

THE BIBLE CHRISTIAN.

"EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE."

Saviour's death in the work of human salvation. But the effect is produced by its moral influence on the mind of man. We cannot admit it to be the sole procuring cause. To do so, would be to do manifest injustice to the teachings of Sacred Scripture. Partiality for a favourite doctrine, and the dread of departing from it, may, and does, induce many excellent people to overlook very plain passages of holy writ, when these passages happen to interfere with the easy enjoyment of their favourite notions. Such a class of persons can perceive a deep and affecting meaning in the former part of Rom. v. 10, "when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," but they fail to perceive any such deep significance in the latter part of the same verse, "much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Here salvation is evidently ascribed to the life of Christ,—that is, to his teaching and example. Now the candid and impartial student of the Scriptures who is not bound by any sectarian dogma, will not close his eyes to the force of such an expression as this. Purification from sin, and the gift of eternal life, are likewise ascribed in Scripture to obedience on the part of the believer (1 Pet. i. 22, Heb. v. 9). And salvation, in other places, is said to be effected by hope (Rom. viii. 24), by the "word" or doctrine of Christ (James i. 21), and by his resurrection (Rom. x. 9, 1 Cor. xv. 17). The candid student, we repeat, cannot shut his eyes to these facts. And the inference to be drawn from a survey of the whole, is, that all the agencies mentioned have a certain influence in the work of human salvation. We cannot exclude any of them without offering disrespect to the Scriptures, which we profess to take as our guide. All these saving influences have come to us through the mission of Jesus Christ; therefore Jesus Christ is our Saviour.

What is called the "Orthodox" doctrine of atonement is founded on a partial interpretation of the Scriptures, it does injustice to the character of God, and involves obvious contradictions. It keeps in view those texts which refer human salvation to the death, or blood, of Christ, and overlooks those which ascribe it likewise to other influences. It represents the Deity as laying bare the arm of vengeance against a perfectly innocent being, whilst the grossly guilty are permitted to escape. It says that an infinite sacrifice is required for sin, and that Christ, an infinite being, laid down his life to offer such a sacrifice. This involves the assertion of the death of an infinite being, which is a palpable contradiction. But this contradiction, we know, is readily covered by the everlasting plea of mystery,—a plea which already shelters the dogma of Transubstantiation, as well as that of the Trinity, and which is still broad enough to cover any others of a similar stamp which the timidity or credulity of the world will permit to be so protected.

We have been led into these remarks on the doctrine of the Atonement by seeing the letter of Dr. Cox of Brooklyn concerning the "Orthodox" theology of Great Britain. Dr. Cox is one of the leading "Orthodox" clergymen of the United States, and, as we noticed in our last number, he directly charges his brethren in Great Britain with inculcating false and confused views of this doctrine. Nay more, he insists that it yet requires to be thoroughly investigated on both sides of the Atlantic. He says,

"The controversy as to the atonement, is soon to become the question of the day. They [the British Theologians] are far behind us in it, and we have no general proficiency of which to boast. Still, I am sure that the atonement is the grand radiating centre of theology; that it is understood competently by very few even of our clever and eminent divines; that the power of the pulpit, and the glory of religion, requires a thorough philosophical elucidation of that transcendent theme. I hear grave and erudite preachers every where making broad and sweeping assertions, which I am sure they have not proved, and which I know are not true. Indeed, they are legalising, strained, confused, and blundering to the souls of their auditors."

This is plainly spoken, and we believe it to be true. We believe that "orthodoxy," notwithstanding the marvellous light of which it boasts, still finds itself surrounded by a mist.

"The controversy as to the Atonement," Dr. Cox thinks, "is soon to become the question of the day." How the Doctor and his brethren will settle it, we will not venture to surmise. We hope, however, that they will perceive the simplicity of the Gospel, and be contented to rest there. The doctrine has undergone several important modifications at the hands of theologians already. For the information of our readers, we commence in our present number the publication of a sketch of its history, which we commend to the careful perusal of all.

Dr. Davidson, formerly Professor of Biblical Criticism for the Irish Calvinistic Presbyterians in the Royal College, Belfast, and now occupying a similar situation in the Lancashire Independent College, for the English Calvinistic Congregationalists, has written a letter, which appeared in the *London Patriot*, in which he makes strictures on some of the proceedings of the Alliance, and withdraws from connection with it. A part of his letter throws important light on the state of opinion regarding the eternity of future punishments. He is a studious and accomplished man, and his testimony on this point we consider very valuable.

"Some proceedings of that Conference created in me considerable dissatisfaction. I allude particularly to two propositions, inserted in what is termed the 'Doctrinal basis.' In one of these, statements are made by which the Friends and many of the Plymouth Brethren are excluded; in the other, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, the eternal blessedness of the righteous, and the eternal punishment of the wicked, is propounded. My objection to these propositions is, that they exclude many Christians. It is not difficult to foretell the reception which the clause relating to the everlasting punishment of the wicked will meet with among a number of thinking men in this country. I give no opinion at present on the scripturality or unscripturality of it, as this is not necessary for my purpose. But I know men, of whose Christianity there can be, in my opinion, no doubt, who hesitate about receiving the doctrine of punishment literally eternal. I believe, too, there are many highly intelligent Christians all over England, (not at all Unitarian,) both ministers and laymen, who are either averse to the doctrine, or have not at all sufficiently studied it, so as to be prepared to subscribe it. In Germany, all the leading evangelical clergy and people, with the exception of Hengstenberg, and perhaps Tholuck, will not adopt it. Such men as Neander, Nitzsch, Julius Muller, Ullmann, Kneke, Bleek, &c., reject it, if I am not greatly mistaken; and thousands of pious Germans do the same.

"I object, therefore, to these two propositions, on the ground of their exclusiveness. In my opinion, they shut out from the association men whom God will not shut out from heaven. They would have excluded such men as John Foster and John Milton," &c.

With regard to creeds also, Dr. D. expresses himself very plainly. He not only objects to the creed of the Alliance, but to creeds generally. He affirms rightly that "ecclesiastical history shows their utility and positive injuriousness." "On the present occasion," he continues,

"A creed is particularly objectionable, because the piety of a man is not manifested by the complexion of his doctrinal belief. Life is the test of true religion. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Conduct is the great index to man of the conformity of his fellow-man to the spirit of the Gospel."

This is truly spoken, and well. So is this: "The Almighty has drawn no line in the Scriptures by which poor humanity might ascertain the amount of doctrine to be believed in order to salvation. Nor has he given any warrant whatever for dividing true Christians into more orthodox and less orthodox; into those whom we can love readily, heartily, easily, with whom we can enjoy sweet fellowship; and those whom it is more difficult to love and sympathize with, because they believe rather little. On the contrary, the Scriptures teach us to love all who bear the Saviour's image. Such as give practical evidence of loving the Saviour must be most loved. To them will the believer feel attracted more easily than to such as exhibit less of the Redeemer's image."

"A word fitly spoken," how beautiful it is! It is "like apples of gold in pictures of silver." While that company of "loving bigots," as the Alliance has been well termed, were striving to make Heaven as narrow as possible, and exclude as many as they could, there were some among their number to revolt at their proceedings, and raise a voice in favour of the essential principle of the Gospel. Several others, we believe, have seceded as well as Dr. Davidson.

"THE CHRISTIAN INQUIRER."

This is the title of a weekly journal recently established in New York, "one of the main objects of which is to explain, defend, and enforce Unitarian views of Christianity." We are much gratified to find that our friends in the leading commercial city of the United States have succeeded in carrying this, their cherished project, into execution. The first numbers have reached us, and they bear the mark of carefulness and ability on the part of those concerned in the management. The accidental and melancholy death of the gentleman originally engaged as Editor, will not, as we learn from private sources, interfere with the continuance of the paper.

A Unitarian newspaper was required in New York. Such an one as the *Christian*

Inquirer promises to be, is required in many other places beside. In saying this, we do not mean to insinuate anything against the two excellent Boston papers—the *Christian Register* and *Christian World*—both of which are well sustained, and for whose Editors we have great respect. But the moral atmosphere of the capital of New England, in its effect upon Unitarianism, is entirely different from that of almost every other place. In Boston, Unitarianism has many churches and a multitude of supporters. It is influential, and cannot be frowned upon, and jostled out of existence by popular orthodoxy. The position of the Unitarians of Boston prevents them from perceiving the constant necessity of "explaining, defending, and enforcing" the distinguishing doctrines of the Unitarian faith. Hence, in the Boston religious papers connected with our denomination, we have comparatively little doctrinal discussion. They have quite enough, we presume, for their own latitude, but certainly not enough for other latitudes. Montreal, for example, requires much more of it than is seen in the *Christian Register* or *Christian World*. To supply this defect, and to penetrate somewhat farther into the "waste and wilderness" of Canada, this unpretending sheet was set on foot some three years ago. New York city and state, require a bold and open discussion of the differences between liberal views of Christianity and the doctrines of popular orthodoxy. Every one who perceives the blighting influence which such orthodoxy has on the human mind, crushing the spirit of free inquiry by frightening the multitudes whom it cannot convince, will agree with us as to the necessity of bestirring ourselves to free society from its disastrous domination. This is not such a matter of indifference as some excellent persons seem to think it is. The evil we complain of is real, visible, undeniable. It is by no means necessary that theological controversy should be of the un-candid, ungenerous character that it too frequently exhibits. If candour and generosity must necessarily be immolated at its shrine, we should stand far from it. But it is not so. Error can be exposed without acrimony, and the truth can be spoken in love. This is the course which the *Christian Inquirer* proposes to take, and, without bating our good wishes for any existing journal of our denomination, we wish it all success.

We subjoin the terms of subscription:—
Terms.—Two dollars and fifty cents per annum, delivered by the carrier; and two dollars to mail subscribers: in all cases in advance. Single copies, six cents. Subscriptions received at the Reading-Room of the Association, at the bookstore of C. S. Francis & Co., 252, Broadway; or at 143, Greene Street.

CONVENTION AT PHILADELPHIA.

The Autumnal Unitarian Convention met in the First Congregational Church, Philadelphia, on Tuesday, 20th October, and was called to order by the Rev. Mr. Lothrop, of Boston, Chairman of the Committee of Arrangements. The following gentlemen were unanimously elected officers of the Convention:—

President.—Rev. F. Parkman, D.D. Boston.
Vice-Presidents.—Walter R. Johnson, Esq., Philadelphia; Hon. Albert Pearing, Boston; Rev. F. A. Farley, Brooklyn, N. Y.
Secretaries.—Rev. A. R. Pope, Kingston, Mass., and Rev. Thomas Hill, Waltham, Mass.

The Rev. Dr. Parkman opened the proceedings by appropriate remarks; and the Rev. Mr. Furness, pastor of the church, offered a cordial greeting and welcome to the members.

Rev. Mr. Lothrop stated the order of exercises, and read the following Resolutions, as those to be offered for the consideration of the Convention:—

"Resolved, That in holding our first convention in the city of William Penn, we would express our respect for his Christian character and services, our sympathy with his humane and spiritual views, and our earnest hope that they may have increasing power over the minds of Christian people, and the policy of Christian nations."

"Resolved, That the state of morals in our country, the condition of the Christian Church at large, and of that portion within our own field is such, as to give us deep solicitude for the future, to move us to thorough examination of our hearts and ways, and call us to a solemn consideration of our spiritual wants, and the means of promoting more faithfully the cause of Christ."

"Resolved, That we insist now, as heretofore, upon the duty of all Christians to labor to extend the gospel and its influence throughout the world, and whilst we rejoice in what has been done among ourselves for the distant places of our land, and especially among the destitute of our towns and cities, we lament that so much apathy exists upon the whole subject, and would regard all that has been accomplished but as the beginning of a great work, to which we are called of God and our own consciences."

Sermons were preached by the Rev. E. B. Hall, of Providence, R. I., and the Rev. F. H. Hedge, of Bangor, Me.

The Convention was conducted throughout in a truly free and Christian spirit, and was characterized by great earnestness of purpose.

On the 21st, about 500 ladies and gentlemen sat down to an elegant collation provided by the friends in Philadelphia. This 'family party' was, by the unanimous consent of all present, one of the pleasantest ever held.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.—The usual semi-annual Communion was held in the Unitarian Church of this city, on Sunday morning, the 8th instant. For the information of our friends at a distance, we may state that there were Eighty Communicants. Sixteen of these, on that occasion joined the Unitarian communion for the first time, most of them having been formerly in communion with Trinitarian Churches. The morning service was devoted wholly to the ordinance. It was a sacred and deeply interesting occasion, and we have every reason to hope that those who sat down to commemorate the death of their Lord, rose with their souls refreshed, and their love to Him strengthened. May the divine influences of the occasion constantly abide in our hearts.

UNITARIANISM IN BOSTON.—There are in Boston twenty-five regularly ordained Unitarian ministers, and settled over as many religious societies, and one unsettled clergyman who ministers to another congregation—making twenty-six in all. Five of these are connected with the ministry at large. The whole number receive salaries to the amount of \$42,000 annually. The houses in which they preach, and the sites on which the churches stand, are estimated to be worth \$800,000.

It is remarked as a curious coincidence, that Mr. Everett, the recent United States Minister to England, and Mr. Bancroft, just appointed to the same post, were both formerly Unitarian clergymen.

"FAMILY CHRISTIAN ALMANAC," for 1847.

We have accidentally met with a copy of this Almanac, which makes high pretensions to a religious character, and proposes in its prospectus to give a list of all the religious denominations in the country, and ministers connected therewith. We turned to it with some interest, but were entirely disappointed in the information we sought. It will be remembered that during the last Session of the Provincial Parliament a good deal of attention was given to the claims for privileges of certain religious societies denominated respectively, "Bible Christians," "Christian Universalists," and "Christians." We had a desire to see where these worshipping societies were located, but we find no mention of them whatever in this publication. This we confess surprised us, considering its pretensions. It is very desirable that every facility should be given to the public, for ascertaining the character and condition of religious societies seeking privileges from the Legislature. Of the "Bible Christians," we do not pretend to know anything further than their existence in certain parts of Canada. Of the "Christian Universalists," we know little, save that they have some dozen congregations. Of the "Christians," we know something. We know that they have between twenty and thirty churches in the country—organized in the "Canada Christian Conference."—In the Legislative Session before last they had the privilege of holding lands for religious purposes, granted to them. We have been in one of their places of worship in the thriving village of Ithaca, on the shore of Lake Ontario. The "Christian Church" there is one of the most prominent buildings in the place, well finished, and capable of seating six or seven hundred persons. In this village, likewise, the "Canada Christian Conference" publish a religious newspaper, called the "Christian Luminary." Now, these are prominent facts, and we are glad of this opportunity of bringing them before the public. The compiler of the "Family Christian Almanac" either knew them, or he did not. If he knew them and withheld them, then he is deficient in integrity. If he did not know them, then he is wanting in intelligence. And, in either case, he is disqualified for the task he has undertaken.

According to the Chinese map of the world, it is said that China occupies nearly the whole space,—but a small portion being allowed for any other nation or people. The Almanac before us seems constructed on the principle of the Chinaman's map. We know nothing of the compiler, but we can see clearly that it is the work of pietistic orthodoxy. The Roman Catholics were rather numerous to be blotted out of this "orthodox" map. But the other denominations verging in the opposite direction of "heterodoxy" are quite overlooked, as nonentities. The Chinese, "eccelestials" however, are beginning to open their eyes and perceive that China does not occupy the whole earth, and that the "barbarians" are somewhere and live somewhere, although they do not shave their heads and wear robes, like themselves. And we hope that "orthodox" individuals, such as the compiler of the Almanac, will soon imitate the good example set them by the illustrious people of the Celestial Empire. We hope they too will soon be enabled to open their eyes and perceive, that "orthodoxy" does not monopolize the whole of Christendom, and that the "heterodox" are really somebody, and have a local habitation and a name, although they do not conform precisely to their leading peculiarities.

The present notice gives us an opportunity to offer another remark which we are desirous should be kept in view by the public. That is—the entire want of candor shown by orthodox publications, generally, when anything connected with Unitarianism is concerned. In looking over the list of Sabbath Schools of this city, as given in the "Family Christian Almanac," page 120, we see no mention made of the school in connection with the Unitarian church. Yet there is one, and it has been for years, and has a superintendant, and teachers, and scholars, as well as any of the others. The compiler must have known the fact of the existence of the Unitarian Sunday School, for its hour of meeting is marked in the tabular form on the preceding page. Again in the list of "Newspapers and Periodicals" presented on page 123, no mention is made of this paper, yet the *BIBLE CHRISTIAN* has been in existence quite as long as half of those given. We should not have placed any importance on the fact of its being included, and we only notice its omission with the view of illustrating the unjust systematic efforts which are constantly exerted against liberal views of Christianity, by popular orthodoxy. Against such unfairness we make our appeal, to all candid minds, of every creed. When an Almanac is compiled and sold professedly for the information of the public at large, they have a right to demand that the information should be honestly and fully given. The suppression of truth is as bad as the suggestion of falsehood, in the compilation of an Almanac as well as in everything else.

We fear that it will be found erroneous in other respects likewise. Take, for instance, the item of intelligence directly beneath that just noticed. It is of the "Government of the United States." There we have George Bancroft set down as Secretary to the Navy. But is not George Bancroft the Minister from the United States to the Court of Great Britain? We have neither time nor space, however, to notice its incorrectness more at large.