

## Poetry.

## THE FIRST SOUL IN HEAVEN.

By faith Abel...obtained witness that he was righteous. God testifying of his gifts; he being dead, yet speaketh.—Heb. xi. 4. "No man could learn that song but...the redeemed."—Rev. xiv. 3.

In hush'd eternity alone  
Before all creatures were,  
Jehovah held His awful throne  
Unworshipp'd by a prayer.

There was no space, nor scene, nor time,  
Nor aught by names we call;  
But, centred in Himself sublime  
Was God, the All in All!

But through eternity there ran  
A thrill of coming change,  
And lustrous shapes of life began  
Around His throne to range.

Radiant with rapture, pure as bright,  
Angelic myriads rise,  
And glow and glisten in the light  
Of God's approving eyes.

In volumed waves of golden sound  
Roll from celestial lyres  
Those swelling chants, that peal around  
From new-created choirs.

But hark! and the shining throng  
Of Shapes who arch their wings,  
A single Voice another song  
With mortal cadence sings:

Alone he seems, and chants apart  
In unexpected notes  
A music where the grateful heart  
In strains of feeling floats:

A beauteous Soul! whose seraph brow  
Is bright with glory's hue,—  
Lo, angels pause to hear him now  
Their harping pause outdo.

Their choral rapture swelled as deep  
As purity could pour;  
But they, who have not learned to weep,  
May never God adore.

With such a burst of whelming love  
As earth's first martyr sang,  
When glory to the Lord above!  
The voice of Abel rang.

Angelic harps their key-note found  
In God, as great and good;  
But Abel's heart did beat and bound  
As only sinner's could.

"Worthy the Lamb! who shall be slain;  
Redemption crowns thy song;  
Ye seraphims! your notes retain,  
But these to me belong."

Thus might the primal soul who came  
Forth from his bleeding clay,  
Kindle the heavens with His bright name,  
Who is our Truth and Way.

And with that blissful song he blent  
A humbling depth of tone,  
Which to the ransom'd harper lent  
A music all its own.

Angels for bliss and being sang  
Their ecstasies on high;  
But how the heavens with wonder rang  
When MAN awoke the sky.

With that new song, Redemption gave  
To Abel's pardon'd soul!—  
Till angels ceased their wings to wave,  
Nor let their chorus roll.

But listen'd with entranced ears  
To that bright martyr's strain,  
Whose notes were born of banish'd fears  
And breath of ended pain.

But from the hour when rescued man  
Enter'd within the veil,  
And heaven's delighted host began  
To list redemption's tale.

Myriads of blood-wash'd souls have flown  
Where the first spirit went,  
Till he, who once hymn'd Christ alone,  
Is now with numbers blent.

Each nation, kindred, home, and clime,  
Helps to increase the throng,  
Making the heavens grow more sublime  
With Earth's redemption-song.

Each minute, guardian angels mount  
With some new soul on high,  
And hear it, close to Glory's fount,  
Deepen that endless cry,—

"Salvation! through the bleeding grace  
Of God's incarnate Son,  
Whose merit for a banded race  
A more than Eden won."

And louder, louder yet will grow  
That song before the Throne,  
As added saints set free from woe  
Shall make the strain their own.

Lord! grant that we on earth begin  
To tune the heart's deep lyre,  
And by prophetic notes within  
Anticipate the choir.

Who ever round Thee chant, and sing  
The song no angels can,—  
"Hail! Prophet, Priest, and destin'd King  
Before the world began,

"Prostrate beneath Thy face to fall  
And cast our crowns before Thee,  
Oh Thou, The Everlasting All,  
Be this our brightest glory!"

—R. R. Montgomery's "Christian Life."

## EPICUREANISM.

The morality of the Epicureans was founded on opinions, apparently, and to some extent, really he opposite of those of the Stoics. Their maxim was, that pleasure was the greatest good, and pain the greatest evil. A maxim which can, by no possible process, be brought into accordance with

Christian morals. The common use of the word "epicure," for one devoted to the pleasures of the palate; and the expression of "Epicurus' sty," used by one of the poets, have, however, led to a misconception of the doctrine of Epicurus, which is a slander even upon him. Epicurus did not confine his ideas of pleasure to mere sensual pleasure, in the gross sense in which that phrase is commonly used. The paradise of Epicurus was not a brothel, or a drinking house, or even a dancing room. It was a garden, in which the pleasures of the pure senses of sight and hearing were combined, with the semi-intellectual gratifications of music, and with the merely intellectual delights of converse. The grosser senses were not excluded from their proper gratifications; but a wise moderation was enforced, by the just inference, that those men enjoyed most pleasure who enjoyed it longest; and that those enjoyed it longest; who enjoyed it with the most moderation. There are not a few moderns, who are baptized Christians, and perhaps think themselves something more, whose morality does not differ very widely from that of Epicurus rightly understood.

But it must be admitted to be a very imperfect and dangerous system. One which affords no ground upon which true Christianity can be erected, because it recognizes no social ties beyond those which exist among persons who minister to each other's pleasures, taking the word in the large sense, in which we have said that the Epicureans used it. A still greater difficulty is, that it does not recognize self-denial. This virtue must lie at the basis of the Christian character. Without it there can be no Christianity. "Whoever," said our Blessed Lord, "doth not take up his cross and follow Me, cannot be My disciple." Again, and still more plainly and strongly; "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me."

The error of the Stoics was dogmatic, they really denied a personal god. They admitted, in their own sense, "gods many and lords many;" but among them there was none that united the attributes of personality with those of deity. He is not a person who has not a will. He is not God who is not supreme. The gods many of the Greeks, whom the Stoics, like other Greeks, worshipped, were not supreme; they had wills, as men had, but, as men also were, they were bound by a stern law of necessity. Such wills, are scarcely wills at all, and those who have only such wills, are scarcely more persons than the planets which revolve in their orbits, in compliance with, not in obedience to, laws which they can neither know nor resist. But admitting, for the sake of argument, that Zeus and his family were, upon stoical principles, persons, and they were so as much as men were upon the same principles, there remains still another difficulty. They were not God; for they were subject to a law, which they did not themselves impose. In this view it is not necessary that the law should be one which, like the law of gravitation, and other laws imposed on brute matter, executes itself and cannot be resisted. He who is subject to a law in the sense of a rule of action imposed by a superior, which the inferior is bound to obey, is not supreme, and, therefore not God. But the gods of the Stoics were subject to the law of necessity, which they were not merely bound to obey, but which they could not choose but obey. If they had wills at all, which is, at least doubtful, they had no free will; no real capacity of choosing what they would do. They were so far from being the governors of the world, that they were not the masters of their own conduct.

The supreme power of the universe was then necessity; but necessity was never conceived of as a person, but as a law. A law without a legislator, imposed by no person, enforced by no will, but regulating all nature by its own blind and unreasoning force. This is the God of the modern Pantheists. Not a personal God, having a will and attributes, a moral character, so to speak; but something which is to be found everywhere, which manifests itself in every thing, and according to which, and by which, every thing exists; but which has no will, and no capacity of beginning or stopping any motion or other proceeding at its pleasure. This is a law, not a person. It is impossible to conceive that such a thing as this can be supreme. Like every other law, it must be a creature, called into being by some will. It is impossible for any man to disbelieve in the existence of his own will; although it is possible for him to persuade himself that he disbelieves. But the consciousness that he does will, will always be to him the same unanswerable proof of his will, that the consciousness of his existence is of his being. Hence, in his study, could disbelieve, that is, could persuade himself that he disbelieved, his own corporal existence; but when he was called upon to act, his sophistry fled before his consciousness. Just so it is with him who supposes himself to doubt the existence and freedom of his will. As soon as he acts, his consciousness of action forces upon him the belief of his power to act. Scarcely less powerful is the argument, for the personality, that is, for the will, of God which results from His action. Things cannot have gone on as they are now going from all eternity. The uni-

verse must have had a beginning, and that beginning must have been produced by a will which could begin, or desist from acting, not by a law which cannot begin or desist. If we concede that the world might have begun by the operation of a law, we gain nothing, for that law must have been made by some will. We can no more conceive of a law without a maker, than we can of action without a will. A lawgiver must be a person; because a law is only an expression of a lawgiver's will.

Yet so anxious are men to get rid of the idea of a personal God, Who is competent to act as a judge, that there are now Pantheists in the world. It is worthy of notice, how they came there. Their system is the development of a particular school of Christianity. We mean historically not logically. Pantheism is historically derivable from that particular school of theology, which delighted in considering God as a being who had shut out His own Will from His own world, by expressing it, once for all, in a decree which was to regulate every thing to all eternity. He would seem, if one may say it reverently, thus to have reduced himself to the position of the duties of Epicurus, who were shut out from the government of the world. This scheme of theology does not, it is true, represent God as abandoning the government of the world, because He is too much engrossed with his own personal pleasure to have time for it. But it represents Him as having left Himself nothing to do, by having reduced everything to decrees and laws, which execute themselves without personal intervention. This scheme differs from the Stoical necessity in this. In the one case, necessity is the work of God, and imposed by him. In the other, it rules and governs God Himself, and yet has no author. Yet the more absurd doctrine seems to be the development of the other, and to have grown out of it. It has not done this so much by any logical process, as through the desire of men to push God out of His own world. One great step towards towards this was regarding Him as having shut Himself out of the continuing government, by an exercise, once for all, of His Omnipotence, disposing forever of every thing which might arise to all eternity to employ Him. But it was a further step when these decrees and laws, which this theory supposes Him to have enacted, are first confounded with Him, and then substituted for Him.

These Pantheists are the modern Stoics, who regard the Church as a setter forth of strange gods, because she preaches "Jesus and the Resurrection," doctrines which imply the personality of God and the responsibility of men. Responsibility cannot really exist without personality, that is will, in man. Nor can it exist without personality, that is will, in God. There can be no responsibility without a law, and the power of obeying or disobeying that law. The existence of a law implies the personality of God, since all law is the expression of His Will. The power of obeying and disobeying, on the part of man, is only another form of speech for his personality.

But while the Epicureans were practically involved in the dogmatic errors of the Stoics, they held their own peculiar errors in moral theology, and they are the matters which we chiefly intended to discuss in this paper. The fundamental principle of their morals was, that pleasure was the chief good, and pain the chief evil. Of course self-denial was according to them, no virtue. The gods, according to their dogmatic theology, acted upon this principle. They made use of their power solely for selfish purposes, and sought for none but selfish enjoyment. Pleasure might be animal, it might be intellectual, it might even be moral. If a man, by doing a benevolent action, could procure for himself more gratification, than by employing the time or property which enabled him to do it, in any other manner, it was wise in him to do so. But, in so doing, he did not do any thing more virtuous than if he preferred employing the same means in procuring a more selfish pleasure. In fact, his conduct was looked at solely as it produced pleasure, or did not produce pleasure; and of pleasures, Epicurus, thought like Paley, that they differed only in duration and intensity. There could be no difference in the degree of pleasures, other than that of intensity, for pleasure was in itself the chief good. It might be worth while to abate from the intensity of our pleasures, in order to prolong their duration in order to increase their intensity. This was a matter of calculation, or, perhaps, of taste. A fast man, might crowd into a short existence a great deal of pleasure; one of a slower temperament might prefer spreading less intense delights over a longer space of time. Each was entitled to pursue his own course; and neither had any right to censure the other. All this proceeds upon the principle, that pleasure is the chief good; and every man must decide for himself, what kinds and degrees of pleasures are best adapted for him. But pain is the chief evil; and that he is always to avoid. Moreover, there is no moral governor of the world, and, therefore, there can be no responsibility for any thing. Every thing brings its own actual consequences, and is to be sought or avoided for those consequences only. There are in the world, at this day, abundance of these Epicureans; who regard the Church as a

babbler, because she preaches the following of Jesus, through self-denial, and works of mercy, and a Resurrection; "in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the Resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the Resurrection of damnation."

These Epicureans are not collected into a formed sect; but they are found everywhere, in all sects, and beyond the limits of all sects. They constitute, in fact, the mass of the people of the world. The modern Stoics, the Pantheists, meet the followers of our Blessed Lord with argument, such as it is. They pretend to interpret the Holy Scriptures after a new and more spiritual, or rather intellectual, method, by which they may be read in a non-natural, sense, and so come to mean Pantheism, disguised under myths, to accommodate it to the notions of a gross and ignorant generation. But the Epicureans give themselves to such trouble. They simply put aside Christianity as troublesome. It does not suit them. No doubt it is true; but then it is not important. The day of judgment is, for any thing that any body knows, a great way off; the day of their own deaths is very uncertain. In the meantime they have enough to do to enjoy themselves, and like the deities of Epicurus, they are resolved so to do, at the expense of every thing else.

They do not feel called upon to prove, that pleasure is the chief good, and pain the chief evil. That would be too much trouble. They assume that it is so, and act upon the assumption. They will not even announce the notion in the form of a distinct proposition, they might be called, upon to prove it; which would be an interruption of their pleasures. They are not going to lose their chief good by talking about it. If any person doubts the correctness of their notion, or the wisdom of their conduct, he may argue about it as much as he likes; but they are not going to take the trouble of answering him, or even of listening to him. Their principle does not rest upon argument; it is self-evident, that pleasure is the chief good and pain the chief evil. All men admit, that one is a good and the other an evil. They must then be, respectively, the chief good and the chief evil, until a greater is produced. They will not look at any evil which is greater than pain, that would be disagreeable; they will not accept of any good which is greater than pleasure, for that must involve some self-denial, in the abstinence from pleasure, which they are resolved not to practise.

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23-4f

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5-1f

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41-1ly

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6-1f

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OFFICE:—Directly opposite the Arcade, St. Lawrence Hall, King Street, Toronto.  
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