

ORIGINAL POETRY.

ADDRESS TO THE OLD YEAR.

Thou good Old Year,—linger, ah! linger yet;
How can we see thee part, without regret?
Didst thou not bring us gifts of priceless worth,—
Joy to the heart, and summer to the earth?
Hast thou not shared in all our hopes and fears,
Witnessed alike bright smiles and secret tears?
Within thy old and withered breast there lies
A world of sweet and sacred memories;
And can we see thee part, without regret?
Thou good old friend,—linger, ah! linger yet.

With thee has many a sunny day been spent,—
With thee has joy, and song and mirth been blent.
Friendship has made thy passing hours all bright,
And Love has tinged them with a holier light;
But, more than all, thou hast calm seasons brought
Of high resolve, and deep and solemn thought,
When goodness seemed to kneel within the heart
And supplicate she never might depart.

Yes, precious hours were thine, thou good Old Year,
And even sorrow makes thee but more dear.
Whatever blessings may be yet in store,
Thy pleasant face we never shall see more.
Let others hail the advent of the new,
And eagerly its promised joys pursue;
But I still turn to thee with fond regret,
Thou good Old Year,—linger, ah! linger yet.

E. J. D.

THE APOSTLE PETER A UNITARIAN.

Before Peter became acquainted with our Saviour, he was a Jew. As such he had been born and educated. He must therefore have been a believer in the doctrine of the Divine Unity. He must have been a worshipper of One God in one person. This will be conceded by all who are conversant with the Jewish history, and whose opinion deserves respect. That Peter could have been a Trinitarian before his conversion to Christianity, is as improbable as that he could have been an atheist. If he ever afterward departed from this fundamental principle of the religion in which he had been brought up, we may reasonably expect to find some notices of so remarkable a change, in the copious accounts we have of his subsequent life. These accounts are contained in the Scriptures of the New Testament. We learn from them that, almost from the very commencement of our Lord's public ministry, to his ascension into heaven, Peter was his most talented and zealous disciple, and that subsequently, for the space of more than thirty years, he was one of the ablest and most successful advocates of the Christian cause.

The question now presents itself—have we any evidence that Peter, either while a pupil in the school of Christ, or at any time afterward in the course of his ministry, abandoned his old belief, in the doctrine of the divine unity, and embraced Trinitarianism? Have we not, on the contrary, the most satisfactory proof that he was, both as a disciple, and a teacher, a Unitarian?

If it be assumed that he ever did abandon his old belief, in the respect we have mentioned, we ask, When? Nor are we unreasonable in our demand. Certainly, an event so extraordinary, at least in his own mind, could not have been passed over in silence, nor even with a slight notice. If others saw fit not to record it, he assuredly would not have omitted to mention it. He must have dwelt upon it often and feelingly. He must have told us at what time, and under what circumstances, a change so fundamental, so opposed to his most deeply rooted prejudices, and so widely affecting the great system of religion, took place; as he has done, with such minuteness of detail concerning the far less important subject of admitting the Gentiles to Christian privileges upon equal footing with the Jews. Now, we repeat the question, when did any such change as described take place? We say, never. And we rest this assertion, in the first instance, on the silence of the Scriptures. We challenge any one to lay his finger on a single sentence, either from Peter himself, or from any other inspired man, which in its proper connexion affords the least particle of evidence, of his ever having embraced Trinitarianism after he had abandoned Judaism. We rest our assertion, in the second place, and chiefly, upon the positive proofs of his Unitarianism, derived from his known declarations and conduct while a pupil of Christ; from the recorded instructions which he, in common with the other disciples, received during that period; from his public discourses, controversies, devotions, and private teachings, as given us by the sacred historian who reported the acts of the Apostles; and from his own writings that have come down to us.

1. We begin with his declarations and conduct while a pupil of Christ. Peter was, of all the disciples, the most likely, from his natural ardor and habitual forwardness, to object to whatever our Saviour might propose adapted to shock his prejudices. And so it was in fact. It was he who rebuked his master, when he announced his future sufferings. But we need not cite particular instances. Our readers must be prepared, by what they recollect of Peter's character, for

the question, whether it is credible, that one so prompt on all occasions to speak from the first impulse of feeling, could have heard Jesus, at any time, assert the existence of 'three persons in the Godhead, equal in substance, power, and glory,' and not have expressed his surprise at what must have appeared to him (educated as he had been) so nearly approaching to polytheism? Especially, could he have refrained from expressions of astonishment, if, on any occasion, our Saviour in the character of the predicted Messiah—a character which no Jew ever dreamed would be properly divine—had claimed to be Jehovah in the flesh, and the object of supreme religious adoration? Impossible! And the fact that no expressions of the kind we have been supposing, ever to our knowledge fell from the lips of this disciple, is one proof that Jesus never inculcated the principles of Trinitarianism upon his followers. But much more than this. There are positive declarations of Peter on record, respecting our Lord's character, that can leave no doubt as to his opinions; declarations, which connected as they are with the approving words of his master, afford the most convincing testimony that Christ did not claim to be, nor was considered by Peter the supreme God.

We recur, for an example, to the sixteenth chapter of Matthew. To the question of Jesus to his disciples,—'Whom say ye that I am?'—Peter with his characteristic promptness replied, 'In what terms? Precisely in such as any Unitarian would have used.—'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.'—And what said our Saviour to this? Did he intimate that he had received an imperfect answer? Did he insinuate that Peter, not having had access to the true source of light, was still in the dark as to his real character in this most important particular? Not at all; but bestowed on him the highest commendations, reminding him, at the same time, that such intelligence could have come only from God,—'Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jona; for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.' And yet another time also, Peter made the same explicit and unhesitating confession. It was when Jesus said unto the twelve, 'Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Such is a specimen of Peter's declarations concerning the dignity of our Saviour's character. They were made on occasions, when, if ever, he would have acknowledged his master's highest claims, and when Jesus, it must be supposed, would have corrected him, had he expressed inadequate views. Yet Peter, so far from calling him God, only professes his belief in him as the Christ, the Son of God, or, which is the same thing, the Messiah; and our Lord, instead of appearing dissatisfied with the profession, in one instance applauded it.

Nor is this all. Peter's known conduct, while conversant with his master, accorded with his declarations. He never betrayed the emotion, nor exhibited the manners, nor performed the acts of one, who believed himself in the immediate presence of his Maker and his God. This is a strong point of the argument. Bring the subject home to your own bosoms, and imagine how a mortal man would feel and behave himself in such a presence; and having done this, carry your thoughts back to the time of Christ's ministry on earth, and observe how familiarly Peter lived with him; how he ate, and drank and conversed with him; how he accompanied him whithersoever he went, now rebuking, and now commending him; at one time uttering the most solemn asseverations of attachment, and at another denying that he ever knew the man,—and then lay your hand upon your heart, and say, if you can, that Peter regarded Jesus as Jehovah!

2. And why should it be supposed by any that Peter ought to have so regarded his master? Whence could he derive the doctrine of the Trinity? How was he to learn that the Messiah was God? It is conceded that he did not bring these notions with him from the synagogue; and we shall now show that he could not find them in the school of Christ. The instructions that he received, in common with the other disciples, were invariably and strictly Unitarian. An example to the contrary is not upon record. We do not assert this unadvisedly. We have read the Gospels through with particular regard to this point; and we know that in no instance did Jesus affirm that the Deity exists in three equal persons, or that he himself is God. On the contrary, we know that he repeatedly, and in the most unequivocal language, bore his testimony to the proper unity of the divine nature, and to his own inferiority to and dependence upon the Father Almighty. Of what essential attribute of Deity did he not expressly and more than once disclaim the possession? Of undivided and independent existence? He said, 'I live by the Father; as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.' Of almighty and undivided power? These are his words, 'I can of mine own self do nothing; all power is given unto me.' Of omniscience? His language is this, 'As my Father hath taught me, I speak,' 'of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels, neither the Son, but the Father only.' Was such teaching as this very well suited to make such a pupil as Peter a Trinitarian? You remember our Saviour's answer to one who applied to him the appellation of 'good'—'In too high a sense; 'Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God.' Did Peter, constant as he had been in his attendance upon his master, know nothing of this? You remember too our Lord's reply to the Jews, who falsely accused him of making himself equal with God;

'The Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father do.'

But why multiply texts? Who does not know that the teachings of Jesus abound in such passages? And where are any of a contrary import to be found? Read over his sermon on the mount, to which the disciples listened. Not a word of Trinitarianism appears there. Read his parables; nothing of such a doctrine appears in them. Listen to his devotions; all are addressed to the one God, the Father of all. Look at the directions he gave to his disciples as to the object of their devotions. Does he tell them to pay religious homage to him? O no; how different from this are his injunctions, even without a single exception. 'When ye pray, say, Our Father.' 'In that day ye shall ask me nothing.' 'Whosoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he shall give it to you.' Witness his miracles. These we are told, prove his supreme deity. Why then did he, before he bid Lazarus come forth from the grave, address this prayer to God,—'Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me?' And why did he so often, as if purposely to multiply guards against that error of subsequent times which we are opposing, refer all his powers to the Father as the author of them?

Listen now to the language of his common discourses with his disciples. Does he not continually speak of himself as sent by the Father; as coming from the Father; as anointed of God; as depending upon God; as being one with his disciples; as he was one with the Father? And can you believe still that Peter was taught to regard him as the supreme God? Without the least qualification, he said—'My Father is greater than I.' Could Peter ever after believe and assert that God the Father was not greater than his Master? Turn your thoughts to the Saviour in the garden. Peter was one of his chosen companions. He if any one witnessed his prayer; 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.' What words could this disciple have listened to more expressive of his Master's consciousness that he was inferior to, and dependent upon the Most High? Look again, and see him an unresisting prisoner, and now a bleeding victim on the cross. Hear his memorable words, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' 'Father into thy hands I commit my spirit.' Behold him bow his head and give up his breath. See him entombed. Are these demonstrations to the mind of Peter of his Master's deity? Is it said that Peter was not a witness to these scenes. Be it so. We will look further. After the resurrection Jesus taught Unitarianism. Go to my brethren, said he to Mary, 'and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' Ponder these words. Has God brethren? Has the eternal and self-existent Father and a God, such as men have? Among the last words he addressed to Peter and the other disciples are these! 'Behold I will send you the promise of my Father.' As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you.' 'All power is given unto me.' But why prolong the discussion? Such, as we have seen, was the course of education through which Peter passed, under the immediate direction of Jesus Christ. It was not varied, in respect to the doctrines in dispute, that we know of, up to the moment of our Saviour's ascension into heaven. How then stands the case? From all we can learn of Peter's declarations, conduct, and education, while a pupil of Christ, we are compelled to believe that he was a Unitarian at the period of his history, at which we have now arrived.

But new revelations are to be made to him, it may be said. Our Saviour, just before his death promised to the disciples further illumination, by which they would be 'led into all truth.' Who knows, it may be asked, but Peter, Unitarian as he doubtless was at that time, may yet see cause to change his opinions and become a teacher of Trinitarianism? In reply to this, we will not stop to show the intrinsic improbability of such an event; but proceed to ascertain how the matter stands in point of fact. The question is to be settled by recurring to the records we have of his preaching, controversies, private teaching, devotions, and writings. That we may not be accused of taking a partial view of the evidence in the case, we shall adduce all of it that relates to the subject.

3. What then do we learn from the Apostle's preaching? His first sermon occurs in the second chapter of the Acts. He delivered it, we are told, immediately after the special illumination of the Holy Spirit. Does it contain anything like Trinitarianism? Not a syllable. It is thoroughly Unitarian from beginning to end. The points of doctrine it presents are these. 1. The divine mission of Jesus Christ. 'Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you; or, as it should be rendered, 'proved unto you to be a man from God.' 2. The evidence of the divinity of his mission. 'By miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.' 3. His death, and how the event stood connected with divine providence and human agency. 'Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.' 4. His resurrection, together with the author and proofs of it. 'Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; this Jesus hath God raised up whereof we all are witnesses.' 5. His exaltation, and to whom he was indebted for it. 'By the right hand of God exalted.' 6. His possession of the promise of the holy spirit, dispensed through him to the first Christians, and how he came by it. 'Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye

now see and hear.' 7. His offices, not undivided, but conferred by the Most High. 'Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ.'

Of this character are the doctrinal parts of Peter's first sermon. It contains not a word, as to the point in question, different from what we have quoted. Who does not see that it is Unitarian in every particular? Could one be delivered more directly opposed to Trinitarian views? And yet, free as the Apostle's preaching was from what are so much vaunted, in our day, as the 'doctrines of grace,' it was not without the most salutary effects. When the people heard it, 'they were pricked in their heart,' and said, 'what shall we do?' And now we have a specimen of Peter's practical directions. Do they savor of modern Orthodoxy? Does he tell them to worship the Trinity, to mourn over native and entire depravity, to confess they can do nothing themselves, to hope for a transfer of the penalty of their guilt to a substituted victim, or to calculate on having their moral deficiencies supplied by the imputed righteousness of Christ? As far from it as possible. He says to them, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.' Save yourselves from this untoward generation.' So taught the most able and zealous of our Lord's ministers. We have too much respect for the understandings of our readers to add a single word by way of comment.

But it will be asked, perhaps, whether Peter always preached so much in the manner of a Unitarian? We will see. Another opportunity offers itself for listening to him. We find him in Solomon's porch, surrounded by a multitude, that had been drawn together by the miraculous cure he had just wrought of a lame man. (Acts, iii.) He prepares to address the people. Will he, who but a little time before preached Unitarianism with such success, now adopt an entirely new course, and unfold an opposite faith? Let the recorded facts decide. The very first statement he makes involves the doctrine of God's supremacy and the inferiority of Christ. 'The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus.' Is this Trinitarianism? Is the Son of God the very God whose son he is? Is he who is glorified, the same with him who confers the glory? Peter proceeds. 'Ye denied the holy one and the just, and killed the prince of life; whom God raised from the dead.' Is it Jehovah that the Apostle accuses the Jews of denying and killing? Is it Jehovah that he says God raised from the dead? The inspired preacher goes on. 'Moses truly said unto the fathers, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me.' This Peter applies to Christ. Look at its import. 'A prophet like unto Moses,'—'of their brethren,'—'raised up by God!' Is this Trinitarianism? The Apostle concludes his discourse in these words, 'Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.' Here, again, Trinitarianism is not only not recognised, but opposed. Jesus is represented simply as the Son, the sent of God, while the supremacy of the Father is maintained, as it is uniformly in the teachings of this distinguished minister of the gospel. Such as we have seen was the character of Peter's preaching. We do not believe he ever uttered a word in his public instructions, inconsistent with what we have now given. Not a single expression occurs in any of his sermons that have been reported, which can by any just rules of interpretation, be made to yield support to the doctrine of the Trinity. And what was the efficacy of the sort of preaching we have been considering? Was it impotent, as some are so fond of representing Unitarianism to be? Three thousand souls were converted to the Christian faith by Peter's first sermon, and five thousand by the second!

[To be concluded in our next.]

MINISTERS OF THE TRUTH.

Devoted and self-denying pioneers, in the cause of truth and righteousness, have never been wanting. Always there have been some of them on earth, protesting with all their strength against iniquity, and in favor of holiness—and always there will be. Circumstances help to create them. No form of oppression or selfishness can be carried out, for any great length of time, without stirring up, in some few minds, a determined opposition to it. No matter whether it is Judaism, or Catholicism, or Protestantism, or Slavery, or any thing else, there are ever some who have goodness enough to separate themselves from it, and to call its supporters to repentance. And if there were not, God would raise them up miraculously, rather than be destitute of a ministry—rather than be destitute of sin-opposers. 'It is by the foolishness of preaching,'—in the language of the Apostle Paul,—or by moral agitations,—by the proclamation of truth,—that the world is to be saved. And if there is not a titled, high-salaried, peculiarly-privileged, fashionable ministry to do this work, there will be a self-denying, untitled, unsalaried, unprivileged unfashionable ministry, to do it. And for one, I have no fears of the world ever being without a ministry. Nor have I any fears of its ever being without a Church.—*Milford Practical Christian.*

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