

EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY.

True religion, that is obedience to the commands of God, both as regards doctrine and ordinances, is, and always must necessarily be evangelical in its character. But in religion, as in politics, *names*, instead of *things*, or dogmatical assertion instead of the proof which Scripture affords, are frequently resorted to, with a view to create prejudice, or to disarm truth of its power over the human mind.

Favourite dogmas, or opinions, however unsupported by the Bible, when once embraced by those who have not taken a comprehensive view of the whole Gospel plan of salvation, are often brooded over, and so much importance attached to them, that the mind becomes morbid, and thus their Scriptural reality is as firmly believed as if they were written with the pen of an angel. Men of this class will not be governed nor directed by the most explicit teaching of the Church, even during its pristine and purest state. Acting on the principle that their own private judgement, unaided by the wisdom and knowledge of the whole Church, is their best and surest guide, they seize on particular texts of Scripture, and without reference to other parts connected with them—without regard to their exposition by the early Church, or of the meaning then attached to particular words or phrases, they put their own construction upon them, and having thus settled the matter conclusively to suit themselves, they modestly assume some striking name, which they suppose is calculated to tickle the itching ears of those who are unlearned or unstable in the Scriptures. But this is not all; names of reproach are often applied to those who differ from them, and thus frequently not only false issues are presented, but parties are formed in the Church, which lead to the commission of sin, and always, more or less, deaden that charity which ought to exist among brethren. The bandying of epithets—the names of *High Church* or *Low Church* of *Tractarians*, *Puseyites*, *Evangelicals*—cannot alter the word of God, or make it other than it is. The doctrine of the Church, irrespective of names, as set forth in her Creeds, Articles, Catechisms, &c., are those which should govern all who are in her Communion. If, in construing them, there should be a difference of opinion, which is tolerated by the Church, it is a most flagrant breach of charity to impute wrong motives, or to invent names of reproach for those who honestly differ in their views. If, on the contrary, the Church has settled their construction, then those who differ from the Church should depart from her Communion, if they are unwilling to abide by her judgement. In the last-named case, the discipline of the Church should, if necessary, be resorted to; but, in the former, the parties being honest in their opinions, reason, argument, and Scripture alone should be urged to convince either party that their views are erroneous, or lead to mischievous consequences. But unfortunately, this is not the case. Those who maintain what they believe the Bible and the Prayer-Book both plainly teach, to-wit that the Church was divinely organized—that its Ministry was divinely appointed, and consisted of three orders, the higher order alone having power to ordain; that the sacraments are not unmeaning rites, or merely memorials of Christ's love for man, but that they are, when worthily received, instruments of grace of remission of sin, and that we are regenerated in Baptism. All these doctrines, which they believe were taught from the beginning, are denounced by many who call themselves Evangelical Christians, as the very opposite of true Evangelical Christianity.

Evangelical Christianity, in its true meaning, is the only Christianity which a true Churchman knows. He believes it consists in obedience to the whole law of God, and in submission to the law of God's Church, where it does not plainly conflict with his expressed will. He believes that Evangelical Christianity, as found in the Scriptures, is no where more clearly, more truly, and more explicitly taught and expounded than in the Book of Common Prayer. Like Adam Clarke, he considers the Prayer Book next to the Bible, as the book of his understanding and his heart. He believes that what it plainly and precisely says it

means; and he resorts to no shift or contrivance, or mental reservation, to evade the force of its language. He believes that what it plainly teaches in accordance with Scripture; and whilst he has charity and kind feeling for all who differ from him, however erroneous he believes their views to be, he accords them honesty of motive, and he labours zealously but kindly to show them their error. At the same time he humbly admits that he may be in error himself. What he thus believes the Church teaches, he firmly upholds; and no charity, falsely so named will induce him to tolerate that which he believes to be unscriptural. And he holds it to be a Christian duty "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints." Acting on these principles he studies his Bible and his Prayer Book. When he reads in the letter, "that it is evident unto all men, diligently reading holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the apostles' times, there have been three orders of Ministers in Christ's Church—Bishops Priests, and Deacons:" he verily believes this to be true. When he reads in the offices for ordaining Priests, and consecrating Bishops, the Prayer of the Church, "Almighty God, giver of all good things, who by Thy Holy Spirit hath appointed divers orders of Ministers in Thy Church," &c., he most surely believes that the Church teaches that the Holy Spirit appointed these orders, and therefore, that they were divinely instituted: he consequently believes that man cannot make void the appointment of God. When again, he reads therein, "that no man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, in this Church, &c, except he be called, tried, examined and admitted thereunto according to the form following, or hath Episcopal ordination," he verily believes that the Church in this, means what she says, that is, that no man can rightfully be accounted a Minister in the Church of God, without he is Episcopally ordained.

Again, when he reads in the Nicene Creed that there is "one baptism for the remission of sins;" he is simple enough to believe that this is merely adopting St. Peter's language "be ye baptized, every one of you, for the remission of sins;" hence he concludes that the Church teaches that, in Holy Baptism, God is pleased to remit sin to all who worthily receive it.

Again the Evangelical Churchman reads in the order for administering Baptism, this exhortation of the Minister, "seeing, now, dearly beloved brethren, that these persons are regenerated and grafted into the body of Christ's Church," &c.; and, also, when he reads therein the prayer directed by the Church, "Give thy Holy Spirit to these persons, that being now born again, and made heirs of everlasting salvation, &c., he does not believe that the Church following Scripture, teaches that "regeneration" is used in its Scriptural meaning: it is not conversion, nor is it renewal of the heart. It is a change of state, a being born in the kingdom of grace." It entitles the party to the covenant blessing of God, and makes him an adopted child, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, all of which will be forfeited unless the party is truly repentant, and leads a life in conformity with his baptismal obligations. But whilst the Churchman does not believe the sins of the impenitent are remitted in baptism, he does believe that grace is given, though it may, as said by the Apostle, (2, Cor. vi. 1.) "be received in vain." He believes that grace is received, because the Church in her Articles, following the Apostles, says, "Sacraments are sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace and of God's will towards us," &c.; and he believes that if the witness is sure, and the signs effectual, grace is surely imparted by God: but although grace is received, yet the remission of sin does not necessarily accompany it, except in a case of true repentance. In the case of infants, repentance, of course, is not needed.

The Churchman then believes in the "thus saith" of the Bible and the Prayer Book. He does not endeavour to explain away the plain and natural import of words in either, to accommodate them to some preconceived opinions of his own. He truly believes that what they say they mean, and he believes all this to be truly Evangelical Christianity. His daily prayer is, "O, Lord, who hast taught us that all our doings, without charity, are nothing worth, send Thy Holy Ghost and

pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace, and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before Thee. Grant this for thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. —Church Herald.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION.

We go to Church to render acts of homage to the King of kings, and to receive in return the privileges He vouchsafes to His faithful subjects. Our first act in His service is a general confession of our sins; and our first privilege is the absolution or forgiveness of our sins.

What other blessings, indeed, could be placed before God's forgiveness? What more sweet and precious than His favour? What more bright and cheering than the light of His countenance?

Yet know, dear reader, that this pearl of great price is not cast before swine to be abused and trampled under foot. It is offered only to those who have discovered its value and who feel how miserable they are without it.

Who are they? Not those who say or fancy they have no sin, and therefore nothing to be forgiven: for as St. John says, they deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them: but only those who confess their sins, for to such, and such only, God has promised to forgive their sins, to cleanse them from all unrighteousness.

How, then, shall we offer up in Church a true confession?

1. By understanding what we confess.

For it is hypocrisy to say "we have done those things which we ought not to have done," without attaching any meaning to our words. And we cannot mean anything, unless we institute a strict inquiry on the subject. And self-examination must be previously prepared at home; for it is too important a work to be passed over in a few minutes at Church.

2. By feeling what we confess. For as many persons know that their chamber is unclean without caring to clean it; so many sinners know the whole catalogue of their crimes by rote, without feeling ashamed of their unhallowed state, either in the sight of God or man.

3. By forsaking what we confess. For as people, after taking the trouble to sweep up the filth of their chamber, will sometimes leave the accumulated heap unremoved, in the midst; so it is not enough to feel shame or compunction for sins, without determining to be altogether rid of them. Beware, lest, after all they be left uncleared upon the conscience, and uncanceled upon the Book of God's remembrance.

4. By coming to Church in time to confess them. For as no man can make agreement unto God for his neighbour; so it is no advantage to find that others have confessed their sins in our absence.

5. By attending when we make confession. For many persons take this, as being the earliest opportunity of looking round about at the congregation, instead of looking (then more than ever) at their evil hearts, and at their sins. Thus they lose, of course all the blessings of the ordinance.

6. By kneeling when we confess. For there cannot be a greater mockery, than for a criminal to sue for his life, while he lounges comfortably at his ease.

Such with the help of Almighty God, would be a true confession. And as he has mercifully promised forgiveness to all who truly make it; so He has "given power and commandment to His Ministers, to declare and pronounce to His people the absolution and remission of their sins" He sent His dear Son, and the Son sent others, and they others again, to proclaim publicly and solemnly in His name and in His stead, pardon to all them that truly repent and believe the Gospel. This ministerial commission and authority is given in the Holy Scripture, which is appropriated for the Gospel on the first Sunday after Easter. It is then recited, because our Lord delivered it on one of the forty days, between His resurrection and ascension.

The pardon which he delivered on that occasion, you, dear reader, are privileged to receive even now as often as you hear it pronounced by the Priest in Church, after you have joined with the congregation in making

a true confession. You may receive it every Sunday; in many places every day of the week. You may receive it in a still more solemn and particular manner, whenever you repair, after due preparation to the Holy Communion.—Penny Post.

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