

From the Episcopal Recorder.

RENUNCIATION OF UNITARIANISM.

The Gambier Observer quotes from the London Christian Remembrancer, the following account of Rev. Mr. Ketley's renunciation of the errors of Socinianism. "It was effected chiefly through the instrumentality of the Rev. Mr. Butler, Curate of St. Margaret's, Ipswich. The statement made by both is highly interesting; evincing just that kind of spirit which a Christian would wish to see at the bottom of such a change—a spirit of meekness and holy reverence." The language addressed to Mr. Butler by his dying wife and his compliance with her wishes, present a most remarkable exemplification of Christian benevolence. Exhibitions of this nature are peculiar to Christianity, and such as this, rare indeed even among Christians. It is simple and sublime.

The parties had had many long interviews; each hoping to gain the other over to his own views, till at length Mr. Ketley, seeing that the opinions of Mr. Butler were not only convictions of his mind, but his life and hope also—his all in all—he gave up all hopes of changing his opinions, and confined himself to the defence of his own. Thus did they continue their private conferences—labouring apparently in vain; but at length an impression was made on Mr. Ketley; and how? The circumstances are worthy of serious attention, going to show what usually lies at the root of this dreadful heresy, and how it is best healed. We give Mr. Butler's words:—

"This subject I invariably endeavoured to consider with him as one involving his own eternal interest, about which I avow I felt more than an ordinary solicitude from the moment when I dared to hope I might be employed in promoting it—a solicitude which augmented as my acquaintance with him proceeded, from causes which you who have known him, will readily conjecture. The first day on which I can now, in looking back, discern any impression made upon his mind, (an impression he did not himself become aware of until long after) was the 3d of April, 1835; a day never to be forgotten by me. I watched by the bedside of my dying wife—you will not deem me impertinent, if I yield to the impulse that prompts me here to pay one tribute to her memory, and record a better was never formed by God, or lost by man. I watched by her dying bed—a storm, unusual at that season, raged, unheeded by her; the thunder roared, and the rain descended in torrents:—

"Without was nature's elemental din,
And beauty died, and friendship wept within."

A servant announced that Mr. Ketley was in the house. I declined seeing him. 'Go,' said the dying—'go to him, Piers; you may be of use to him.'

On seeing my friend I said to him 'I feel incapable of entering into argument with you now—let us read together a portion of the Bible.' He consented. I chose the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; and read, briefly commenting as I proceeded. In answer to some remarks I made on the term 'propitiation,' he contended that the word in the original being the same by which the mercy-seat is denominated, merely implied the manifestation of divine mercy by Jesus Christ, without any reference to atonement; and that nothing was mentioned of his blood. I repeated the words which had escaped his attention, 'through faith in his blood.' When leaving me, 'I am convinced' he said, 'no man, in your present situation, could make the effort you have made, in conversing with me to-day, without genuine desire of my spiritual benefit; and whatever conclusion I may come to respecting the subject of your conversation, your motives I shall ever appreciate as I ought.' From that time his manner became more serious in our discussion, and he appeared to defer more to the authority of Scripture.

From this beginning, Mr. Ketley proceeded, till he fully embraced 'the faith once delivered to the saints,' during the whole period of his inquiries, studying most diligently, often reading at the rate of ten hours a day; and when his mind was at length made up, he conferred not a moment with flesh and blood, but openly, in his own pulpit, and to his own people, announced the change of his sentiments. Nor sentiments only; his feelings appear to have been as effectually wrought upon as his opinions; he seems to have received the truth, as applied by the Spirit, and in

the love thereof. On this subject he speaks thus in his address to his people:—

'You ask, and it is no impertinent curiosity that prompts the question; whence this change in me, who some fourteen years ago, published in the 'Christian Reformer,' a statement of my conversion to Unitarianism, and, in subsequent dialogues, embodied the substance of real conversations under fictitious names? Do you ask whence this change? and with a look of positive incredulity, though there are no apparent, as I know there exists no real proof of insincerity, do you say how can these things be, and the man be in sober mind, and under the influence of pure, unsullied motives? I answer you, and with all sincerity, with no reserve, as under the all-seeing eye, against which I dare not sin—I answer you, as I shall at the tribunal of heaven, where you and I must abide and stand the day of His coming, whose brightness, even when veiled by humanity, is above the splendour of the sun, and whose eye shall penetrate through all the folds of sophistry and self-imposition to the hidden motives of you and me—I answer you with a deep and thrilling sense of the responsibility that attaches to me not only on the ground of sincerity in which I stand 'thrice armed, and triple proof,' but also on the ground of faithfulness; I answer you: and I charge you in the presence of Him, who is the judge of quick and dead, that you listen to my answer, and that you despise not its import. I attribute my change of sentiment to the effected operation of the divine Spirit, producing conviction in me, not in a miraculous way, but in the way he usually influences believers; proofs of which millions of Christians have within them, agreeably with the doctrine that is as sound in philosophy as it is clear in the revelation of the Gospel, that God is the prime mover in the spiritual, as in the physical world; since Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God alone giveth the increase.'

From this whole transaction, some important lessons may be gathered. One is in relation to the mode of dealing with those who deny the doctrine of the Trinity. Mr. Butler did not indulge his disciple by arguing abstractly on the depth of his divine nature, and of the mode of divine existence; he preferred to view this great doctrine practically, and to occupy himself and his inquirer with 'the important question—the scheme of salvation.' This, we believe, to be the true method in most cases of the kind. Any other flatters pride of intellect, and leads the parties concerned to fall unconsciously into the notion that the whole subject is a mere speculation. We may safely say that there is not a subject proposed to us in the Bible as a mere subject of speculation. The remark is especially true with regard to the divine nature. God never reveals himself to us to furnish a subject to what our intellects.—He unveils his mysterious Majesty to our weak vision, only that in the light thereof we may see and feel our weakness, ignorance, insignificance, and sin. We may always regard it as the fundamental principle that into the Holy of holies above all, we never should have been conducted except in order that we might fall down before the mercy-seat as sinners, and adoring, cry like the prophet, 'wo is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.'—He that acts in the spirit of this remark in dealing with the deniers of our Lord, is alone likely to meet with success, and his success alone is likely to be spiritually profitable to the man whom he may turn from the error of his ways. So did Mr. Butler.

Another lesson is on the importance of maintaining the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. A departure from strictness here opens the door for unbounded rationalism, so called. Low views here render the oracles of God, in effect what the oracles of the heathen deities were in nature, indeterminateness and ambiguity. We do not, in such case, ask, 'What saith the Lord?' but 'what must the Lord have said?' We go to the Bible, not to learn, but to teach; not to derive ideas from the words, but to force ideas upon them. Instead of 'trusting the Lord with all our heart,' we 'lean to our own understandings,' and the result is pretty much the same as if we had no revelation. On the contrary, if we believe that those messengers from God, whose writings we possess, 'spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but

in which the 'Holy Ghost teacheth;' then it may be expected that we shall receive the Scriptures as indeed a revelation, believing that 'foolishness of God is wiser than men,' we shall receive the divine testimony in the exercise of a simple faith and a child-like docility of spirit—we shall 'become as little children.' A want of these high views of the inspiration of Scripture characterized the creed of Mr. Ketley, while a Socinian; but he happily discovered his error. We give his own words:

'Bear with me (continues Mr. Ketley) as I proceed to disclose to you my present state of mind. I more than suspect, or I would make no public confession, I feel convinced—and it is with becoming humility and sorrow that I state it—I feel convinced that I have leaned too much to my own understanding, when I have gone to the inspired writings; that I have formed a most erroneous and dangerous view of their amount of inspiration; believing it to be in that low sense which, as it now forcibly strikes me, only tends to lessen their value, and diminish their authority as a rule of faith, but necessarily produces that effect. Under the influence of these two principles I see most clearly that I have made the teachings of revelation to coincide with what appeared to me rational views; without suspecting what, after careful thought on the subject, will appear very evident that this is a most fatal principle, and that, while it has the appearance of being reasonable, is the reverse, and so far from securing rational interpretation, renders it impossible. Why do these effects flow from the first principle? Because, if we resolve to believe nothing implicitly—nothing but what we think to be reasonable, what chance have we for understanding the revealed will of God? How can we make the divine word the man of our counsel?

The following opinions of some of the most eminent reformers on the continent of Europe, with regard to the primitive constitution of the Church, are taken from the Rev. Mr. Boyd's tract on that subject, which has already appeared in the Colonial Churchman. He asks "the reader to bear in mind that the Churches on the continent did not generally preserve the Episcopal succession, for the want of Bishops."—Ed. C. O.

JOHN CALVIN was contemporary with Luther, and died, A. D. 1561. He says in his Institute, "It will be useful in these things, to recognise the form of the ancient church, which will represent the image of the divine institution, as if to our very sight." As we have said, that a threefold ministry is commended to us in scripture, in like manner, whatever the ancient church had of the ministry, it distinguished into three orders; for the order of presbyters, part were appointed pastors and teachers, the other part over the regulation and correction of conduct." "Therefore Jerome, when he speaks of five orders in the church, enumerates bishops, presbyters, deacons, believers catechumens." "Those to whom the office of teaching was enjoined, were all called presbyters. They elected one out of their number in each city, to whom they gave especially the title of bishop, lest from equality, as usually happens, dissensions might arise." "The right (of ordination) was by the imposition of hands, for I read of no other ceremony used besides this, unless that the bishops wore a habit somewhat adorned, in the stated assembly, by which they might be distinguished from the other presbyters. They ordained the presbyters and the deacons also by the imposition of hands alone: but each bishop ordained his own presbyters." "Whence the ancient writers often mention this, that the presbyter differed from the bishop in nothing, unless in his not possessing the power of ordaining." He also admits that bishops in the primitive church were governors. "For this end to every bishop was committed the government of his own clergy, that they should rule the clerks (clergy) according to the canons, and hold them to their duty."—These quotations are taken from a chapter of the "Institute" the title of which is, "Of the state of the Old Church, and of the manner of governing, which was in use before the Papacy." Toplady, a non-episcopal writer, tells us that "this great reformer, Calvin, wished for the introduction of Protestant episcopacy into the reformed churches abroad;" and that he, Calvin, Bullinger, and others, made a "serious motion, in the reign of Edward VI., to have bishops