

were frequently observed among his hearers. Crowds assembled to listen and to wonder: inasmuch that the Managers were obliged to issue tickets at a shilling each, and still the Chapel was crowded.

As a specimen of the sorry stuff,—to give it no worse name—that captivated the ears of the Metropolitan Presbyterians, we shall quote a passage from the work mentioned at the top of this article, which he published after he had for some time resided in London:—

“Sorrow was not indigenous to our planet; nor did this eclipse of the Divinity frown upon her birth; her birth-star was the light of her Maker’s countenance; her birth-song was the music of the starred spheres; her birth-right was a womb teeming with wholesome fruits; and the ornaments of her birth was a face clothed with beauty, and blushing with virtue, happiness and peace. Into this stately palace, created and furnished for his reception, man was introduced to rule over it and enjoy it.”

This precious morsel, delivered with due emphasis and accompanied with appropriate action, contains sufficient to attract the attention of the most indifferent ear; though it could not much impress the heart. The sonorous voice and measured gesticulation of the orator pressed the matter upon the attention; but the same means were found inadequate to the conveyance of instruction to a well regulated, and accomplished mind. The reason is, that on a closer investigation of the matter delivered, and partially concealed under the fictitious drapery of false rhetoric, the whole turns out to be, notwithstanding the measured periods, downright nonsense. For example let us notice the metaphors introduced into the above quotation, which evidently applies to the primeval appearance of the earth, and which was undoubtedly meant to be truly sublime.

First, Sorrow is a *substance*, which may or may not be indigenous; and it immediately becomes an eclipse! The earth is then personified as a female Being, whose birth is accompanied with *stars*, and *songs*,—whose birth-right is her own womb,—and the ornaments of whose birth is a *blushing face*!! And to crown the whole, this female Being, thus gifted—thus adorned—turns out to be

A PALACE!!! Ohe jam satis! ah uno disce omnia.

In spite of such instance of bad taste,—instances which were innumerable, even in the course of a single sermon; Mr. Irving’s popularity still continued to increase. The managers of Hatton Garden finding the chapel was too small and much too confined for the vast assemblages which usually crowded to hear him, determined to sell it, and to build a larger and more commodious place of worship. Accordingly a magnificent building, in the first style of modern architecture, was soon opened for the reception of the orator and his admirers. There could not be less than 2500 sittings within the walls of the new chapel.

It was in this place that we chanced to hear him. The time was a Wednesday evening in the month of April 1829. The occasion was a preparatory exercise to the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. The preacher had begun a little before we entered; and every pew seemed to be full, we could only find room to stand in one of the passages in the gallery; and this, we were given to understand by an acquaintance, might be considered a great favour.

There the preacher stood, speaking in measured and well-rounded periods, and using vehement action with his hands. His figure was tall and muscular, his hair was permitted to flow, in primeval simplicity, down his shoulders, and back. The colour of it was jet black, it was parted in the middle of the forehead; and a favourite employment with him whilst preaching, was to put it back with his hand behind the ear. Unfortunately he had a strong cast in his eye in an outward direction: so that when appearing to look straight before him, he had, in fact, one eye directed to, and fixed upon, the left hand gallery, and the other, on the right. When the spectator was at such a distance as not to perceive this defect, Mr. Irving had altogether what might be called a venerable and commanding appearance. He spoke slowly and distinctly, and scarcely used a word that he did not conceive had with it some peculiar and, by no means, graceful action. Indeed his action was to the full as faulty, according to the principles of true taste, as his metaphors were. The best that can be said of it is,—that it was original, and striking.

We said that he had begun his sermon before we entered: we staid two hours, and left him still speaking. He appeared to have set all arrangement at defiance: he certainly was most deficient in the *Lucidus ordo*. We still remember the following passage: although we cannot vouch for the expressions—the ipsissima verba of the preacher:—

“Be ready against the third day: so Jehovah directed Moses to declare unto the children of Israel before they approached to the mount of God: ‘wash you, make you clean,’ the same voice still pronounceth to us: clean your souls and your spirits, by drinking and washing in the fountain of all knowledge and purity. That fountain is the Bible the true word of the Most High; the word which shineth, and still giveth light; the word that bringeth down the strongholds of iniquity; that reareth up the holy generation; and setteth them forward in the path, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. But,

My Brethren, in the usage of this preparative beware lest you mix the clean with the unclean; lest ye poison your souls through false philosophy. For the Bible, that blessed book of divine inspiration, may be likened unto an immense Laboratory; where the chemist hath prepared and laid upon various shelves around him, drugs both poisonous and wholesome: they are mixed together; they are in separate jars and vials, and they are labelled according to their true contents. It becometh us therefore to use them with care; to examine the label before we swallow the contents; lest whilst we are endeavoring to store up grace upon grace against the day of our sanctification, we may eat and drink the eternal damnation of our souls.”

Such as far as we can remember is a specimen of his extempore preaching: for he used no notes of any kind. A short time after giving utterance to this effusion, he broke off into a most vehement philippic against the Pope and the church of Rome, whom he denominated “*the little horn*.” This was, at the period we are speaking of, a favourite subject with him. The moment he touched upon it he went off with great animation, sparing nothing either internal or external, that belonged to “*the Beast*.” At intervals he paused, and uttered imprecations against the whole system of Roman Catholicism in the language of scripture. Anathema—anathema—anathema maran-atha—maran-atha—he would utter in a guttural and sepulchral tone of voice, and put on a horrid expression of countenance that made one shudder.

It was shortly after this period of his career that Mr. Irving fell into the religious delusion of teaching the doctrine of tongues and interpretation of tongues; founded as he imagined upon 1 Cor: xii. 10.—“*to another divers kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.*” Allowing his vivid but misguided imagination to be worked upon by this and passages of a similar nature, he actually came to the conclusion that the Spirit still speaks to mortals in tongues which they cannot understand without an interpreter, and founded his claim to popularity and greatness upon this discovery. It is remarkable to observe, and a useful inference may be made from the observation, that the man, who so earnestly cautioned his hearers against using what he was pleased to call the “*poison of the Bible*,” should in so short a time have drunk deeply of it himself.

The exhibitions that were made in consequence of this discovery drew immense concourse of followers. We never witnessed any of them; but we conversed with numbers that did. On one occasion a friend told us that he was present and heard the voices speak. The chapel was crowded to excess. The preacher was proceeding in his own peculiar style, illustrating and explaining the several technicalities of his new doctrines. He cast his eye towards one corner of the gallery, and observed a young female greatly agitated: so much so, that she appeared ready to fall into convulsions. Presently he paused, saying with considerable emotion—“*Listen, my Brethren, the Spirit seeketh utterance.*” A long pause ensued. Anon a quivering, tremulous, female voice, cried out with a power and energy that seemed supernatural—“*Eku—Eheku—ma—holi—holi—holi—b—a—h*”;—resting upon the last syllable with a sound that indicated an agony of despair. Another pause ensued. The preacher then rose up and prayed for an interpreter; so did others of the congregation. But no interpreter appeared. Instead however another labouring under the gift of tongues exhibited himself in a different part of the chapel. This was an elderly man, who presently broke forth in a tone, that with its unearthliness thrilled the congregation, saying—“*Hoki—meni—hoheka—kali—ma—holi—mela—soki—haki—b—a—h*”; and rising with his voice as he proceeded, until it had attained an unnatural pitch, which struck horror into the audience. Mr. Irving himself at last became the interpreter; and the voices were of course made to speak his own sentiments.

The subject of these extraordinary proceedings was taken up by the proper ecclesiastical authorities, and Mr. Irving was, by a solemn resolution of the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland, excommunicated from their church; and all connection hitherto subsisting between them declared to be null and void. After the passing of this resolution he was ousted from his fine chapel, and forced to preach in the streets and highways, or in any public building which the influence of his deluded followers might chance to place at his service. In this condition he died two or three years ago.

The conformation of Mr. Irving’s mind appears to have been of a very peculiar character, his imagination at all times outstripped his judgment, he seems to have grasped at first conceptions, and never to have waited until mature reflection taught him whether these conceptions might, or might not, be rendered practicable. Nothing is more dangerous in religion than the effect of such an unbridled licence to the imaginative faculties. The poet’s imagination may soar as high as it pleases, but it must be guided by probabilities and human sympathies. The imagination of the mathematician may in the same manner revel amid the vagaries of impalpable abstraction, but it must be guided by known conclusions and the proportion of numbers. But in matters of religion, it can be guided by neither the one nor the other: because doctrines are propounded as matters of faith, which probability and experience cannot

solve: and because there is no numerical proportion between points of theological discussion. For instance, we cannot say that as 1 : 2 :: faith : love. There is no exact proportion. Hence to speculate beyond the bounds of experience, and of the ancient land marks in matters of religion, is dangerous, and will as often—perhaps oftener, end in error as in truth.

Let therefore the individual of whom the foregoing remarks are made, serve as a warning to all who may feel disposed to speculate and invent new doctrines in the religion of the gospel. Such attempts will invariably terminate in insanity or rank fanaticism. The reason why such is the case cannot perhaps be easily explained: but that it is so experience universally proves. Witness Dr. Ash, Joanna Southcote, Anne Underwood, &c.

The members of the Church of England have therefore great reason to be thankful for their excellent and incomparable Liturgy, which based upon Scripture, leads them from strength to strength, and points out before them the way to everlasting life. On the one hand it guards them against coldness or inattention during their contemplations on religious things: for it breathes the most fervent spirit of piety and heavenly love. On the other it shields them from the vagaries of fanaticism: for its contents have been culled from the devotions and sentiments of the holiest and most perfect of the sons of men, who said “*I am the way, the truth and the life.*” Let us therefore rejoice in the Zion in which we are fortified: let us go round about her, and tell the towers thereof, and consider her palaces; let us not seek to wander in the by ways, where the light of truth shineth not, and which will inevitably lead all that walk therein to delusion, and unhappiness. But let us rest content with the light that is given,—marking as we traverse the vast wilderness of this dreary world, the paths, which holy men have trod before us, and which conducted them to everlasting glory; that so God may be our God forever and ever, and be our guide even unto death.

CRITO.

For the Colonial Churchman.

ASH WEDNESDAY.

MESSRS. EDITORS,

As it is the design of your periodical to admit every thing in your columns which may tend to make your readers (especially those who are members of the Church of England, best acquainted with the constitution and form of that Church, as well as the promotion of sound and vital religion,—I have, in accordance with these views, sent you the following extracts, taken from the 2d vol. of the ‘*Clavis Calendaris*,’ for the information of those who may not know why the Church has appointed a particular service for the first day of Lent, commonly called ‘*Ash Wednesday*,’ and why it is so designated—presuming you may deem them worthy of a place in your valuable paper.

M.

‘*Ash Wednesday* stands conspicuous in the history of the ancient church, for the severity of discipline exercised on that day: penitents appeared before their bishops with naked feet, and merely a slight covering over their bodies, consisting of the coarsest sackcloth, ready to submit to such penance as should be imposed upon them; those who were deemed deserving of exemplary punishment, were first amply sprinkled with the ashes of the Palm tree, or other evergreens, burnt on the Palm Sunday of the preceding year, and then driven out of the church door, the whole of the clergy assembled upon the occasion following them, repeating the words of the curse denounced against our first parents, ‘*In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread*’—a degradation they had again to undergo on the succeeding Sunday: but such as had sinned in a less degree, were merely marked on the forehead with the sign of the cross, and admonished to continue in the fair course they had begun. ‘*Remember man that dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return,*’ was the awful and salutary lesson impressed upon the human mind, whereby to mortify vanity and humble pride.

The primitive Christians did not commence their Lent until the Sunday now called the first in Lent—Pope Felix the third, in the year 487, first added the four days preceding the old Lent to Sunday, complete the number of fasting to forty, of which it actually consists, as hath already been observed.

Pope Gregory the Great introduced the sprinkling of ashes on the first of the four additional days, which gave it the name of *Dies Cinerum*, or *Ash Wednesday*; and the Council of Biverium in the year 1091, strictly enjoined the observance of this ceremony, which continued from that period to be invariably practised by the Christian church until the Reformation.