

The BEREAN.

THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH ALL READINESS OF MIND, AND SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, WHETHER THOSE THINGS WERE SO.—ACTS xviii. 11.

VOLUME III.—No. 8.]

QUEBEC, THURSDAY, MAY 21, 1846.

[WHOLE NUMBER 112.]

THE ASCENSION.

PSALM lxxviii.

Rise, King of glory, rise!
Re-sume thy heavenly throne;
The vaulting sinners to chastise,
And bless and save thy own.
Hallelujah!

Through Sinai's wilderness
He led our sires of old,
And he is still as prompt to bless,
As strong to send his folk.
Hallelujah!

We are in the desert too;
Saviour, bear us safely through.
For us he came to die,
For us he rose again;
And freely offers now from high
The gifts he won for men.
Hallelujah!

Jesus here was mighty and low;
Jesus is the same above.
O praise our Saviour King;
Before him humbly fall,
To him let all our tributes bring,
Whose bounty flows to all.
Hallelujah!

Mighty thou, and happy we,
Blest and shielded, Lord, by thee!
Rev. H. F. Lyte, A. M.

THE LORD ASCENDING.

While he blessed them, he was parted from them. LEVI xxiv. 51.—Not as though the blessing were incomplete; not as though the near view of His own glories obliterated from the heart of Jesus his sorrowing disciples, and hurried him away, while the blessing hung, yet unfinished, upon his lips; but he was parted from them in the act of blessing, to indicate that the work of blessing still continues; to point out the office which, as our Advocate with the Father, He still discharges in the courts above; and that as He "died for our sins, and rose again for our justification," and ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, that he might receive gifts for man, so "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." He has indeed ascended the throne in heaven, and there sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But he sits there as "a Priest upon his throne," and ever pleads the cause of His believing people. And when the Divine justice, and truth, and holiness—for these attributes, not the heart of God, are arrayed in hostility against the guilty—claim the forfeited life of the transgressor against that strict and holy law which pronounces, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them;"—He intercedes for man and, lifting up his hands—those hands pierced by the nails that fastened Him to the accursed tree—that He may demonstrate to the congregated host of heaven that God's holiness has not been compromised by the pardon of guilty man, but that the law has been "magnified and made honourable;" that "mercy and truth have here met together, righteousness and peace embraced each other." He pleads his own atoning righteousness, and sufferings, and death—exclaims, "Place the guilt of his transgressions to my account; lay upon me, as the scape-goat of an apostate world, the burden and penalty of all his sins; and let this penitent believer—this prisoner of hope—this purchase of my cross—this child of adoption and of my love—let him go free!"

They worshipped Him. LUKE xxiv. 52.—And this worship unapproved—these Divine honours accepted from the representatives, the embryo of the infant Church, prove Christ to be very God; and doubtless were permitted, or rather received to justify us in "honouring the Son, even as we honour the Father." Contrast with this the conduct of Paul and Barnabas to the people of Lystra—or the conduct of Peter to Cornelius, when he would prostrate himself before him, "Stand up, I myself also am a man;" and, in this accepted adoration of the Apostles, let the Socinian, while he acknowledges the holiness of Christ, acknowledge also that Christ was more than man. Contrast the conduct of this angel, God's direct ambassador, to John, when he fell at his feet to worship him; "See thou do it not. I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus; worship God;" and let the Arian see that Christ is not merely an angelic existence—a creature, though the first of created beings—but very God. Observe the rapid haste, the hurried brevity, with which both the Apostle and the angel interrupt this act of adoration, strongly expressive of the horror with which they contemplated this impious prostration, this shocking blasphemy. Observe too the angel's argument and motive for the rejection of such worship by the holy Apostle, while opening the Kingdom of Heaven to the Gentile world—and still more by the holy angel, while yet the odours of heaven breathe freshly from this ambassador of the courts above, and the rays of Divine glory, imparted by the recent converse of God, still emanate from him—and in the acceptance of this worship by Christ, let us see that great, that vital, and vitalizing truth, that Christ is, as Scripture expressly asserts him to be, "God over all, blessed for evermore."—J. M. H. in the *Christian Observer*.

ELIJAH IN RETIREMENT AT ZAREPHATH.

May not this period of Elijah's history read us a useful lesson—a lesson peculiarly needful and important in the present times? Perhaps never was society in a state of more unnatural and awful excitement than at present. The life-blood seems to throbb every where through

out the body politic to its very extremities. A feverish thirst for novelty: an ardent passion for change, no matter what the risk; a reckless and presumptuous meddling, every matter its subject, and every individual its agent; an universal avidity for what is called reform, but what is, in fact, destruction—constitute the spirit of the age, and render, far more than do any legislative enactments which have as yet assailed them, the state democratic, and the church militant. Each individual, as if the legitimate successor of Jeremiah, and "set over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy; and to throw down, to build, and to plant;" seems to fancy himself Divinely commissioned to undertake the burden of the national interests, political and religious. The doctrine of a particular Providence seems forgotten by all; or, by perversion, understood to mean the providence of each individual in the great mass; and each by his conduct loudly proclaims, "The earth is weak, and all the inhabitants thereof; I bear up the pillars of it." Each individual, no matter what his talent, age, or station, seems as if imperatively charged with the office of destroying or remodelling a constitution; of pulling down or rebuilding a church. Every interest is shaking; every object in daily flux; so that it is scarcely possible for the true lovers of peace and order to be quiescent. They are "constrained to dwell with Mesekh, and to have their habitation in the tents of Kedar;" among the enemies of peace. Every spot on which they would repose is agitated, and trembles at the heaving of this great moral volcano. May not, then, this epoch in the history of Elijah teach us to watch Providence; and, in days of bustling activity like the present, not to run before we are sent; not to stretch forth a bold and presumptuous hand, even to prop the ark of God? May we not learn from it to curb that restless spirit of party zeal, which would indeed send, not peace on earth, but a sword? which, mindful of that kingdom heralded by the angelic choir, established to promote not only glory to God in the highest, but also peace on earth, would cause needless dissensions and bitter controversy in societies and families, for some quibble in doctrine or scruple in practice; and rend the body of Christ for trifles, fantastic, perhaps false opinions, which minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith: a spirit whose effect it has ever been to turn aside his disciples into vain jangling, and cause them to swerve from the great end of the commandment, which is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.

Should not the Christian, then, always strive to do something for God and for souls? Assuredly he should; and Elijah's retirement tells us what. His silence speaks. One act only of Elijah during these three years and a half is recorded; and it indicates benevolence, piety, and faith. We see it in the tenderest sympathy, energized by the strongest faith; faith which could expect a miracle more stupendous in nature and magnitude than any which had ever hitherto been wrought; and venting itself in the devout aspirations of this fervent and effectual prayer,—"O Lord, my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again." If we, too, would work for God in regenerating souls, we should seek, by self-inspection and self-denial, by retirement, meditation, and secret prayer, so to frame and fashion our own souls, that we may become vessels unto honour, fit instruments for a holy God to use. We should leave no room for the charge, "That teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" Thou that wouldst convert a world, and, in the ardour of zeal, compass sea and land to make one proselyte, art thou wholly indifferent to the salvation of thine own soul, and of the souls of those most near and dear to thee? If, indeed, the love of Christ constrains us to seek and to save them which are lost, we should, and will do it, after the command of Christ, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." We should, and will do it, after the example of Christ, who sanctified himself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

The whole character and conduct of Elijah, throughout his mysterious history, seems designed to furnish a colossal model of a man whom God has selected, or rather fitted, to be his chosen instrument, in his sensibility and obedience to the leadings of the Divine will; and it is a history of dazzling extremes. The most extensive publicity and the most obscure retirement, laborious activity and meditative stillness, are the widely separated extremes within which, at the impulse of the Divine mind, his life vibrates. To-day, as God calls, you see him elevated, conspicuous, on a sublime pinnacle of glory; to-morrow, rapt from view, he treads the deep and dark valley of humiliation. And who will say that Elijah more faithfully consulted his own obligations or God's glory, or was more near to the manifestations of the Divine presence and favour, when, as if dropping from heaven, in the assertion and plenitude of a miracle-working power, he boldly appeared before the tyrant Ahab, and shut the windows of heaven with that solemn asseveration, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word?" or when he stood, alone and persecuted, by the dilapidated altar of the Lord, which he had repaired upon Mount Carmel; in the view of an assembled nation, called the fire from heaven upon his sacrifice; and then, in the ardour of zeal, hewed in pieces the priests of Baal before the Lord? or when he denounced Ahab to his face in the vineyard of Naboth, at the moment of proudest security and fullest enjoyment? or, as God's vicegerent, deposed and anointed kings and

prophets? than when, in obedience to the Divine command, this powerful agent of good did hide himself by the brook Cherith, and consort but with the tenants of the air? or dwell in the profound domestic retirement of the widow's hut at Zarephath, known but by the comforts and blessings which his presence and his piety ministered to the humble pair, sole occupants of his mean retreat? or sat him down under a juniper tree in the dreper solitude of the wilderness of Beersheba? or buried him in the cave of Horeb? or, far from the busy haunts of man, did stand upon the mount before the Lord? In fact, Elijah's history tells us that no line of action is so abstractedly preferable to others, as that, in all seasons and circumstances, it is the more excellent way. It is its conformity to the leadings of Providence and the attractions of grace, which alone can sanctify any action; however useful and excellent in its nature. And that conformity to the recognized will of God, that meek submission, that patient resignation, that self-denying, loving obedience, can dignify the meanest actions, and hallow the most secular. By its sublimating energy it can wait up before God, from the golden altar which is before the throne, with the prayers of all saints, the humble labours of the pious "servant, obedient to his master after the flesh, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ; not with eye service, as a man-pleaser, but as the servant of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." It can dignify as well as hallow the submissive resignation of the meek pauper, who humbly craves the often refused boon of charity; or the meaneast toils of the patient husbandman, doomed of Providence "to force a churlish soil for scanty bread."—*Correspondent of Christian Observer*.

GOD'S CARE FOR CHILDREN, SIGNIFIED IN BAPTISM.

He puts them in the care of the Church; the Holy Ghost superintends their nurture, and aids by its holy influences. It is not indispensable that a new nature shall at once be put into them, in order to make them sons of God by adoption. This is to be the effect of that adoption, and the means appointed to prepare the child for its inheritance. The Holy Ghost may be given to the child, and surely belong to it, and the moral effect of it not take place at once, or at any future time. The child may always resist the Holy Ghost until it is taken away from him. We may understand what is meant by the Holy Ghost being given, and yet not effecting the object for which it is given, by considering what is meant by the Holy Spirit being taken away from us. Does it mean that God takes away from us a good nature, changes us from holy to unholy, hardens our hearts, heightens our pride, and loves? No, no, for a moment suppose this. Nor must we confound the gift of the Holy Ghost with a view to our renovation, with the fact of our being renewed in the spirit of our minds. The one is the agent, the other the work done; but the two are not always inseparable. "My spirit shall not always strive with man," says the Lord; it is often most unsuccessful.

But it may be asked whether, beside these interesting circumstances belonging to baptism, and this grafting into the Church, and sealing of the promises, in which all must agree, there is not some other special blessing which hovers over the baptismal font, and enters into the soul of the child. When the child is sealed as the adopted one of God, is there no incipient act of the Spirit, making a first impression on the soul—no beginning of the work of sanctification—no seed deposited—no germ implanted, which are to be fostered and increased by successive operations, and aided by a pious education? Some pious and learned divines have thus expressed themselves, modestly and doubtfully of course, for it must of necessity be conjecture and hope, nothing more. The author would respectfully submit to his readers, whether there be not this serious objection to all such speculations, that they are on a subject which God has placed beyond the range of the human mind. What passes in the soul of an infant, cannot be ascertained by any discovery revealed to us, or made by the mind of man. What God can do, or may do, is not told to us. Secret things belong to the Lord. Here, I humbly conceive, is the source of more dispute in the Church of God, than any other whatever. Attempting to be wise above what is written, reaching at things too high for us, thinking that we see clearly what is only dimly seen, as through a glass darkly, we run into much error. And how often is it the case, that men are positive, dogmatic, and anathematizing, in proportion as the subjects are but faintly alluded to in Scripture, and are in themselves dark and difficult. Some have supposed that it was absolutely necessary that a beginning be made in baptism, or else it could not be carried on—that there would be no foundation to build upon—nothing to cultivate—as if the faculties and affections of our nature were not still left us, though corrupted, on which to act; and as if the Spirit of God could not begin its work either before or after baptism. If there is force in this objection, then it operates against the conversion of any adults who have not been baptized in infancy, except we receive them to baptism without faith and penitence, that the seed may be deposited.—*The Right Rev. Bishop Meade of Virginia*.

TRADITION, AND THE FATHERS.

From the Rev. Thomas Scott's *Remarks on Bishop Tomline's Refutation of Calvinism*. The ancient fathers of the Christian church may be read with benefit, in various ways; their persons ought, in general, to be venerated; even their supposed mistakes are

entitled to our candour; but they have no authority over our creed, any more than we have over the creed of our remote posterity. We are, therefore, in this chapter cited before a tribunal, the authority of which we disclaim: we are to be tried by a jury, every individual of which we challenge, and against whom we can bring most valid exceptions. So little agreement in sentiment is found among these fathers, that it would be a very easy task to bring together a long catalogue of their mutual discordances; and so inaccurate were they, as to historical facts, that it would be equally easy to make a long list of their most undeniable mistakes. Their comments upon the Scripture were often such as would be almost universally rejected, nay despised, in these days. They were uninspired men, and fallible as others are: few of them had enjoyed the benefit of a religious education, or been trained up in any learning which did not rather disqualify than prepare them for theological studies. Copies of the Scriptures were not then multiplied as they now are: few of the fathers were capable of studying the original of the Old Testament, and some were unacquainted with that of the New. What those who perhaps had conversed with the Apostles, or who lived soon after, learned from this source, more than we have in the Scriptures, must be preserved by recollection, and communicated by tradition; neither of which are greatly to be depended on, in respect of controverted points of theology. Criticism, especially Biblical criticism; and the skill and habit of exactly weighing the true import of every expression, and the grammatical meaning of every sentence; and deducing conclusions from it by logical rules, were comparatively little known among them: so that (except as they learned any thing from the uncertain source of tradition, or unless they were divinely inspired,) they had fewer helps, by far, for understanding the Scriptures, than moderns have; to whom the multiplication of books by printing, and the ease and readiness with which any man communicates his sentiments to great numbers, and with which they may be examined, confirmed, or refuted, is, to the sincere inquirer after truth, an inestimable advantage to which the fathers were strangers. Most of them had been brought up in heathen notions, or had imbibed the notions of the philosophers, of which they retained a considerable proportion after their conversion; and with which some of them, as we shall see, exceedingly corrupted Christianity. They did not observe the Apostle's caution, "Let no man spoil you, through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." They were in general men of great earnestness and piety; some of them had much learning of various kinds (for that time,) and brilliant talents; but few of them possessed that stock of theological knowledge, and that quick and accurate judgment on disputable points, by which the least shade of difference is promptly and exactly perceived; and by which men, through exercise and habit, discern good and evil, as "the ear distinguishes sounds, and the mouth tastes meats."

Indeed, it seems highly probable that the Lord, foreknowing how prone men, in subsequent times, would be to over-venerate the uninspired writers of the primitive church, and to make them even the rivals of his holy oracles—a kind of authoritative exposition of them—was pleased to counteract this tendency, by permitting it so to come to pass: that we no sooner leave the Apostolical writings to open the books of these ancient fathers, than we seem, as it were, at once got into another climate: and the inferiority of their productions strikes our minds, in proportion as we enter into the spirit and views of the Divine word, and relish and delight in it.

The difficulty also of distinguishing the genuine writings of the fathers from the works falsely ascribed to them, and from the interpolations which have been made in them, is allowed even by the most zealous assertors of their claim to our almost implicit evidence. If then we would know what primitive Christianity was, we must go to earlier times than even those of the most ancient fathers of the Christian church—even to the times of the Apostles, and the writings contained in the New Testament.

THE UNITARIAN BELIEF.

Letter from the late Dr. Arnold, Head Master of Rugby School, to the parent of one of his scholars.

Recd. June 15, 1829. I had occasion to speak to your son this evening on the subject of the approaching Confirmation; and as I had understood that his friends were not members of the Established Church, my object was not so much to persuade him to get confirmed, as to avail myself of the opportunity thus afforded me to speak with him generally on the subject of his state as a Christian, and the temptations to which he was now peculiarly exposed, and the nature of that hope and faith which he would require as his best defence. But, in inquiring to what persuasion his friends belonged, I found that they were Unitarians. I felt myself therefore unable to proceed, because, as nothing would be more repugnant to my notions of fair dealing than to avail myself directly of any opportunities of influencing a boy's mind contrary to the religious belief of his parents, without giving them the fullest notice, so, on the other hand, when the differences of belief are so great and so many, I feel that I could not at all enter upon the subject, without enforcing principles wholly contrary to those in which your son has been brought up. This difficulty will increase with every half-year that he remains at the school, as he will be gradually coming more and more under my immediate care; and I can neither

suffer any of those boys with whom I am more immediately connected, to be left without religious instruction, nor can I give it in his case, without unavoidably imparting views, wholly different from those entertained by the persons whom he is naturally most disposed to love and honour.

Under these circumstances, I think it fair to state to you, what line I feel bound to follow after the knowledge which I have gained of your son's religious belief. In every thing I should say to him on the subject, I should use every possible pains and delicacy to avoid hurting his feelings with regard to his relations; but at the same time, I cannot avoid labouring to impress on him, what is my belief on the most valuable truths in Christianity, and which, I fear, must be sadly at variance with the tenets in which he has been brought up. I should not do this controversially; and, in the case of any other form of dissent from the Establishment, I would avoid dwelling on the differences between us, because I could teach all that I conceive to be essential in Christianity, without at all touching upon them. But in this instance it is impossible to avoid interfering with the very points most at issue. I have a very good opinion of your son, both as to his conduct and ability, and I should be very sorry to lose him from the school. I think, also, that any one who knows me, would give you ample assurance that I have not the slightest feeling against Dissenters as such, or any desire, but rather very much the contrary, to make this school exclusive. My difficulty with your son is not one which I feel as a Churchman, but as a Christian; and goes only on this simple principle, that I feel bound to teach the essentials of Christianity to all those committed to my care—and with these the tenets of the Unitarians alone, among all the Dissenters in the kingdom, are in my judgment irreconcilable. I trust that you will forgive me for having troubled you thus at length on this subject.

[The above letter speaks explicitly enough upon the views of the writer as being of the most liberal kind possible, short of being latitudinarian, towards those who dissent from the Church of which he was a Clergyman; it is remarkable for the expression of the strong feeling which he entertained with regard to the Unitarian tenets: he considered them *irreconcilable* with the essentials of Christianity.—ED. BEREAN.]

POLITICAL DIFFERENCES.

Another lesson which ought to be learned from the painful dealings of Divine Providence, to which allusion has been made, is that of greater moderation and mutual forbearance in our political differences. Why should an election be a signal for the indulgence and display of so much bitterness and rancour? Why, if citizens differ in their views of public measures, or in their predilections for candidates for office, can they not differ as men, as brethren, and as Christians? The increase of heat and animosity during a few years past, is ominous of evil to our free institutions, and most alarming to the genuine patriot. What is gained to either side by misrepresentation and falsehood, by irritation and contumely, by invective and abuse? Why should the baring forward of a man's name as a candidate for office, set loose against him so many slanderous tongues, and make him a target for the darts of calumny and malice? Why should the ordinary charities of life be suspended or poisoned, and political differences separate friends and kindred? These things ought not so to be. And surely there is a voice from the recent graves of those who have been suddenly taken from the seat of authority, to rebuke this foul spirit. How near are these eager combatants, how near the candidates for whom they are battling, to eternity? How soon will animosities and differences be buried in the grave? "The fashion of this world passeth away." While men are fiercely disputing with each other, the ground opens beneath their feet, and they go down into the sepulchre. Surely, when tempted to employ the unwholesome arts of partizanship, they should call to mind the nearness of another world. When they are about to let loose the slander and to circulate the calumny, to depreciate the public services, or detract from the private worth, or disturb the domestic peace of an opponent, they should bethink them of the coffin and the tomb. There is something else to live for than the victory of party. There is fearful havoc made of immortal souls in these frequent strifes and hot contentions. And our hope and prayer should be that such solemn interpositions of the Almighty, as that which hath again occurred, may be as oil shed upon the perturbed waters. Let the statesman in his coffin be a silent preacher of peace and good will. Let there be a voice heard as it were from the fixed and pallid lips, testifying the littleness of all that is earthly, and the wickedness and folly of his embittered warfare. Let the dead yet speak of a message of kindness, moderation, and brotherly love. Let these differing in their political views remember that they are of one country, and of one faith; "that there is a house appointed for all the living;" and that they must lie down together in the grave. "Will not their ashes rest together in quietness? Or will the silence of the tomb be broken by harsh recriminations? Then let them live together in harmony, and differ though they do as citizens, they may yet be love as brethren, and be pitiful and courteous."—*Sermon on the death of Gov. Stockton, by the Right Rev. Alfred Lee, D. D., Bishop of Delaware.—Ep. Recorder*.

THE AFFECTIONS.

Look to the vigour of the affections towards heavenly things. If they are not constantly attended to, excited, directed, and