

INTERNAL EVIDENCES.

WE feel deeply convinced that in the present wars of the faith, a large and just apprehension of the actual nature of Christianity must take the place and perform the functions which in former times were discharged by books upon the evidences of religion and discussions upon the authorities, whether Scriptural or ecclesiastical, which recommend mankind.

Archbishop Whately was never tired of holding up to scorn Coleridge's declaration that he is weary of the name of Evidences of Christianity, that if men can but be brought to feel their want of religion they will accept it. We do not defend the terms of Coleridge's dictum. For the consciousness of a want apart from the conception of that which supplies the want, may be nearly as empty a thing as the proof of a religion apart from the comprehension of its nature. Still, many thoughtful persons will now be of opinion that the philosopher was nearer the truth than the prelate, that the best evidence of religion is afforded by its correspondence to the genuine spiritual demands of our souls, and that while proofs and testimonies of an external kind have doubtless importance in introducing religion to men, they are but subsidiary to the supreme evidence of divine origin which enables our hearts to declare how we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have seen Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, Blessed is the work of so setting Him and His faith before men as to bring these words to their lips.

We have said also that the presentation of Christianity as it is seems destined to supercede discussions as to the seat of the authority to teach Christianity. Many a book—and many a good book—has been written to explain and to recommend the faith by assuming an authority from which there shall be no appeal, to tell us what the faith is and compel us to accept it. When authority possessed, as it did for many ages, the physical power to suppress objection, its arguments in its own support were unanswerable; it had to be submitted to, though its moral weight might suffer the more it depended upon the material. But when it comes to pass that the outward and material supports of authority are removed, and it has to lean upon spiritual and intellectual forces, the whole plan and system of teaching religion upon authority is sooner or later brought into question. We do not mean either authority or the need of authority wholly gives way; but it greatly changes its character and finds it impossible to use the peremptory tone in which it spoke of old. It can only hope to recommend, but not to silence or coerce. It must, like St. Paul, not as having dominion over faith, but as a helper of Christian joy, and by manifestation of the truth, commend itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. For the question arises what the proofs can be by which either Holy Scripture or the Church can demand submission from the minds to which it recommends Christianity. They must not be proofs which assume a belief in Christ-

ianity, since Christianity is the very subject which the authority is to introduce. The aversion of men to uncertainty, and the expediency of agreeing upon some authority in order to avoid interminable discussion, may for a time prevent them from pressing this query, and determine them to rest in texts of Scripture or decisions of the Church as finally decisive. But their attitude of mind is transitional and insecure. Men become more and more accustomed to doubt whether the authority is indeed so supreme and infallible as is assumed. Actual instances of its insufficiency accumulate, and after having been uttered for a while only by daring spirits, come at last to be looked in the face by all honest men. And so the nail that was fastened in a sure place becomes loosened, and that which was hung on it, if it has no other support, falls down. This discovery was made for Church authority three centuries ago, and we cannot conceal from ourselves that the authority of Scripture has suffered a very great change in our own generation. It is the dismay of many pious souls; yet we not only hold that Christianity will survive the discovery that the earthly authority on which it was supposed to depend was not absolute or infallible, but that the change will not even be so great as was imagined.

In civil government the supreme and absolute authority of the king was long supposed to be the only security for order and obedience. It was disproved, defeated and withdrawn; yet order and obedience have not perished. Authority in the State now rests, in part at all events, upon that which it was formerly thought anomalous to admit in the question: free choice exercised by subjects as to the measures which they will accept from authority, and a perception upon their part that the rule to which they submit is the representative of their own maturest preferences. When from such a condition of politics we look back upon the period when kings were nominally absolute and people nominally passive, we find that though this was the theory it was much impaired in fact, and that subjects did not yield to their kings a more unquestioning submission than now; only then their self-assertion was as it were illegitimate, while now it is justified by the theory of law.

And it is much the same in things ecclesiastical, although in the days when the Church was absolute, private opinions and popular impulses were supposed to have no place, yet in point of fact, they had place, and in real truth guided the authority which pretended to guide them. And when Holy Scripture had succeeded to the seat of infallibility, and a text was the sufficient proof of either a doctrine or a fact, the texts were chosen and explained according to the desires and prepossessions of the minds which supposed to be their humble servants.

If this was so, can we think that it will make a revolution if we honestly and openly admit the claim of the human intellect and conscience to judge, not merely of the validity of an authority to which it is afterwards to submit

without question, but also of the subject-matter of the revelation which the authority communicates? We hold that, on the contrary, not merely belief in revelation, but also reverence for authority may well survive the change. To rule over free men is the glory of a king, and to be loved and revered by minds which seek and accept truth from all quarters, and are not afraid to criticize their authority itself, is a grander position, either for the Church or the Bible, than that of an authority which even because it is unquestioned is unproved.

But whether we be right or wrong in looking forward without dismay to the future of Christianity in an age of universal enquiry, it is certain that the change is upon us, and we may as well wish for the days of the Heptarchy as for the return of the time when the best minds among our people could accept our doctrines upon authority without question as to their inherent worthiness.—*Church Quarterly*.

REVERENCE IN CHURCH CHOIRS.

THERE is, we fear a growing tendency on the part of our church choirs to forget that their office in the Church of God is to lead in acts of holy worship—pious acts that must not be levelled to mere performances. A case in point occurred quite recently. At a national society's gathering in a large church in this city, with a choir and organist of more than ordinary ability, the choirmaster assumed the role of conductor, and the musical part of the service was attended with more circumstance, in the way of time beating and gesticulation, than would have held together a chorus of a thousand. This, with a constant unrest, nodding to singers as they entered, handing around copies of music, and whispering instructions, made what should have been worship, a burlesque. The functions of the conductor are altogether foreign to the duties of a church choirmaster. Conducting may be tolerated in the case of a festival, where a number of large choirs that have been trained independently are taking part, but in that case the conductor is generally placed so that while the choirs can see him he is hidden from the congregation.

In two other instances (in churches in this city), where the choir is in the proper place, i.e., the chancel, the soloists during the anthem left their seats and stood in the middle of the chancel to perform their parts. We heard of another case where a member of a choir adorned with long-sleeved gloves and low-necked dress, advanced to the chancel steps and after bowing to the audience (or, rather congregation,) sang her little piece. An encore would doubtless have been acceded to.

It is gratifying to note the progress of art in our musical services, but at the same time we must be sure it is genuine. If not genuine it will only work its own ruin, and fail in its mission in the church.

The famous Richard Hooker very quaintly says:—"In church music, curiosity and ostentation of art, wanton or light or unsuitable

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