

Original Poetry

(For The Church.) TO THE BIBLE.

Font of Eternal Wisdom!—while I gaze Upon thy waters, and behold them flow, Life, beauty, and dispensing here below, Thy healing streams and earth thy youthful days...

(For The Church.)

The Hebrew, that weeps on the mountain Beholds thee, O Zion! no more! The waters which gush from life's fountain, Are dry on thy desolate shore.

Thy Temple of light hath been clouded With the pall that envelops the dead; The soul of thy beauty is shrouded, The light of thy spirit is fled.

Like the gloom that hangs over the billow When the clouds of destruction are near; Is that darkness which rests on the pillow, When hope has forsaken us here.

Still we look for a glorious morning, When the storms of the day are pass'd by; And turn from the dark clouds of sorrow, To that light which remains in the sky! Cobourg, February 28. E.

THE SACRAMENTS A BARRIER AGAINST HERESIES.

(From Dr. Waterland's Works.)

[CONTINUED FROM OUR LAST.]

IX. About the year 360 rose up the sect of Marcionites, otherwise called Pneumatocli, impugners of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost. They were a kind of Semi-Arians, admitting the Divinity of the second Person, but rejecting the Divinity of the third, and in broader terms than the Arians before them had done. However, the Sacrament of Baptism stood full in their way, being a lasting monument of the true Divinity of the third Person as well as of the second; and by that chiefly were the generality of Christians confirmed in the ancient faith, and preserved from falling into the snares of seducers.

X. About the year 370, or a little sooner, the sect of Apollinarians began to spread new doctrines, and to make some noise in the world. Among sundry other wrong tenets, they had this conceit, that the manhood of our Saviour Christ was converted into or absorbed in his Godhead. For they imagined, that by thus resolving two distinct natures into one, they should the more easily account for the one Person of Christ; not considering that the whole economy of man's redemption was founded in the plain Scripture doctrine of a Saviour both God and man. In opposition to those dangerous tenets, the learned and eloquent Chrysostom (A. D. 405. circ.) made use of an argument drawn from the Sacrament of the Eucharist, to this effect; that the representative body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist (sanctified by Divine grace, but not converted into Divine substance) plainly implied, that the natural body of Christ, though joined with the Godhead, was not converted into Godhead; for like as the consecrated bread, though called Christ's body on account of its sanctification, did not cease to be bread; so the human nature of Christ, though dignified with the Divinity, did not cease to be the same human nature, which it always was. We may call this either an argument or an illustration; for indeed it is both under different views. Considered as a similitude, it is an illustration of a case; but at the same time is an argument to show, that the Apollinarians were widely mistaken in imagining that a change of qualities, circumstances, or names, inferred a change of nature and substance. Bread was still bread, though for good reasons dignified with the name of the Lord's body; and the man Christ was still man, though for good reasons (that is, on account of a personal union) dignified with the title of God. Thus the Sacrament of the Eucharist, being a memorial of the incarnation, and a kind of emblem of it, was made use of to explain it, and to confirm the faithful in the ancient belief of that important article. But I proceed.

XI. About the year 410, Pelagius opened the prejudices which he had for some time privately entertained against the Church's doctrine of original sin; but the Sacrament of Baptism looked him full in the face, and proved one of the most considerable obstacles to his progress. The prevailing practice had all along been to baptize infants; and the Church had understood it to be baptizing them for remission of sin. The inference was clear and certain, and level to the capacity of every common Christian. Wherefore this single argument had weight sufficient to bear down all the abstracted subtleties and laboured refinements of Pelagius and his associates, and proved one of the strongest securities to the Christian faith so far, during that momentous controversy.

XII. About the year 430 appeared the Nestorian heresy; which, dividing the manhood of our Lord from the Godhead, made in effect two Persons, or two Christs. Here the Sacrament of the Eucharist was again called in to compose the difference, and to settle the point in question. For since the virtue and efficacy of the supposed personal union of the real body with the Divine nature of our Lord, it would be frustrating or evacuating all the efficacy of the Eucharist, to divide the manhood, in such a sense, from the Godhead. The argument was just and weighty, and could not fail of its due effect among as many as had any tender regard for so divine and comfortable a Sacrament.

XIII. Within twenty years after, came up the Eutychian heresy; which, in the contrary extreme, so blended the Godhead and manhood together, as to make but one nature of both, after the example of the Apollinarians, whom I before mentioned. The Sacrament of the Eucharist was of eminent service in this case also, for if the bread and wine in that Sacrament are what they have been called, (and as constantly believed to be) symbols and figures of Christ's body and blood, then it is certain that our Lord really put on flesh and blood, and that his human nature was and is distinct from his Divine. To say, that "the Word was made flesh," or that the flesh was converted into the Word, in such a sense as to leave no distinct humanity, was as much as to say, that the Sacraments now make us not "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;" and that the Eucharist in particular, is an insignificant show, or worse, either not representing the truth of things, or representing a falsehood. Such was the argument made use of in the Eutychian controversy; a plainer or stronger there could not be nor any wherein the generality of Christians could think themselves more deeply concerned.

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XIV. Long after this, in the eighth century, endeavours were employed by many to bring in the worship, or at least the use, of images into churches. In this case also, the Sacrament of the Eucharist was seasonably pleaded, for the giving some check to the growing corruption. The good Fathers of Constantinople, in the year 754, meeting in council to the number of 338, argued against images to this effect: that as our Lord had appointed no visible image of himself, his incarnation, or passion, but the eucharistical one, and probably intended that for a most effectual bar, to preclude all appearances of idolatry; it would be high presumption in men, without warrant, without occasion, and against the very design of our Lord in that Sacrament, to introduce any other kind of images of their own devising. The opposite party, some time after, (A. D. 787.) in the second Council of Nice, eluded this plain reasoning, by pretending, falsely, that the sacred symbols are not the image of Christ's body and blood, but the very body and blood; and thus they laid the seeds of that error, which grew up at length by degrees into the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation. For the true notion of the Eucharist lying cross to their darling schemes, they chose rather to deprave the Sacrament itself, than to stand corrected by it. However, all this tends to confirm the main point, which I have been insisting upon, that the Sacraments, among other very valuable uses, have for many ages upwards been the standing barriers against corruptions; though there are no fences so strong, nor any ramparts so high, but daring and desultory wits may either break through them or leap over them.

XV. I shall add but one example more; and it shall be of Faustus Socinus, of the sixteenth century; a person of pregnant wit and teeming invention; of moderate learning, but a very large share of sufficiency.—His great ambition was, to strike out a new system of religion from his own conceits; though he happened only to revive (and perhaps very ignorantly) the ancient Sabellianism, Photinianism, and Pelagianism, with other exploded heresies. He began with subverting (as far as in him lay) the true and ancient doctrine of the Trinity, rejecting the Deity of the second Person, and even the being of the third. After a thousand subtleties brought to elude plain Scripture, and after infinite pains taken in so unnatural a war against Heaven, he was yet sensible that he should prevail nothing, unless, together with the doctrine of the Trinity, he could discard the two Sacraments also, or render them contemptible. Baptism was a standing monument of the personality and equal Divinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and the other Sacrament was an abiding memorial of the merits (though no creature can merit) of our Lord's obedience and sufferings; and both together were lasting attestations, all the way down from the very infancy of the Church, of the secret workings, the heavenly graces and influences of the Holy Spirit upon the faithful receivers. Therefore to let the Sacraments stand, as aforesaid, was leaving the ancient faith to grow up again in the Christian world, much faster than Socinus, with all his subtle explications of Scripture texts, could bear it. Well being aware how this matter was, he fell next upon the Sacraments; discarding one of them, in a manner, under pretence that it was needless; and casting the other, with respect to what was most valuating it, to render it despicable. It was thought able in it, to render it despicable. It was somewhat odd, by some of his own friends, that he should labour to throw off Baptism, and to be content to retain the Eucharist, which appeared to be comparatively of slighter moment, and less insisted upon in Scripture. But he well knew what he did; for in the form of Baptism stood most directly in his way. As to the Eucharist, if he could but reduce it to a bare commemoration of an absent friend, there would be nothing left in it to create him much trouble; but it might look sincere and ingenious, in that instance at least, to abide by the letter of the text, and to plead for the perpetuity of an ancient and venerable (now by him made nominal) Sacrament. This appears to be the most natural account of his conduct in the whole affair. For otherwise it is a very plain case, that a lively imagination like his might have invented as fair or fairer pretences for laying aside the Eucharist; than for discarding Baptism; and it might have been easier to elude some few places of Scripture than many.—But I return.

From the induction of particulars here drawn together, and laid before you, may be understood, by the way, the true and right notion of the Christian Eucharist, such as obtained from the beginning, and continued till the dark ages came on, and longer; but the point which I aimed at, was to illustrate the use of both the Sacraments considered as fences or barriers, ordained by Christ, to secure the true faith, and to preclude false doctrines. Few have ever attempted to corrupt Christianity in any of its considerable branches, but first or last, they have found themselves embarrassed by one or both Sacraments; and have been thereby obliged either to desist presently, or to expose themselves farther, by quarrelling with those sacred institutions, which all wise and good men have ever most highly revered.

I have taken notice, how the most essential articles of the Christian religion have, in their several turns, (as they happened to be attacked,) been supported and strengthened by these auxiliary means. The doctrine of the visible creation by God most high; the doctrine of our redemption by Christ, both God and man; the doctrine of sanctifying grace by the Holy Spirit of God, a real Person, and also Divine; the doctrines of original sin, and of our Lord's meritorious sacrifice, and of a future resurrection of the body; these, and as many others as are contained in these, have all been eminently preserved and held up by the Christian Sacraments. The Sacraments therefore are full of excellent instruction and admonition; they carry creeds and commandments, as it were in the bowels of them; they speak even to the eyes in silent imagery, and often teach more in dumb show, with less expence of time and much greater efficacy, than any the most eloquent discourses could do.

LABOURS OF THE EARLY MISSIONARIES IN AMERICA.

[Continued from "The Church," of February 14.]

NEW ENGLAND.

In answer to a number of queries addressed by the Society to the missionaries, Dr. Johnson gave, in 1727, the following account of his mission at Stratford:—"The first beginning of the Church of England in this town was about ten or fifteen families, most of

them tradesmen, some husbandmen, who were born and bred up in England, and came and settled here, and some of them were born here, and by means of the rest reconciled to the church. It is now twenty years since they first endeavoured to have the worship of God in the method of the church among them; but were disappointed till about five years ago, ever since which the numbers have been considerably increasing, so that now there are about fifty families within the compass of ten miles square who pretty steadily frequent the church."

Others attended occasionally from the surrounding country within a circuit of thirty miles, for so ill provided was the settlement, that to the eastward there was only one church within 100 miles, and none at all to the north. The next year, he records the conversion of two native Indians, and the reconciliation to the church of seven entire families who had left its communion. Subsequently, he informed the Society of "two or three likely young gentlemen," who, having been for some years dissenting preachers, had, by their course of reading and conversation, been led to entertain doubts of the lawfulness of their ministrations, and would in all probability, together with their congregations, conform to the church. One of these, Jonathan Arnold, was, on the recommendation of Dr. Johnson, and at the earnest solicitation of the members of the church in Connecticut, ordained as itinerant missionary for that colony. As the Society was at this time pledged to the full amount of its income, and Mr. Arnold was possessed of some means of his own, he expressed his readiness to serve without stipend from the Society, receiving only the very insignificant allowances which could be afforded by the people.

It appears by a letter from Dr. Johnson, in 1741, that the country was infested by "a variety of travelling, enthusiastic, and antinomian teachers, who so afflicted the people with their dismal outcries, that their bodies were frequently affected with surprising convulsions, and involuntary agitations, and cramps, but that the church had rather gained than suffered by these commotions, for that three or four families had come over to it in consequence." Indeed so considerable was the increase of the congregation at Stratford, that it was found necessary to build a new church there, while several were in course of building in different parts of the country, in the hope of being provided with the services of a missionary by the Society.

In 1743, Dr. Johnson expresses his thanks to the Society for the "excellent scheme they have concerted for providing for such young men as offer themselves candidates from hence, of whom the number is still increasing, as well as that of places where they might be advantageously situated."

The following interesting paragraph is taken from the same letter:—"I lately opened a new church at Ripton. On the Sunday following, a dissenting teacher—one Mills—being a great admirer of Mr. Whitfield, reviled and declaimed against my sermon, which was upon the subject of relative holiness, and the reverence due to the house of God. He insisted that there is no more holiness in a church than under an oak tree, &c., and soon after some of his followers put his doctrine in practice, by defiling the church with ordure in several places. This zealous man gave out, when Whitfield first appeared, that their expelling and encouraging that great reformer would utterly destroy the church, root and branch; but now, finding the event to be the entire reverse of his predictions, he is grown out of all patience with us. In the meantime, while they are daily spitting out their potent venom against us, I thank God we have a blessed spirit of peace and charity, and of zeal and unanimity, with every other Christian virtue happily prevailing among my people, who are carrying on our new church with great despatch, and we have had several new families added, and more seem likely to follow them."

In various subsequent letters, he speaks of the demand for more clergymen, and mentions no fewer than eight candidates, who were anxious to proceed to England for ordination. He says, Feb. 12, 1745, "As there is such a growing disposition in the people in many places to forsake the tenets of enthusiasm and confusion, so there is the like disposition increasing in the college, where there are already ten children of the church, and several sons of dissenting parents that are much inclined to conform. I was there last week, and was much pleased with their exercises. . . . Thus the harvest is large, and the labourers not a few, who would gladly be employed, and be content with moderate wages as can be thought tolerable, whenever the Society shall be in a disposition to employ them, or any of them."

This zeal in behalf of the church of their fathers, and the desire to be employed in its ministry, which was felt and expressed by so many, is the more remarkable, as the sectarian government of New England continued to oppress every such feeling by the most wanton and harassing persecution. "Though the madness," (says Dr. Johnson, 1745,) "of the late enthusiasm has somewhat abated, the venom of it still continues, and, I fear, rather increases, and operates in a virulent manner, in many places, against the church, so that no sooner does any person in authority appear for the church, but he is soon displaced, and some bitter creature set up by the government in his room; and in some places, notwithstanding the law they had made in our favour, they have, of late, taxed the lands of the church people, in common with the dissenters, towards the support of their ministers. I have myself lately had no less than ten pounds [of] my money forced from me toward maintaining three of the worst creatures in the government, being taxes raised upon some lands I had in the places where they were teachers. But what I would mention as the greatest grievance of this kind, is the case of the church people at Darby, who are forced to pay such a land-tax in their own town [ship] to a dissenting teacher and meeting-house in one of their villages, (where they have a church of their own to finish, and a minister to provide for), the amount of which in the whole will be very considerable."

And not only did those who were favourably inclined to the church expose themselves to the ill-will of their provincial government, but were subject to discouragements of another kind. There was no episcopal school or college for the education of their children, and, in many districts, no service according to the usage of the Church of England, inso much that Dr. Johnson, resolute and uncompromising churchman as he was, found himself under the necessity of entering into the following explanation, in answer to some ill-natured rumour: "As to my son. It is indeed a great mortification to me and him, that I am obliged to send him to a dissenting college, or deny him any public education at all; and rather than deny him a collegiate education, I confess I do not deny him going to meeting when he can't help it, to which he is himself so averse that nothing but necessity would put him upon it. He comes home to church once in three weeks, or a month, at least to the communion if possible, being fourteen miles; and as often as there is church there, he goes to Westhaven, which is four miles." Another, and the principal difficulty of all, which has been frequently before alluded to, was the necessity under which every candidate for the ministry was laid of going to England for ordination. The office of missionary, arduous, responsible, and ill-requited as it was, could not be obtained, without a dangerous, in several instances it proved a fatal, voyage of 6000 miles. Yet were there not found wanting persons ready and willing to give themselves to the work.

In 1743, Dr. Johnson says, "Here is an ingenious gentleman, one Mr. Prince, of very considerable learning, having been for fifteen years a fellow of Harvard College, in Cambridge, who has conformed, and desires to serve the church in holy orders, and would willingly go home in the spring; and here is an honest neighbouring dissenting teacher, who will very soon appear for the church, and probably bring the greatest part of his congregation with him."

In 1746, he writes, "A love to the church is still gaining in the college, and four more, whose names are, Allen, Lloyd, Sturgeon, and Chandler, have declared themselves candidates for holy orders, and there seems a very growing disposition towards the church in New-haven, as well as the college, so that I hope there will be, ere long, a flourishing church there." I have heretofore desired leave for Messrs. Dibble and Learning to go for orders, and am now desired to ask the same for Messrs. Mansfield and Allen, as soon as the Society can be in a disposition to receive them."

In 1747, he sends to the Bishop of London information of "a number of vacancies, four of which are in this colony, so that (he says) I am now alone here on the sea coast, without one person in orders besides myself, for more than a hundred miles, in seven ministers, and those northward have their hands full; so that my burden is at present insupportable; nor have we yet leave for any to go home, though there are five or six valuable candidates. Unless, therefore, the Society can provide, or your lordship can think proper to ordain, on such titles as can be made here, (which in some places, though not without much hardship, may, I believe, be made equal to 300, sterling per annum), the church must soon decay apace. Meantime, it is really affecting to hear the cries and importunities of people from several quarters, and not have it in one's power to help them."

While the wants of the church were so urgent on the one hand, and on the other so many promising young men, whether originally born in her communion or converts from dissent, were ready and anxious to enroll themselves in her service, it is impossible to repress a feeling of regret that the means did not exist for rendering their talents immediately available. Had a theological college been founded, and a bishop sent forth to ordain elders in every city, and to care for the interests of the church, many, doubtless, would have ranged themselves on her side who were led by the circumstances of their position to take part against her. Possibly an orthodox church might now be flourishing in a country where the unsystematic theology, and the anti-episcopal discipline of the Puritans have found their natural development in the general prevalence of Socinianism. As it was, and in spite of manifold discouragement, the church grew apace. Shortly after Dr. Johnson's settlement at Stratford, Mr. Cane, having on his recommendation gone to England for ordination, was appointed to the neighbouring mission of Fairfield, while Mr. Beach and Mr. Seabury, forsaking the communion of dissenters, were ordained to the cures of New Town and New London. In 1736, it was found that in the whole colony not fewer than 700 families were in communion with the Church of England.

This increase is attributed by Dr. Chandler, not exclusively to the labours of the clergy, but in no small part to the extravagant lengths to which Whitfield and his followers proceeded; and there can be no difficulty in believing that the unmeasured denunciations of the enemies of the church might have led to a calm consideration of her doctrines, while the religious anarchy produced throughout the country by the preaching of uneducated fanatics would dispose the more sober-minded Christians to seek for shelter and repose in the bosom of the church. The prevalence of many erroneous views, as to the authority and ordinances of the church, induced Dr. Johnson to publish several treatises in her defence; and he appears to have been no less successful as a controversialist than he was useful and efficient as a missionary. Indeed, his publications in vindication of the church attracted the attention of the University of Oxford, and in 1743, the degree of D.D. was conferred upon him by diploma. This, it will be remembered, was the second time that he had been honourably noticed by the university.—His M.A. degree was given in hope. "Sperantes nempe, illius ministerio, aliam et eandem, olim, nascituram Ecclesiam Anglicanam." The present diploma referred to this expectation as in part realised. The church had, however, still need of such champions.

In 1748, he says, "Scarce ever was there a people in a more bewildered and confounded condition, occasioned by the sad effects of Methodism, still in many places strangely rampant, and crumbling them into endless separations, which occasions the most sensible of them to be every where looking to the church as their only refuge." A year later, he speaks in the same tone, and describes "a disposition among the sectaries to the church as still increasing," especially at Brantford, where, within two or three years, twenty-five families had conformed.

It seems that the missionaries of this period were no more exempt than those of our own day from the evils or imputations of slanderous tongues. It may be worth while to mention the charge of making alterations in the Liturgy, in order to record Dr. Johnson's indignant denial. "This (he says) is very hard indeed, when we have given so much proof of our inviolable attachment to it, and that the established episcopacy and liturgy is dearer to us than anything in the world besides; so dear as to leave fathers, mothers, brethren, sisters, houses, and lands, and venture our lives to the greatest hazard for it,—twenty-five having gone a thousand leagues for episcopal orders, of whom no less than five have lost their lives, and several others suffered the most dangerous sicknesses, and all at the expence of more than we could well afford; and all this when we might have had the greatest applauses of all our friends and acquaintance (if we could have made our consciences easy as we were) and the best preferments they could give."

While congregations of European settlers were forming in the villages round Stratford, at Norwalk, Hebron, Middleton, Wallingford, Guilford and Brantford, neither the native Americans nor the poor African converts were neglected. "I have always (says Johnson) had a catechetical lecture during the summer months, attended by many negroes and some Indians, about seventy or eighty in all, and as far as I can find, where the dissenters have baptized one we have baptized two, if not three or four, negroes or Indians; and I have four or five communicants."

NATIONAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL BLESSINGS.

(From a Sermon by Rev. Thomas Atkinson, Rector of St. Peter's Church, Baltimore.)

We, my brethren, as members of the Church, have additional and very weighty reasons for offering up thanks and ascribing praise to God. To that branch of His holy Church to which we belong, His favour has been remarkably extended during the past year. Not six months, scarcely three months, have elapsed since very painful forebodings clouded the minds of some of the truest and best friends of the Church. It was feared that a tendency to Romanism existed among some of the clergy and laity in England, and even in this country. Now, it would be uncandid in me to deny that there was reason for that fear. Sentiments were advanced in books, tracts, and newspapers which could scarcely be reconciled with affectionate and reverential attachment to the Church to which

their authors belonged. It is not for me to account for this tendency. I cannot explain the motives or the course of reasoning which could induce a single man to prefer the Church of Rome, adulterated and corrupt as she is, to that pure and primitive Church to which it is our happiness to belong. Whatever of good Rome has, we have, either actually or potentially, while the inestimable treasures that she has lost we retain. Our unbroken succession from the Apostles is as unquestionable as her's, our ministry certainly not less valid, our Liturgy drawn more entirely from the reservoirs of ancient devotion. While, on the other hand, our worship is in a language understood by the people as the Scriptures direct, as the wants of the soul require, as the primitive Christians practised; while her worship is in a dead tongue, her Liturgy is a barbarism to her own people, and in every country her children are as barbarians to their own mother. Our Sacraments are perfect, while her's are mingled with ecclesiastical ordinances not properly of the same rank, and that one, the Lord's Supper, which she herself acknowledges to be the highest, and most sacred, has yet been so profanely and irreverently mutilated in her hands, that it is, at the best, doubtful whether a layman does, or can receive it, in her unhappy communion. Above all, Scriptural truth has free course among us. No interdict is laid on its circulation, at home or abroad, at one time or at another. Our doctrines are derived from it, and proved by it. They flow to us clear and fresh from the living fountain of Holy Writ, while her's comes down through the filthy puddle, as our Homily expresses it, of human tradition. What infatuation could induce any man to leave those green pastures and those still waters, where, in the goodness of God, the lot of our inheritance lies, to batten on that moor? It is one of the anomalies which human nature sometimes exhibits, as when the children of Israel loathed that manna which was angel's food and lusted after the feshpots of Egypt. But, just because it is strange and inexplicable, I believe it to be rare. I have never thought that any considerable number of persons were in danger of apostatizing to Rome. I had too much confidence in the excellence of our cause, and the attaching influence of our Church. But there were those who did entertain this fear, and even believed that a schism in the Church might be necessary in order to separate ourselves from these false brethren. I never looked on this as the true remedy. I never considered this evil and sin the divine method of averting other evils. I was aroused at the inconsistency and blindness of those who could even harbour the thought of a division of the Church. In their horror and dread of Rome, they were willing to take the very step which Rome would have most rejoiced in, and by which the interests of Rome would have been most signally advanced. A schism in our Church would ineffectually strengthen the hold which Rome now has on the religious faith and interests of these United States. The people of this country are tired of strife and division in the concerns of religion. They are worn out with building a Babel, where there is a perpetual confusion of tongues, and where the hand of every workman is against his fellow labourer. They demand in the Church, peace and unity, and they have acuteness enough to see that the necessary conditions of these are authority and stability. They demand, therefore, a Church which man did not make, and which man consequently cannot unmake. If they could not find these conditions anywhere short of Rome, a great multitude will go there for them. If they can find them in a more pure and a more scriptural Church, they will, of course, prefer such a Church. While our Church continues united, converts will flock to it, like doves to the windows. But, if, in the awful judgement of God, it should be broken to pieces, who would seek for shelter on a wreck? Divide this Church, and you so exceedingly weaken it, that practically, it may be said, you destroy it. Destroy it, and what becomes of us? The only effectual safeguard against Romanism is cast down, and the angry flood pours in and overwhelms us. Divide this Church then, and the shadow goes backward on the dial-plate of prophecy and the coming of the millennial day is postponed.

It was amid such dangers and forebodings that the General Convention met. One party feared heresy, the other schism. Some believed that many of their brethren were Romanists in disguise, while they in turn were suspected of being false to the Church, and willing to sacrifice her distinctive principles. Subjects were discussed in the Convention which necessarily drew out the opinions of its members on all the topics of those discussions was the discovery that they really differed much less than they had supposed. It was found that there had been mutual misapprehension produced by the extravagancies of newspaper statements and oral rumours. On all sides, with scarcely an exception, there was the most explicit disclaimer of any views or principles adverse to those clearly taught and ever held in the Church. Was this to be discredited? By none, it seemed to me, but those who were themselves conscious of perfidy. No candid man could listen to the debates in the last General Convention without being satisfied that on all essential subjects, the Church is one in doctrine as she is one in order, and that where differences of any magnitude, differences for which more than a few individuals are responsible,—do actually exist, that they are legitimate differences such as result from that liberty wherewith Christ maketh His people free. They result from the very character of the Church itself as being truly Catholic, no shred or fragment stricken off from the body of Christ, and shrinking and narrowing in its isolation, but an integral and living member of that body, capable, consequently, of harmonizing its own constituent parts, and of reconciling unity of faith, with diversity of opinion. It was then made manifest that the Church herself is neither Calvinistic, nor Arminian, that her principles are neither those of the exclusive High-Churchman, nor of the exclusive Low-Churchman, but that Calvinist and Arminian, High-Churchman and Low-Churchman, may all happily and usefully dwell together in her courts, minister at her altars, and be prepared by her discipline for that upper temple, where there is neither error nor discord, but all hearts respond to the same truths, and all voices unite in singing the same song of praise and adoration. I have long loved and honoured the Church, I have long believed her to be the purest and best member of the Christian body upon earth, I have long delighted to meditate on her ancient descent, not merely reaching to the saints of early ages, and to the blessed Apostles, but to Prophets likewise, and to Patriarchs, binding us together in the same mystical bond not only with Leighton and Wilson, with Augustine and Chrysostom, with St. Peter and St. Paul, but also with Isaiah and Elijah, nay with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. I have rejoiced to dwell on her Divine Order, her Scriptural Faith, her lowly devotions, such as become the conscious feebleness and defilement of human beings, and the glorious Majesty of Him whom we worship, her lofty hymns of praise, such as breathe of Heaven itself, and even Cherubim and Seraphim might not disdain to utter. I have thanked God that he counted such an one as I am, not too unworthy to be made a member and a minister of such a body. But never has the Church seemed to me so truly admirable as at her last deliberative Council. She was then seen with one hand quieting her alarmed and agitated children, and bidding them to be at peace, while with the other she directs her ministering servants of every grade to carry the glad tidings of salvation to remote and populous China, to degraded Africa, to the less favoured sister Churches of the East, to the dispersed sheep of our

own western wilderness. At the same time she is providing more carefully for the ignorant and the needy of her own communion, by restoring to their proper functions a class of ministers, whose order had been perpetuated, because that was divine, but some of whose appropriate duties had, in the lapse of time, been devolved on others, and consequently neglected. In the midst of these weighty cares, she is seen exercising a strict and salutary discipline over some of her highest and most honoured officers, thus purifying herself within, while she is extending her borders abroad. Who can doubt that God is with her of a truth?—From what other quarter did her help come? Her children had restrained prayer, her ministers had greatly sinned their appropriate work to engage in unseemly strife. If the Church had depended on man, it would have been disgraced or destroyed, but its Builder and Maker was God, and He would not forsake the work of His own hands. Who can doubt that He is preparing her for a more elevated career, for more arduous and eminent services. Even now she seems like an eagle, trimming her feathers and balancing her wings before she soars aloft into the air to seek a higher region, and a more brilliant sunshine than she has ever before reached. Not for our merits, but His own glory, for His own name-sake has He done this. Because He is a God that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of His heritage.

THE ESSENES.

(From Dr. Barton's Lectures upon the Ecclesiastical History of the first three centuries.)

There was at this time [during the period of our Lord's Ministry] a sect or body of men already existing in Judea, who, it might be thought, could not have listened with indifference to the preaching of Jesus. It has sometimes excited surprise, that the Evangelists make no mention of the Essenes, whose singular habits are described by Philo Judæus and Josephus, and to whom the opponents of Christianity have sometimes pointed, as the source from which it was derived.—The Essenes of Palestine, according to Philo and Josephus, were about 4,000 in their own day. Philo describes also another set of men under the name of Therapeutæ, who have been called contemplative Essenes, and who were found in the greatest numbers in Egypt. The account of these two sects have many points of agreement; and perhaps, as I shall observe presently, they may be traced to a common origin; but there seems no reason to conclude that Philo meant to speak of the Egyptian Therapeutæ as Essenes. It is plain from Josephus, that the Essenes were a Jewish sect; but the Therapeutæ, though traces of Judaism appear in their religious principles and customs, cannot be considered to have been originally or exclusively Jews. The Essenes were remarkable for their strict morality, for their ascetic and abstemious habits, for having a community of goods, and for living in villages apart from the great towns. Some of them held marriage to be unlawful; but all of them were regular in following some employment; their industry was conspicuous; and their early devotions, which were repeated every day, could only have been the fruits of sincere and genuine piety. There is undoubtedly much in the character of the Essenes, which may remind us of the habits of the early Christians. Eusebius, who was not much of a reflecting, still less of a critical historian, was so deceived by this resemblance, that he supposed Philo to have met with some Christian communities in the neighbourhood of Alexandria, and to have described them by the name of Therapeutæ. That there is no foundation for such a notion, or for identifying the Therapeutæ with the Essenes, has been shewn satisfactorily by many writers. The Essenes, however, who were a Jewish sect, and lived in Palestine, could hardly have heard our Saviour or His Apostles, without being struck by the truth of their preaching; and it is perhaps singular, that no mention is made of them by the Evangelists.

In the first place, I would observe, that though the time when the Essenes first appeared is not distinctly known, there is reason to think that they had not been long in existence before this period; they may only now have been beginning to form their system, and the name of Essenes may not yet have been given them. In the next place, the accounts which we have of our Saviour's journeys and discourses are connected principally with the cities and towns; whereas the Essenes, as I have stated, avoided these places, and lived in small rustic communities of their own. If Philo and Josephus computed their number rightly at 4,000 within the whole of Palestine, they must have been very thinly scattered over the country; and our Saviour in his circuits may seldom have met with them. According to Pliny, their principal settlements were in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea; and this might account for the Evangelists making no mention of them, since our Saviour is not said to have visited that country. To all which I would add, that what I have said above of the great object of his preaching might lead us to expect, that he would not particularly have sought out the Essenes during the short period of his ministry.

His object, as I have explained it, was not to unfold the whole of that great scheme which he was about to accomplish; this he left to his Apostles, who were to come after him: his own preaching was to prepare men for a pure and spiritual religion; to remove from their minds all which impeded their salvation; and so to leave them open to receive the truth, whenever it was revealed to them. This being the case, the Essenes were already better prepared than most of the Jews of that time to receive the gospel; the moral discipline which was requisite, was not wholly new to them; and when our Saviour said, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," and when the towns of Judea and Galilee were so abundantly filled with objects of the latter kind, we need not wonder that less of his attention was paid to the more moral, and comparatively more spiritual people, who were afterwards called Essenes.

By no means wish to paint the morals and religion of the Essenes in too favourable colours. There was much in their system, which is unsuited for man in the discharge of those social duties which God has intended him to fulfil. There was also a mixture of superstition, which seems clearly to point to an eastern origin; and if we suppose some of the more rigid Pharisees, who saw with disgust the general depravity of the nation, to have admitted into their creed some speculative notions which had travelled into Judea from Persia, we shall perhaps have an incorrect idea of the origin of the Essenes. Still it must be remembered that their morality, if compared with that of the Jews at large, was vastly more pure and spiritual.—The obstacles which were to be removed in their conversion to the gospel were as nothing, when contrasted with the mountains which shut out that heavenly vision from the Scribes and Pharisees. The preaching of our Saviour, if viewed as a whole, may prove to us the great truth, that the chief impediment to the gospel is the corruption of the heart. It is not ignorance, it is not weakness of intellect, it is not a want of learning, which are the main causes of infidelity; it is an absence of that moral feeling, of that deep conviction of our own frailness, and of the necessity of holiness, which first leads men to justify what they are determined to commit, and then sets them to hate that which would prove their principles to be wrong. It was thus that our Saviour's preaching was directed, not so much to the head, as to the heart.

It was in pursuance of feelings such as these, that the Jewish authorities never ceased till they had put