

Notices of Recent Publications.

SERMONS: Doctrinal and Practical. By the late Rev. Wm. Archer Butler, M. A., 11, and 2nd series: 1857. Philadelphia: Eury & McMillan. Toronto: J. C. Geikie.

The name of Butler is not a strange one in the republic of letters. With two at least, who bore it, we have been long familiar: Samuel and Joseph. Very different in their structure of mind and caste of character, in the remains they have left, and the reputations they have gained, are the poetic wit, and the philosophic divine.

Samuel Butler, brought up in the bosom of a Puritan Church, a needy pensioner on Puritan bounty, but afterwards waspishly stinging the bosom that nestled and nourished him; and, with the return of Charles to the Throne, his father had left for the scaffold, buzzing amid the glare of the court, and seeking to have shed on him the rays of royal favour, only to sink in disappointment and disgust into the shade, and to fill a pauper's grave. Still his "Hudibras" died not with him. Though stained with blasphemous and obscene allusions, and much coarse ribaldry, it is so full of rollicking wit, broad humour and scathing sarcasm, as to entitle its author to be regarded as the father of modern English comic writers.

Joseph Butler! what a contrast in every respect to Samuel, and "the analogy"—what a contrast to "Hudibras"—a master spirit, he, the chief Butler, elevated by universal consent, to the dignity of a Prince and a great man in Israel. A master piece that, which is still gathering fresh tributes and gaining fresh triumphs which has demolished some of the main strongholds of the enemies of Revelation, and shivered into fragments some of their favorite weapons: which has set a thinking myriad minds, and sown seeds of thought from which much golden grain has been gathered; and which, unanswered because unanswerable, will ever stand a monument of sanctified genius, and a bulwark of our most Holy Faith.

Unlike either of his predecessors is the Butler before us, though there meet in him some of the qualities of both. There is a beautiful blending of the Poet, the Philosopher, and the Theologian.

He was born and brought up a Papist, his mother toward whom he cherished a warm regard, being a zealous devotee of Rome. Early roused to anxiety about his soul, he sought relief, unburdening and unbooming himself before a Confessor. Seeking rest at the Confessional, he found none. As a dutiful Son, he came to the Holy Father asking bread but got only a stone.

Thirsting for God even the loving God, he came to have that burning thirst slacked, but the poison of asps was offered him in lieu of the water of life. His heart aching, his moral feelings rudely shocked he shrunk back from the spot he had regarded with superstitious reverence, and secured only at the foot of the cross that satisfaction which was devised him at the hole of the Confessional Box. Then, suddenly, there fell from his eyes as it had been scales. And now amid the cheering light of

God's reconciled countenance and the full blaze of Gospel day, he stood forth a faithful champion of the simple truth as it is in Jesus, and the sworn foe of that system which loves the darkness rather than the light, because its doctrines and deeds are wretchedly evil. The righteousness of Christ,—the cardinal truth so eagerly grasped by Martin Luther as he emerged from the gloom of his monastic cell, was seized by Archer Butler with a tenacity which, never for a moment released. "We preach Christ crucified" was his motto. To him to live was Christ, and he died at the premature age of 34, with "Christ, my righteousness" on his quivering lips. During his brief career, he held the exhausting plurality of Professor and Pastor. His singularly, active and penetrating mind too soon wore through the slim scabbard which contained it. Rivalling Hugh Binning, who became Professor in Glasgow, at twenty-two, the chair of Moral Philosophy in the University of Dublin was established especially for Butler when he was only twenty-three. Crowds of enthusiastic students flocked to his feet and hung on his lips entranced by the bewitching power of his eloquence. So thrilling was the effect produced, that one of them testifies that at times literally their breath was taken away. He was constantly reading, writing, and lecturing, while he ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus. In his devotion to Plato he never forgot the humble disciple of Christ. The University—the Church at large, and a host of public charities, received the benefit of his ministerial services, which the scattered population of his rustic parish lying along the bleak Atlantic Coast, were vigilantly cared for. To them the bread of life, and the meat that perisheth were both dispensed by him. From many a heart did he keep away gaunt famine during that dismal winter which others were mourning as in the days of old: "Is not the meat cut off before our eyes?—The seed is rotten under their clods—the garners are laid desolate—the barns are broken down."—Joel i. 16. In that terrible crisis Butler proved a father to the poor, and the cause which he knew not he searched out.

"His whole faculties were devoted to the ministry he had undertaken. At one time he was found applying his musical skill to the training of a village choir, at another, he was found casting aside his loftiest speculations in mental science, and his erudite researches into Grecian and German Philosophy, to obey the call of suffering and of sorrow." It is not to be wondered at therefore that the common people heard him gladly, and that his person as well as his preaching, was regarded by them with fondest affection. When the eye saw him, then it blessed him; and when the ear heard him, it bore witness to him, because he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless and him that had no helper. The blessing of them that were ready to perish, came upon him, and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

This is the man of God whose sermons are on our table, and should be noticed by us long ago. Happily, they have been so universally admired, and obtained such a general circulation as to need no testimony of their favor from us. They have secured their place, and that, no mean one, amongst our sacred classics. It is no exaggeration to say that these volumes contain imagery almost as rich as Taylor's oratory: as vigorous often as Louth's judgment: as sound as Barrow's, a style as attractive, but more copious; original and forcible than Alterbury's; piety as elevated as Howe's; and a fervour as intense at times as Baxter's.

We would be far from saying that many of these discourses, particularly in the first series, are model specimens of preaching for such a rural parish as that which formed the principal

scene of Butler's pastoral labors. The elaborate diction—the gorgeous imagery—the intricate and occasionally involved sentences—the subtle trains of thought, and the elegant illustration and exquisite finish, they could not appreciate. But it must be remembered that the bulk of these were prepared for special occasions, and addressed to special audiences, such as the University and various public institutions. His rustic flock he fed with food convenient for them; rightly dividing the word of truth, giving to each a portion of meat in due season. Then paper was discarded, and all the elaboration of the study, and out of the abundance of his heart, his mouth spake.

For long, sermons have been proverbially a drug in the literary market. It has become common to speak of the Pulpit having lost its power, and the Platform and Press taking its place. The popularity of the sermons of Guthrie, and Spurgeon and William Archer Butler, goes far to wipe out the stigma, and to give the lie to the calumny.

CHRIST AS REDEEMER, THE DELEGATED HEAD OF CREATION: by the Rev. Henry Gordon of Gananoque. London: James Nisbet & Co Toronto: J. C. Geikie. Kingston: J. Duff. Hamilton: D. McLellan. Montreal: J. Douglass. Ottawa: J. Durie. Price 6s.

It is known to many of our readers that after an absence of about twenty years, from his native land, Mr. Gordon lately revisited Scotland. While in Britain he was invited to preach in London, to the Congregation of Maylabone, of which the Rev. Wm. Chalmers is pastor. The sermon preached by Mr. Gordon on this occasion was that for which the title is given above. The text was the last clause of Col. i. 16—"All things were created by him and for him." The grandeur of the subject, and the manner in which it was handled arrested the attention of the Congregation. A request was in consequence addressed to Mr. Gordon to consent to have the sermon published and now a printed copy of it lies before us.

That all things throughout the universe, and especially in this world, were made for Christ is the great doctrine of the sermon. The proofs of this doctrine are first given; then the reasons; and lastly the uses. The proofs are chiefly drawn from express statements of scripture, such as the 5th Psalm, Heb. 2. 8; Heb. 1. 2; 1 Cor. 15. 27; and Eph. 3. 9-11. The reasons alleged are the position of Christ in the stupendous plan of salvation, the nature of the work He was to accomplish, and the reward due for its successful accomplishment.—The practical uses of the doctrine urged are the peculiar solemnity of man's position in creation, the utter impossibility of neutrality towards Christ, the duty of consecration which the world owes to Christ in its associated relations, and the momentous alternative of safety or ruin to those who accept or reject Christ.

It will thus be seen that the sermon embraces a very wide and important field. It is only justice to add that in the discussion of the various topics, Mr. Gordon exhibits such lofty conceptions and suggests such noble ideas, that we deem it impossible for any one to rise from the prayerful perusal of the sermon, without being more deeply impressed than before with the grandeur of the great scheme of redemption, and feeling a more intense interest in those glorious subjects into which even the angels desire to look. Most heartily do we wish to see a copy of the sermon in the hands of every one of our readers.

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