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Samuel Hopkins

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Samuel Hof Ris. We are offeraching a critical and a dirintegrating ferial in the history of Thew Tenglind theological Tought as it has developed within the language akivel We have already seen four the wovement has exhibited two tendencies. The warhack by Charmey and the liberole, and the other by Echwards and the veachinists. In Edward me have seen a Tendency Towards speculative theology which gove rather under freedom to the imagination, and left out of consideration the facts of life, and had we flace for the actinary corrows sense. In Source Hof his of Gust Barrington we have a won who carried this speculative, unreal system of theology to its free limit. I his theologiere system sometimes spoken of as the Berkehine

Divinity, there is a system of thought of the 2 on for severed from heron life as one could with. Edwards referented two ideas. Whis Emphasis upon the third side of religion, i.e. the word fruits of the first. (2) his samplied when of woris relation to a sovereign Josh, Hofkins follows in Edwards foth, Enofesiging the word puilt of the spirit in whithe colls disinterested henevolence. Hof him wrote an account of his own left and I grote his own words. "I was form at Moderbury Connecticut on The Ford's clay, Sept. 17. 1721. They favents were Juferson of religion; and I was descended from christin ancestors, both by my fother and my wother as for back and for been able to trace my descent ... Or soon as I was regable of understanding, and attending to it, I was Told that my fother, when he was in = formed that he had a son born to him said, if the child should live, he would

give him a follie education, that he might be a minister or a Sobbothday word, alluding at the age of 16 he entered yele, and then speake of his college life. While a member of the college, I behim, I tool the character of a soler studious youth, and of a better scholar than the higger hoef of my the members of that society; and had the afferbation of the governour of the college. I avoided the intimacy and confany of the oferly ricions: and indeed keft but Little confany, being attentive to my stuckes. on the eighteenth or nineTeeth year of my age, I cannot vow rectainly determine which, I made a propersion of religion, and joined the church to which my facents belonged in waterhang. I was serious, and was thought to be a fious youth, and I had this thought and tife of myself. I was constant in reaching the hitle, and in attending on fublic and secret religion

and devotion, when I thought of conferring the sin I had her quilty of that dry, and asking fouden, I could not recollect that I had som = mitted me sin that day. These ignorant was dof my own heart, and of the spirituality, strictuers, and extent of the divine love! after his graduations he went to her. Hurftens to live with Edwards, and finish his prefaration for the winistry. In July 1743, he hegue his chities as faster of the Church in Housatonic, loter Roman as Barrington. It was a wort unfermissing community in which to begin wish. His faish consisted of Thily four ohis, half of them her Englanders, and the Muainde Theufork Botch, who finds vot under: stond aughil. They were a four feofle, lax in Their religions and sound hobits, and the fact that the dutch could not understool his freaching, and were still forced to fry for the suffert of the shock, were a source

of discord in his church. Indeed is own characteristics were not such as to have great influence away such a feafle. Up himself he says I have lived retire : went, and have token were fleasure olive thou in any conform; and home after whom to side alon &, suhen on a journey. rother this in the hest combory, He was an arcetic above in his diet, living on the wort projol fore. HE never took any exercise, and worked in his study from 14 to 18 tows each day, aside from that he wer a four freacher, Charring said of him that he was the new ideal of bool delineng." This limitation Hofkens himself reoligiel, and in his old age said They peaching has olivery affected to me ar foor, low and miserable, confared with whitit ought to be... I for fell often as if I want leave of and never attempt any were."

Such was Hofkins from one frint of wiew, get if we look at him from another first of wien we feel very different obert him, His other sicle offeas in his devotion to duty. The fraction offlication of his great theme of disinterested Benevolevec, The natural disaction toyes of his faish conflect with the bitter controversies into which his theological firens carried him lead to are unsolve forting relationship in the should, and he soughtfor new fields of work. On agree 11.1770 he become former forter of the church of herefut R. J. It his during this fastrate that the very voble characteristics of his personality offear. The Nevrhiting wor back a very disasterous in fluence on the truck of her fort, and he wer forced to be obsert from the sity time from 1776-80. When he returned to his farish in 1780. Le formel it entirely

scattered, the farswage bruved, and the weeting down unfit for use. In the fore of all there difficulties, to which was added the further consideration the his involved wife and formily must be cared for, he refused a coll to a very confortable faish in huddle borough, and took of his clatics ot herfort, religing when the weekly contii but in for his suffert. Ot times there amonted only to about two hunched chollars for year. That only was Hof his clurch in four enclision but he were vot afraid of losing his wort substantiol sufforters financially in his sence and ferristert attachs on the slave tracking interests. Therefore wer of tense the wort important slors tracking fort of her England, and the wealth of the city was due to this business. But his chaintenested henevolevel world hardly femil-him to mier with conflorency such an in stitution. while other winisters of her kughel were tolerating, and even toking facts in 8 the slerz wistilution, Hof kins war devorming it from his frefit, and working every forsible effort to seeme freedom for individuol shoes and ont of his scenty salary he contributed one 100 lung sum to a missimony society for ranging the Gorfel to Ofrica. From this foint of view we can see that Hopkins wer a great were, and diel wich to start the flilanthrofic reform of the 19th Centry. There is suggested something of gearden of character from worker's lecture on Hofkins, He is speaking of the closing years of his life. "For him they were years of triol, and of increasing feetleners due to old age. His enguegation was swall and confred with of the advanced in life His church wentershif included fer men. His servous mere refuted dry and obstract by the young footle of his flock who woudened to other churches. His unavivoted delivery

became less othactive with years; and his boiling meakness was greatly augmented by a faralytic stroke which he suffered in formary, 1799. Still be continued to freach fill bletofer 1803, though with feetle voice puch needing the assistance of his colored fortige, the septing herefort Garden, to enter the fulfit, and serve times even to vise to Tsy. 4. Z. Leveler V. 956. deliver the securer." Dec. 20. 1803. Le clied. Such was Hofhis life, but his theology was vot so athartine, although it was quite as severe. Hof Kinsianism, or the Berkshire Divinity is Colvin:

Such was tofthis off, but were guite as severe wat so atheretive, although it was guite as severe. It of himsianism, or the Berkshir divinity is Colvin: it we colvinized. There is a guest deal of light it was now his theology by the following them there were his duguing concerning the future state of those who chie in their dim." He was, itenal funishment reflects such light on the Divine Character, government and works, expecially the work of redempths; and worker such

a bright display of the worthiners and granden of the bedeever, and of divine love and grace to the redeemed; and is the occasion of sur so wuch boffiners in heaven; and so necessary, in order to the highest glory, and the greatest increasing felicity of Gods everlasting Kingdom; Hot, shortel it sease, and this fire could be extinguished, it world, in a great measure, obscure the light of heaven. "? But his strong enofhesis ufor the former of the regenerate for disinterested Buevolence is his quot contibotion, and warls a long stef in advovce of Edwards It is at this fourt that chaning touches ofon Hof Rius.

Samuel Hopkins

Earl Clement Davis

Harvard University or Pittsfield, MA1

No Date

We are approaching a critical and a disintegrating period in the history of New England theological thought as it has developed within the Congregational Churches.

We have already seen how the mevement has exhibited two tendencies. One marked by Chauncy and the liberals, and the other by Edwards and the reactionists. In Edwards we have seen a tendency towards specualtive theology which gave rather undue freedom to the imagination, and left out of consideration the facts of life, and had no place for the ordinary commonsense. In Samuel Hopkins of Great Barrington we have a man who carried this speculative unreal system of theology to its full limit. In his theological system sometimes spoken of as the Berkshire Divinity, there is a system of Thought about as removed from human life as one could wish. Edwards represented two ideas. (1) his emphasis upon the ethical side of religion, i.e., the moral fruits of the spirit. (2) his mystical idea of man's relation to a soverign God. Hopkins follows in Edwards' path, emphasizing the moral fruits of the spirit in what he calls disinterested benevolence.

Hopkins wrote an account of his own life and I quote his own words.

I was born at Waterbury Connecticut on the Lord's day, Sept. 17, 1721. My parents were professors of religion; and I was descended from Christian ancestors, both by my father and my mother as far back as I have been able to trace my descent. ... As soon as I was capable of understanding, and

¹ The manuscripts in this series covering early New England Congregational preachers have no date. They are hand-written, dating them before Earl Davis started typing his manuscripts in 1907. So, they date either from his time at Harvard University, or the first year or two of his ministry in Pittsfield.

attending to it, I was told that my father, when he was informed that he had a son born to him said, if the child should live, he would give him a public education, that he might be a minister or a Sabbath day man, alluding to my being born on the sabbath. (pp 23-4).²

At the age of 16 he entered Yale, and thus speaks of his college life.

While a member of the college, I believe I had the character of a sober studious youth, and of a better scholar than the bigger half of the members of that society; and had the approbation of the governors of the college. I avoided the intimacy and company of the openly vicious; and indeed kept but little company, being attentive to my studies. In the eighteenth or nineteenth year of my age, I cannot now certainly determine which, I made a profession of religion, and joined the church to which my parents belonged in Waterbury. I was serious, and was thought to be a pious youth, and I had this thought and hope of myself. I was constant in reading the Bible, and in attending on public and secret religion. And sometimes at night, in my retirement and devotion, when I thought of confessing the sins I had been guilty of that day, and asking pardon, I could not recollect that I had committed one sin that day. Thus ignorant was I of my own heart, and of the spirituality strictness, and extent of the divine law!!3

After his graduation he went to No. Hampton to live with Edwards, and finish his preparation for the ministry.

In July 1743, he began his duties as pastor of the church in Housatonic, later known as Barrington. It was a most unpromising community in which to begin work. His parish consisted of thirty families, half of them New Englanders,

² Sketches of the Life of the Late, Rev. Samuel Hopkins, D.D., Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin. 1805.

³ Sketches of the Life of the Late, Rev. Samuel Hopkins, D.D., Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin. 1805, p. 27-28.

and the remainder New York Dutch, who could not understand English. They were a poor people, lax in their religious and social habits, and the fact that the Dutch could not understand his preaching, and were still forced to pay for the support of the church, was a source of discord in this church.

Indeed his own characteristics were not such as to have great influence among such a people. Of himself he says, "I have loved retirement, and have taken more pleasure alone than in any company. And have often chosen to ride alone, when on a journey, rather than in the best company." He was an ascetic also in his diet, living on the most frugal fare. He never took any exercise, and worked in his study from 14 to 18 hours each day. Aside from that he was a poor preacher. Channing said of him that "he was the very ideal of bad delivery." This limitation, Hopkins himself realized, and in his old age said, "My preaching has always appeared to me as poor, low, and miserable, compared with what it ought to be. ... I have felt often as if I must leave off and never attempt any more."

Such was Hopkins from one point of view, if we look at him from another point of view we feel very different about him. His other side appears in his devotion to duty, the practical application of his great theme of disinterested Benevolence.

The natural disadvantages of his parish coupled with the bitter controversies into which his theological opinions carried him led to an unsatisfactory relationship in the church, and he sought for new fields of work. On April 11, 1770 he became formal pastor of the church at Newport, R.I.

It is during this pastorate that the very noble characteristics of his personality appear. The Revolutionary war had a very disastrous influence on the trade at Newport, and he was forced to be absent from the

⁴ Sketches of the Life of the Late, Rev. Samuel Hopkins, D.D., Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin. 1805, p. 86.

⁵ Sketches of the Life of the Late, Rev. Samuel Hopkins, D.D., Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin. 1805, p. 88.

town from 1776-80. When he returned to his parish in 1780 he found it entirely scattered, the parsonage burned, and the meeting house unfit for use. In the face of all these difficulties, to which was added the further consideration that his invalid wife and family must be cared for, he refused a call to a very comfortable parish in Middleborough, and took up his duties at Newport, relying upon the weekly contributions for his support. At times these amounted only to about two hundred dollars per year.

Not only was Hopkins church in poor condition but he was not afraid of losing his most substantial supporters financially in his severe and persistent attacks on the slave trading interests. Newport was of course the most important slave trading port of New England, and the wealth of the city was due to this business. But Hopkins' disinterested benevolence would hardly permit him to view with complacency such an institution. While other ministers of New England were tolerating, and even taking part in the slave institution, Hopkins was denouncing it from his pulpit, and working every possible effort to secure freedom for individual slaves, and out of his scanty salary he contributed over \$100 lump sum to a missionary society for carrying the Gospel to Africa.

From this point of view we can see that Hopkins was a great man, and did much to start the philanthropic reform of the 19th century. There is suggested something of grandeur of character in the man in the following sentences taken from Walker's lecture on Hopkins. He is speaking of the closing years of his life.

For him they were years of trial, and of increasing feebleness due to old age. His congregation was small and composed mostly of the advanced in life. His church membership included few men. His sermons were reputed 'dry and abstract' by the young people of his flock who wandered to other churches. His unanimated delivery became less attractive with years; and his bodily weakness was greatly augmented by a paralytic stroke which he suffered in January 1799. Still he continued to preach till October 1803, though with feeble voice and needing the assistance of his colored protégé, the sexton,

Newport Gardner, to enter the pulpit, and sometimes even to rise to deliver the sermon. (Ten N. E. Leaders, p. 356). 6

Dec. 20, 1803, he died.

Such was Hopkins' life, but his theology was not so attractive, although it was quite as severe. {???} {???}, or the Berkshire Divinity is Calvinism calvinized. There is a great deal of light thrown on his theology by the following from his "Inquiry concerning the future state of those who die in their Sin." He says,

Eternal punishment reflects such light on the Divine Character, government and works, especially the work of redemption; and makes such a bright display of the worthiness and grandeur of the Redeemer, and of divine love and grace to the redeemed; and is the occasion of so much happiness in heaven; and so necessary in order to the highest glory, and the greatest increasing felicity of God's everlasting Kingdom; that should it cease, and this fire could be extinguished, it would, in great measure, obscure the light of heaven.

But his strong emphasis upon the power of the regenerate for disinterested benevolence is his great contribution, and marks a long step in advance of Edwards. It is at this point that Channing touches upon Hopkins.

⁶ Ten New England Leaders by Williston Walker. New York: Silver, Burdett and Co., 1901.