so far as overthrowing the remainder of the Scripture is concerned.

We turn now to the other proof-text Acts 20:28 and find it in harmony with all other Scripture—God’s theory still stands, harmoniously supported by the united testimony of the Bible. Our contemporary should possess and use a copy of the EMPHATIC DIAGLOTT and it would not fall into such an error as it has here done. Not in this text only, but in several others, the translators of the common version have been careless, and misled by their Trinitarian views, have given an imperfect translation. The Diaglott renders this—“To feed the church of God which he acquired by the blood of *His own*,” i.e. His own Son.

Seeing that these are its *proofs* and claimed strong supports, will our inconsistent Contemporary give up a baseless theory? Will it believe that “the *man* Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom [corresponding price] for all”? Or will it seek for new props for its theory, and cling to it while time and money and readers continue, and while there are fresh untried Scriptures to be wrested and misapplied? We fear that as in the past, its theory will still struggle for existence though every proof-text advanced be taken from under it.

Yes, if answering our contemporary’s questions will do good and help discover to it the baselessness of any theory that does not recognize in the death of Jesus, the *ransom*—the corresponding price for the sins of the Adamic race—we will be very truly *glad* to answer all that it may propound. We have no theory which we fear to have overthrown by Scripture. The Bible theory can never contradict or deny itself, nor can any overthrow it.

While we have only love and good will toward all men, we cannot, dare not, from loyalty to our King, fellowship or bid *God speed* to, or in any way encourage or approve, any person or journal which denies that we were “reconciled to God by the death of *His Son*,” “who gave himself a *corresponding* price [Ransom] for all.” See 2 John 10,11.

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— *March, 1885* —



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