

Pittsford, Monroe Co. N.Y.

Feb. 26, 1861.

My Dear Marvin:

Your letter of the 8th I rec'd some days ago; but in the bustle of running to & fro, & the eager labor of my new & more interesting field, I have, till now, found no time to answer it. I have made two discoveries in Attica: 1. The vast importance of visiting, in building up a society, & filling up the pews; it is a blessing to work in a large population. 2. The immense, immeasurable force of a well conducted Bible Class; what you saw in Pittsford was but the shadow, & the article I sent you but a meagre outline or indistinct hint, of the beautiful reality. I find my heart filled with wonder & thankfulness. The benefit of my annoyances from bad men in Pittsford now begins to appear; I rejoice to have passed through such a furnace, & lament that I allowed any murmuring to escape me during the solemn process. The

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teachings of Prof. Upham on this subject, in his Life of Faith & elsewhere, I now embrace as true & heavenly.

As to what you suggest about the use of the Bible, it is doubtless true. Luther says, the man who studies it closely, will perceive much that he can not express. But mark, the man who is enamored of systematic theology is only intellectually interested, & even this inferior interest is felt in connexion with the thoughts of other men — a two-fold disadvantage. Let a man go deeply into the subject of the Angel of the Covenant for example, or a connected view of the Messianic Prophecies, or O. Test. ideas of Expiation for Sin, & he will by & by imbibe some of those spiritual perceptions Luther speaks of, sweet, melting, ineffable; compared with these, the theology of Taylor will seem like an iceberg. I have no objection to theology in its place; I wd not abuse & insult it as Ward Beecher unwisely does; but I wd ever be mindful of its very subordinate & rudimentary nature; students sh'd be taught to be jealous of its encroachments & its

unspiritualizing, enslaving tendency. I find, on my side, Chalmers, Payson, & a host of other such. And tho' I do not expect your assent just now, I am pretty sure of it in yr later life, & especially when you shall have passed through the furnace. Mark my words. There will come a time when you will feel an inexpressibly strong desire to lay yr heart close to God's word, & yr earlier love of theology will seem like boys' play. A change is coming over the chh; the Bible is going to be read with new eyes, & theology will sink to a very insignificant place. The man who anticipates it is wise.

As an example of the vast enjoyment at least, of close original study of the Bible, I wd mention the piece on the Incarnation, in a late No. of the New Englander. I must thank the man. The correctness of it I want to consider further.

To read the papers now-a-days requires a deal of patience; my attention is occupied hardly more with Southern affairs, than the universal lawlessness, recklessness, corruption, & democratic ignorance & impudence of the North; the all pervading fraud, (of the people,

& hideous meanness of the courts, in the Empire State — all this seems to me plainly the necessary result of the government of an unchecked democracy; I am firm in the belief that it will in due time turn into a military despotism, as it always has done. Says Koch, the German historian: "That is the most revolting despotism which gives the whole power to the majority, i.e. to the least enlightened & most unreflecting part of the nation". Nor is the example of N. England any comfort; it began with the cream of England, & can never be repeated; it will only require a longer time to work out the mischief. I see yr Legislature has had to take Boston out of the hands of the mob. You yourself will by & by agree with Dr. Alexander: "Democracy & I are less & less friends every day I live". I have no doubt there are thousands in the U.S. who ^{secretly} long for the balance enjoyed in England, viz. the House of Lords, now more prized in that country than ever before. I am at heart an Englishman, & hate & abhor this whole absurdity of unchecked democracy, tho' I sh'd not dare to say it loud, for fear of being mobbed. The land of liberty indeed!

The articles of Taylor Lewis in the World I do not see. If my don. next week is as big as I expect, I shall be likely to take that paper. My salary now will enable me to indulge more in choice bks & periodicals. The raised map of Palestine, Smith's ^{Bible} great Dic. \$10, Milman \$10, Motley, Palfrey, &c. I am coveting. — Sermonising is with me a thing of new ambition. Hope I am labouring the "higher experience".

Very much love, & to family. A. North.

Rochester 5 am. But I have no business with so fine a preacher.
I lately heard Prof. Robinson of

Attica, Wyoming Co. N.Y.
Sep. 11, 1861.

My Dear Marvin:

Our Synod is in session at Batavia, 10 miles off; I had set apart some time for it; but on hearing last evening the announcement of the subjects of discussion for to-day, they appear to me so dry, that I much prefer staying at home this forenoon & writing to you. There are three trains from here daily; I can go & hear the evening sermon. Last evening heard a discourse perfectly flat & insipid, because it had no plan; it was only a heap of remarks.

The excellent Ellinwood, pastor of Central Chh. Rochester, was here lately, to visit a sister. We read, together, some of the Oxford Essays, an astonishing mixture of infidelity, good sense, historical learning, sophistry, & pretended love of religion. Hearing that Prof. Smith, of N.Y. Sem. has written a reply or review, I have sent for it. How plain it is, that men have their probation in their own field, i.e. where their ambition, studies, lusts, & passions, centre. The devil wd not tempt you & me to gamble or drink, or to lay deep plots to

get money, or to tell lies in newspapers for party interests; but he wd tempt you in the region of metaphysics & theology, & me to muse away several hours among the men of the 15th century, over & above what my pastor's duties can spare. Those learned fools of the Essays are deplorably ignorant of their own hearts, & of their spiritual wants. Let us look well to the arena where our real wrestle is found! That bk wd make a profitable exercise for you; I see, all through it, the besetting vice of the English mind, viz. inability to transfer itself to an ancient & foreign position; this is what makes them so poor interpreters when quite orthodox. The bk can never be satisfactorily answered by acute logic & metaphysical theology; it must be done by a true exegesis. This remark perhaps does not apply to every one of the seven essays.

Lately looked into Payson's Life; it seems a new book. Feel inclined to preach more from such texts as: "Narrow is the way." Have come to the conviction that there is a certain awful intensity, or thickening, so to speak, of God's providence round about a minister, as he goes on; s

he must learn his high lessons, or find in his path the Angel with a drawn sword. You are younger than I; a few years hence you will see what I mean. A favorite text with me is Phil. 3:12 latter half. — There are two ways of learning spiritual lessons: One, by experience of outward providences pushing a believer along from step to step, with the help of some faith; a quicker way is, to believe more heartily, & like a child, so that the outward providences come rather as pleasant answers from heaven, & go along by our side, as celestial attendants — language is at fault. Such men as Payson find power in believing earlier in life. This Guyon & Upham doctrine of spiritual training coming from a union of Providence & Holy Spirit working intimately together, seems to me a gem of untold value, bright upon every page of the Bible.

Theology, I insist upon it, must be re-cast; the materials are slowly accumulating; till more complete, I wd put the student to an eclecticism. E.g. instead of the metaphysical discussions, by Park & others, about power & will, I wd substitute the noble view of Bushnell in his 19th sermon, p. 364. Instead of the dryness of common theology on Providence,

I wd substitute Sec. VI. in Nat. Hist. Entth. In other words, I wd not ~~not~~ put fundamental doctrines at pawn into the hand of skepticism, redeemable by the success of philosophical acuteness; rather I wd mix them up with experience as an essential condition of understanding them, well guarded against deception by correct statement. So the Atonement sh'd be presented in something like the delightful mode of Shedd, B. Sac. 16. 723. So the Divinity of Christ is best proved by Bushnell's method of implication, in passages like John 14:23. Nothing can be plainer, than that our bks of N. Eng. theology are in part a sediment from the mid. ages, & from the coldness of the 18th century. One of the said Essays well & ludicrously sets forth the tendency of Eng. theology to content itself with the "Evidences" of Christianity; Robt Hall says the reason is, the Eng. divines knew not the inside. The effect is felt in American theology. What a distorted work is Woods' system, adjusted to the neighboring infidelity of Boston! So Taylor is adjusted to a local influence; it leaves the universal heart of the race a-hungering. I have seen much disaster to the mind of theoly. students from the impression left on it by the dry system of Hickok at Auburn. History, history, history; when will the importance of it, to the theologian, be understood, in helping him to detect unconscious influences?

Have a new force driving me to the throne of grace; a son in his 19th year, a noble Christian boy, gone to the wars; he is physically stout, & such a favorite they make him a sergeant. — Money is scarce; my salary is some hundreds behind; else I wd come & see you. — Feel much interested in sermonizing, & in the pursuit of the higher experience. Much love.

A. North.

Attica, Wyoming Co.

Dec. 18, 1861.

My Dear Marvin:

The universe is full of things, the relations of which we see but in part; man loves to classify, may, must classify, if he wd acquire much knowledge. But there are different classes of things; some, like the facts of natural science, lie within his reach so nearly complete, that his classifications are also complete; but other things, connected with his higher capacities & aspirations, present themselves to the classifying faculty in so very partial & fragmentary a manner, that the philosophical mind will fear to attempt a classification till its materials are more full. Any impatient attempt at classification (which the natural love of system will be apt to induce) will necessarily blind the mind toward any further induction, or collection of materials, for the reason given by Bacon: "Method, [prematurely adopted] carrying a show of total & perfect knowledge, has a tendency to generate acquiescence". Hence Whately says a chief source of theol. error is, the love of system over the love of truth.

Theological system once firmly in the mind, error is the sure result. You will say: How so, if the system is a true one? I answer, that is impossible; Paul said so: "We know in part, & see prophesy in part." Hence many devout men (Chalmers late in life, & Payson, see page 69) have become jealous of theology; the reason is, their far-reaching spiritual perception gets a glimpse of new material; the old system looks both meagre & false. Hence, too, some of our leading divines, feeling the danger from the bewitching & blinding effects upon young students, of systems like those of Taylor & Hickok, have talked much of a "Biblical theology". These attempts, too, have failed, because, as Whately again says, they apply to a term in Scripture its technical sense as used in some theol. system. The student (I have seen much of it) will so love his system, as to hide the deeper spiritual treasures of the Bible from his eyes; every thing is seen in the light of the system; he does not hold his mind in that Baconian posture which modestly fears to classify. The providence of God, in the rough experience of life, has to beat & bruise this theology-worship out of him. Dr. Woods' piety, therefore, I think was right, in his rebuke to Taylor, for his too

great vindication of philosophical theology. In Huntingdon & Bushnell, also, I see plain marks of my way of thinking. Little does it boot, that Taylor showed man to ^{be} an agent, ever so closely; the soul in its higher experiences, will look on the array of proof with a sort of weariness & dissatisfaction. — But I fear becoming wearisome to you. I sh'd like to enter further into the metaphysics of the question, & show you how the mind must necessarily work, on your Taylor plan; but abstruse talk is too lengthy for letters. Do not suppose me verging toward Old School-ism; I more than ever dislike their bigotry & theological slavery.

I can hardly agree with you about the English. They can not enter into all the nice distinctions of our party doctrines; the plain fact is, both North & South are fighting for slavery; what matters it whether the kites beat, or the crows? Indeed, I marvel that their indignation has not been hotter, at the detestable conduct ^{of the North.}. You are quite mistaken in supposing "the people are ready to make this a war of freedom"; you view things too much thro' N. Eng. spectacles; N. York is largely pro-slavery, may among thousands around me, fiercely & secessionally so. — My great apprehension is, the nation is to be char-

tised by some calamitous turn in our affairs. But I fear to tell you my inmost thoughts.

The High Chhman have such a facility of sneering & laughing at Presbyterians, that I am afraid to call on Tyler at Batavia. One of his members, Judge Tracy, an acquaintance of mine, wd introduce me; perhaps some time I will try it. — The chhman don't laugh at me much after they know me; I am too familiar with their history. I agree with you, it is a sort of infidelity in gown & bands, & stained glass. How interesting the history of the windings of the depraved heart! & how necessary to be rooted & grounded!

I am rather given to despondency lately; my people are united, but slack in paying; my fear is, I shall have to leave them; for, when a heavy debt is accumulated, it is nearly or quite impossible to get it paid, & I cannot afford to lose it. Wd that I c'd devote myself to my ministry without troubles of this kind. But I will not annoy you with these vulgar subsidiary concerns.

Have a fine son in Rosencrow's army, nearly 19; writes a nice letter. They have made a sergeant of him. He lays up money to help his brother in Moretta College.

Think of going to Le Roy this week to missionary convention; Treat, Dwight, & others will be there. — A musical convention is now in this place.

A kiss for that baby.

Of new books I have no room to speak.

Your true friend, A. North.