

THE 'MONTREAL REGISTER'  
AND THE  
'TRACT FOR THE TIMES.'

Our attention has been directed to some remarks of the *Register*, a weekly religious newspaper published in this city, on the 'Tract for the Times,' the origin of which was referred to in our last number. The tract is spoken of in pretty harsh terms by that journal and the editor evidently thinks, and would have the public to think likewise, that its compilers are not very honest persons.

He takes exception to the term "Unitarian," as a distinguishing name for our denomination. He would be studiously exact in his distribution of denominational titles. He styles us "the Unitarian community" to be sure, but then he carefully protects his reputation for precision by the introduction of a parenthetical "(so-called)." "We say so-called (he continues) because we regard the word Unitarian as a misnomer. It implies that those who are not Unitarians do not believe in the Unity of the Godhead, which we need not say is contrary to fact." Now to our apprehension it implies no such thing. The *Register* we believe is conducted by a minister of the Baptist church. Now if we or any other party who put a different construction on the Christian ordinance of baptism from that of the Baptists, should in writing style them "the (so-called) Baptist community," and continue thus "we say so-called because we regard the word Baptist a misnomer. It implies that those who are not Baptists do not recognize the ordinance of baptism, which we need not say is contrary to fact,"—if we were to express ourselves in this manner would the *Register* see any fitness or point in it? Or would the Baptists consider themselves justified in withholding the name "Congregationalists" from those who are generally called by that title, on the ground of its implying "that those who are not Congregationalists do not uphold and practice the Congregational form of discipline?" Are not the Baptists themselves, Congregationalists? For our own part, we never stop to quibble about such matters. If we were disposed to be captious we could raise a controversy on every denominational title in Christendom. We are willing at all times to call every sect of Christians by whatever name they wish to be distinguished. In every such case there are certain conditions implied and understood, and these will be known and remembered by every one who takes any interest in the enquiry. There are also too many matters of serious import in controversy among Christians, without seeking to mar the peace of the church by disputations on such unimportant concerns.

It may be right to remark here, that Unitarian is properly a generic term usually employed to denote all those who deny the doctrine of the Trinity. Every body knows that the Trinitarians hold the doctrine of God's Unity, but every body knows likewise that it is a unity in which there is a trinity of persons. But besides being used in a generic sense, the term Unitarian is likewise employed in a more limited one—to denote a sect or class of *genus* Unitarian. By some of the English Unitarians we know it has been said that, the term Unitarian properly belonged to those only who hold the simple humanity of Christ, but this has long since ceased to be a matter of discussion, and custom has now given the term to all who deny the triune theory of the Godhead. In England, Ireland, and America, they are all styled Unitarians, though it is well known they differ in opinion concerning the rank of Christ. Amongst the Unitarians of England, the belief of Christ's simple humanity prevails. In Ireland, the belief in his pre-existence prevails. In America, the Unitarians are probably about equally divided in opinion on that point. But besides those called Unitarians, there are comprehended under the generic title several other sects. There are those who will accept no title but that of 'Christians,' of whom there are probably seven hundred congregations in the United States, many in England, and some (nearly 30 congregations) in Canada,—there are likewise Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Universalists, Quakers, &c., all of whom maintain the strict unity of the Supreme Being.

The object of the *Register* more particularly in noticing the *Tract*, is "to make a remark or two on some historical statements." That publication contains "An Address" reported from a Tract of the American Unitarian Association, issued some twenty years since we believe, and republished more than two years ago in our own columns. But it was circulated in the United States and in this city at the period referred to, without any questioning as to its "historical statements." These statements are too generally admitted

to allow any reasonable cavil. But on their re-appearance here some weeks since they fell under the scrutinising eye of the *Register*, and then sure enough they were speedily called to account; our contemporary we perceive, keeps a vigilant eye on his neighbours generally, if we may judge from the number of his paper now under our notice.

The statements which the *Register* feels so strongly disposed to controvert, relate to the religious opinions of Newton, Locke, Milton, and Watts. "That they were Unitarians in the British sense of the word is not true," he says. "Whether they were all Arians remains to be proved." How studiously he preserves his exactness concerning the name! How carefully his negative is suspended upon a nice distinction! How rigorous, his demand for proof.

We might give our contemporary a summary answer by saying that the proof is on record, printed and published years ago, and if he, has not seen it, it is not our fault. But we will not do so. We shall offer a few remarks on the matter.

Concerning Sir Isaac Newton, the *Register* quotes Dr. Brewster, sustained by Mr. Biot, to the effect that there is nothing in Newton's writings "to justify or even authorize, the idea that he was an anti-Trinitarian." On this our remark will be brief.

Is there anything, we ask, in the writings of the great philosopher and Bible student to justify the idea that he was a believer in the Trinity? Nothing, we reply. And the *Register* must make the same answer. And now we ask all whom it may concern, did they ever read Sir Isaac Newton's elaborate treatise on the "two notable corruptions of Scripture"? In this he shows that the two texts 1 John v. 7, and 1 Tim. iii. 16, so long relied on as strong props of the Triune theory of the Godhead, and the Supreme Deity of Christ, are interpolations and corruptions. It may be said, that many other eminent critics whose Trinitarianism is unquestioned have done the same thing with regard to these texts. We know, however, that in doing so they have carefully left on record their belief in Trinitarianism, lest their reputation for orthodoxy should suffer by such a step. But Newton has done no such thing. Far otherwise indeed. He speaks in such a manner as to leave little doubt of his disbelief in the Trinity. When he has occasion to refer to the passage in Matthew's Gospel containing the baptismal commission, he speaks of it as "the place from which they tried at first to derive the Trinity." \* Would a believer in the Trinity have thus expressed himself?

Dr. Chalmers cannot be supposed to have any partiality for Unitarianism, and he admits Newton's heresy. In his second astronomical discourse he bestows a glowing eulogium on that distinguished man as a student of the Bible. But to guard himself from being supposed to countenance the philosopher's well known heterodoxy, he thus qualifies that eulogium in his preface: "In the course of this sermon I have offered a tribute of acknowledgment to the theology of Sir Isaac Newton; and in such terms as, if not further explained, may be liable to misconception. The grand circumstance of applause in the character of this great man, is, that unseduced by all the magnificence of his own discourses, he had a solidity of mind which could resist their fascination, and keep him in steady attachment to that book whose general evidence stamped upon it the impress of a real communication from heaven. This was the sole attribute of his theology which I had in my eye when I presumed to eulogize it. I do not think, that, amid the distraction of his other pursuits, he has at all times succeeded in his interpretation of the book; else he would never in my apprehension, have abetted the leading doctrine of a sect or system, which has now nearly dwindled away from public observation." The closing sentence we confess is not very complimentary to the Unitarians, but the fact in question is admitted, and by one, whose authority in such a matter should surely satisfy any Trinitarian.

With regard to John Locke, the *Register* says:—"that he indulged in speculations on the subject of the Trinity, and has been charged with Arianism is well known." As the writer is so precise about names, we may inform him that he might have ventured to say "Socinianism." Here is a passage from the writings of his clerical antagonist:—"When he (Locke) proceeds to mention the advantages and benefits of Christ's coming into the world and appearing in the flesh, he hath not one syllable of his satisfying for us, or by his death purchasing life or salvation, or anything that sounds like it. This and several other things show that he is all over Socinian." Now Locke was a theological student and writer. To borrow his own words, "the little satisfaction and consistency that was to be found in most of the systems of divinity he had met with, made him betake himself to the sole reading of the Scriptures (to which they all appeal) for the understand-

\* Newton's History of Two Corruptions of Scripture, sect. 1, par. 4.

ing of the Christian religion." In consequence of his theological writings he was assailed by his contemporaries, and charged with Unitarianism, in one or other of its forms. This, says the *Register*, is well known. But that he lived and died in Unitarianism, "where is the proof?" asks the writer before us. Such a demand is both unreasonable and improper, and the *Register* should have known this. Such cavilling is puerile. "Where is the proof?"—The fact admitted stands for proof until it can be shown that Locke changed his mind. His Unitarianism was not only admitted but charged upon him by the Trinitarians of his own time. The evidence that satisfied them in the matter, will satisfy us. And yet in the present day, we have a Trinitarian in the person of the editor of the *Register*, virtually charging his fellow Trinitarians with stolidity or misrepresentation, by insinuating that they had no proper grounds for their manifold accusations. The *Register* should either have been prepared to show that their charges, which he admits were made, were groundless, or else he should have raised no question about the matter.

And even John Milton, the *Register* seeks to throw a doubt over his Unitarianism, by suggesting a question fully as unreasonable and improper as that put in the case of Locke. We say unreasonable and improper, because in strict argumentation such questions deserve no answer. Our principal reason for noticing them is to give our readers some information on the points suggested by them. Thus writes the *Register* concerning Milton:—"That in his treatise on Christian doctrine he wrote as an Arian Baptist, need not be disputed. Will any one undertake to maintain that these were his maturer and final views? The absurdity of this question is perceptible to the commonest understanding. An Arian belongs to a class of Unitarians. If therefore it "need not be disputed" that he wrote as such, why is it disputed either openly or by implication, by the *Register* or by any one else, until he can show grounds for disputing it by producing subsequent writings of Milton to evince that he had changed his mind?"

He wrote as an Arian Baptist. His works then show that he was an Arian Baptist, and until we have proof to the contrary we are to regard him as such. Does the *Register* mean to insinuate by his question that Milton's "matured and final views" were those of a Trinitarian Pedobaptist? His question has either this meaning or it has no proper meaning at all. The latter we think is the case. We should not be surprised after this, to find our contemporary starting some ingenious queries to throw a doubt over the Unitarianism of Priestley or Channing.

We have before us Milton's "Last Thoughts on the Trinity," from which we might make copious extracts if we had time and space. He speaks with not much favor of "the commonly received drama of personalities of the Godhead." And in his exposition of 1 Cor. viii. 4-6, he thus writes: "Here the expression 'there is none other God but one' excludes not only all other essences, but all other persons whatever; for it is expressly said in the sixth verse, that 'the Father is that one God; wherefore there is no other person but one.'" If this be not Unitarianism, we know not what Unitarianism is.

Respecting Dr. Watts, we have not much to say here. In our April number we quoted some extracts from his writings which prove clearly his departure from Trinitarianism. But we should not require to go farther than the quotation which the *Register* has given from one of his biographers, to maintain our point. We read there that Dr. Watts "was attacked by the Trinitarians." Now why was he attacked by the Trinitarians? Not surely because he was a believer in the Trinitarian theory. This we should naturally infer, and we are confirmed in our inference by a passage in the same extract, which informs us that "the Doctor certainly departed from the common hypothesis." Read this quotation from Dr. Watts's "solemn address to the great and blessed God."—"Hadst thou told me plainly, in any single text, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are three real persons in thy divine nature, I had never suffered myself to be bewildered in so many doubts, nor embarrassed with so many strong fears of assenting to the mere inventions of men instead of divine doctrine; but I should have humbly and immediately accepted thy words, so far as it was possible for me to understand them, as the only rule of my faith. Or hadst thou been pleased so to express and include this proposition in the several parts of thy book, from whence my reason and conscience might with ease find out, and with certainty infer this doctrine, I should have joyfully employed all my reasoning powers, with their utmost skill and activity to have found out this inference, and engrafted it into my soul." From this it is plain he did not consider the doctrine of three persons in one God either expressly revealed in scripture, or fairly deducible therefrom. For a more lengthened extract to the same effect we refer our readers to our number for April.

Nor should we fail to state that we have the direct evidence of Dr. Nathaniel Lardner, to the effect that Dr. Watts was an Unitarian. His letters are published where he says that Dr. W. "was in the latter part of his life an Unitarian." Few, we presume, will venture to question the veracity of the author of "the Credibility of the Gospel History."

The remarks now offered are far from exhausting the subject. We may probably recur to the matter at some future and more convenient time.

On the last paragraph of the *Register's* article we shall say a word and then have done. "Even those who declaim most loudly against human authority in matters of religion, are fond of claiming the suffrages of great men for their peculiar sentiments."—This remark is levelled against the Unitarians. Let us be fairly understood here. We do protest against all human authority in matters of religion. We would accept no men, be they ever so great, as authorities, nor would we attempt to force any opinions upon others. Unitarians however are peculiarly situated. They are considered as fair game to be hunted down by any means, by almost all sects and persons. They are stigmatised as heretics, as 'deniers of the Lord that bought them,' as weak and wicked men dealing disingenuously with the Scriptures, and torturing them to suit their own purposes. They are proscribed and excluded here, and peremptorily shut out from all hopes of mercy hereafter. Timid minds are naturally alarmed by such denunciations and representations. Thousands are thus actually terrified from bestowing a moment's serious attention on the Unitarian system, or the grounds on which it rests. Under such circumstances, we say, it is perfectly competent and justifiable to make reference to the case of such distinguished ornaments of our race as Milton, Locke, and Newton,—men who, though educated under orthodox influences, did upon enquiry renounce the orthodox theology,—men who went to the word of God and read with their own eyes what was written there,—men who brought not only clear, powerful, and well disciplined minds to the investigation of the Bible, but meek and teachable dispositions,—men who could rise above all the common prejudices by which they were surrounded, and with soberness, patience and impartiality seek the precious pearl of divine truth, loving it for its own sake alone. We wish that every man would thus go to the Bible, and leaving all human authorities—all human creeds and confessions,—meekly learn from that most blessed book, what is so plainly written on its pages—that there is but one God; that God is one; and that the Father is the only true God.

CHRISTIANITY AND WAR.

In our age there can be no peace that is not honourable; there can be no war that is not dishonourable. The true honour of a nation is to be found only in deeds of justice, and in the happiness of its people, all of which are inconsistent with war. In the clear eye of Christian judgment, vain are its victories, infamous are its spoils. He is the true benefactor, and alone worthy of honour, who brings comfort where before was wretchedness; who dries the tear of sorrow; who pours oil into the wounds of the unfortunate; who feeds the hungry and clothes the naked; who unlooses the fetters of the slave; who does justice; who enlightens the ignorant; who enlivens and exalts, by his virtuous genius, in art, in literature, in science, the hours of life; who, by words or actions, inspires a love for God and for man. This is the Christian hero; this is the man of honour in a Christian land. He is no benefactor, nor deserving of honour, whatever may be his worldly renown, whose life is passed in acts of force; who renounces the great law of Christian brotherhood; whose vocation is blood; who triumphs in battle over his fellow-men. Well may old Sir Thomas Browne exclaim, "the world does not know its greatest men;" for thus far it has chiefly discerned the violent brood of battle, the armed men springing up from the dragon's teeth sown by Hate, and cared little for the truly good men, Children of Love, Cromwells guiltless of their country's blood, whose steps on earth have been as noiseless as an angel's wing."—Charles Sumner.

MRS. DANA'S LETTERS.

LETTERS TO RELATIVES & FRIENDS, chiefly in Reply to Arguments in support of the Doctrine of the Trinity.

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