

## Our Contributors.

### PRINCIPAL GRANT OPENS A MINE.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Principal Grant returned to Kingston the other day from his fifth tour across the continent and was interviewed as a matter of course. The genial Principal is greatly pleased with the progress of the country and greatly disgusted and indignant at the treatment recently received by Mr. Duncan, the missionary on the Pacific coast. The Principal thinks that Mr. Duncan has been badly used, especially by the Pharisees and Sadducees of that region. No one knows better than Principal Grant that earnest, active, manly workers in the Church always do suffer more from the Pharisees than from any other class. But that is not the mine we wish to work to-day, though it is not a bad one. Referring to statements made against Mr. Duncan Principal Grant asks some most suggestive questions:

He is certain to fight against powerful forces, and if you throw stones at dogs they will bark and, if they dare, bite. How could he be popular with whiskey sellers who were not allowed into his prosperous settlement, or with their friends? How could he be popular with ruffians, whose aim was to debauch Indian girls, to whom Lord Dufferin paid so high a compliment? Would even traders be fond of him, who used to make cent per cent out of the Indians, and who saw them trading with Victoria to the extent of \$100,000 a year? How easy to set stories afloat and how many ready to industriously circulate them.

Is there any man under heaven other than a minister or a missionary who is expected to be popular with his enemies? It is an outrage on common sense and decency to condemn a missionary because he is not beloved by whiskey sellers and debauchees. What kind of a missionary would he be if people of that kind loved him? Can a man fight ruffians and be popular with them at the same time? If he can he is a slim fighter. The harder the blows he gives the Devil the more will the Devil and his emissaries hate him.

In the case of a missionary all this ought to be self-evident but it is not so evident in the case of a minister. Is it not a notorious fact that a large proportion of the ministers who are turned out of their pulpits are turned out mainly because they are not popular with their enemies. Presbyteries may gloss the matter over and canting old Pharisees may utter unctuous platitudes about the "dear brother," but the plain hard facts of the case often are that the minister has to go because he was not popular with his enemies. He was put on trial before his enemies and of course they decided against him.

Mr. R. J. Burdette, of the Brooklyn Eagle, is not Principal of any College, but he is a local preacher and one of the shrewdest men in America. The same mail that brought us the interview with Principal Grant brought the following extract from Mr. Burdette in which he expresses in a striking way the injustice which Principal Grant denounces so vigorously—the absurd and cruel injustice of going to opponents, rivals, or enemies for unbiassed information. The case in point is that of a returned Unitarian missionary who got some reliable information from the Japanese about Christian converts. Mr. Burdette says:

The returned Unitarian missionary, who has been giving an account of his labours in Japan, says that when he asked the highly intelligent Japanese about the converts made by other missionaries, the reply "was a meaning smile." It is a good thing for the Christian world that there is one intelligent missionary in Japan. That he is intelligent, even to rashness, is shown by the fact that when he wants to know the standing and character of Christian converts he goes to the heathen for evidence. That's right. If you want to know about Christianity ask a heathen or an infidel; go to a Democrat for information regarding the excellence of the Republican platform; always take the word of a saloon-keeper in regard to the merits of prohibition; go to an anarchist for correct ideas of government; if you wish to be honestly and correctly informed upon the merits of civil service reform go to the oldest and worst spoilsman that ever hung on to office through four administrations; believe everything a Presbyterian tells you about the Pope; take the word of a Japanese heathen about Japanese Christians every time; and, as a matter of course, adopting his own rule of evidence, the Unitarian missionary will not kick if the Methodists go to the Baptists for correct opinions concerning his work. Nothing like going right to the unbiassed, pure fountain-head for clear water.

The principle that underlies the good points made in the foregoing extracts may be applied—usefully applied—in a hundred directions in Canada.

If you want thoroughly trustworthy information about Jesuitism ask somebody who knows nothing about the subject but who has been industriously denouncing the Jesuits for the last six months. If you want unbiassed information about the Roman Catholic Church always ask a red hot Orangeman, and if you want to get trustworthy facts about Orangism always ask a Roman Catholic priest. The best man to give correct information about the merits of the Scott Act is a liquor seller who has just been put in gaol for violating its provisions. He will always be conspicuously fair. Always go to a Tory for unbiassed information about Radicals and to Radicals for honest information about Tories. To get a fair account of what is done in Catholic convents be sure to ask that American divine who figured in Toronto a few months ago and who told an English audience the other week that "the Virgin Mary was not much of a virgin after all." For an unbiassed and conspicuously fair account of what the Bible teaches about the use of liquor it might be well to consult the temperance man who declared that if our Saviour made wine at Cana he did that which was morally wrong.

There need be no difficulty in getting correct information about anything or anybody. If you want to know about any minister's character or work always ask some one who dislikes him. The personal dislike will give a tinge to the min-

ister's sermons, to his speeches, to his communion addresses, to everything he says and does. By getting opinions coloured by personal dislike, or even hate, you will of course have a thoroughly trustworthy information. If you want genuine truth about a session ask somebody who has had a quarrel with it, a man suspended for drunkenness might do very well. If you want correct information about the finances of a congregation always apply to a man that the treasurer has been compelled to ask about six times for arrears. The right person to go to for information about a Sabbath school is a boy that the Superintendent has just expelled.

If you want to know exactly what kind of a person a young lady is, always be sure to ask some fellow who has tried to get her and couldn't.

If you want unbiassed, trustworthy, religiously fair information about Queen's University don't fail to ask a Toronto University man who thinks there is really only one university in Ontario.

Clergymen are perhaps the only members of society who habitually judge men by what their rivals, or opponents, or enemies say of him. Usually about the first drive a lawyer makes at a witness in cross-examination is an attempt to show that he and the man he is swearing against have not been on good terms. If he makes that clear, the witness is more than half discredited at the start.

A good rule is never to pay the slightest attention to evil things that a man says of any one he dislikes. The opinions that most men give and the stories they tell about their enemies are beneath the notice of a gentleman, not to speak of a Christian.

### THE Gnostic HERESY.—ITS RISE, PROGRESS AND EFFECTS.

FROM THE POSTHUMOUS PAPERS OF THE LATE MR. T. HENNING.

Such were the general tenets of the Gnostic sects, emanating from one general principle. But the details of their cosmogony, their philosophy and their religion, were infinitely modified by local circumstances, by the more or less fanciful genius of their founders, and by the strange infusion of the different elements of Platonism, Cabbalism, or that which in its strict sense, may be called Orientalism; for as the learned Dr. Burton remarks Gnosticism was by no means a new and a distinct philosophy, but was made up of selections from almost every system. We find in it the Platonic doctrine of ideas and the notion that everything in this lower world has a celestial and immaterial archetype. We find in it evident traces of that mystical and Cabbalistic jargon which, after their return from Babylon, deformed the religion of the Jews; and many Gnostics adopted the Oriental notion of two independent co-eternal principles the one, the author of good, the other, of evil. Lastly we find the Gnostic theory full of ideas and terms which must have been taken from the Gospel; and Jesus Christ, under some form or other, of aeon, emanation or incorporeal phantom, enters into all their systems and from the Gospel of Christ they seem to have obtained that knowledge which in their conception raised them above all other mortals and entitled them to their peculiar name *gnostikoi*.

#### III. THE SOURCES OF Gnosticism.

Having thus briefly sketched the great leading doctrines common to all the Gnostic sects, and having remarked generally that these doctrines were neither new nor original we would proceed to make some observations on the sources from which Gnosticism is supposed to flow. On this point a difference of opinion prevails. Some writers have deduced it from the Eastern notion of a good and evil principle: some, from the Jewish Cabbala, and others, from the doctrine of the later Platonists. Dr. Burton, who devoted years of study to this subject and who has given us the result of his researches, in his Bampton lectures, considers that those have taken the most natural and probably the truest course, who have concluded that all these opinions contributed to build up the monstrous system, known by the name of Gnosticism. As we agree with the learned professor, in most of what he has advanced upon this point, we would briefly allude to these three sources in order, viz.: 1. The Oriental doctrines of the Magi of Babylon, or the Dualistic system; 2. of the Cabbala of the Jewish doctors and lastly, the philosophy of Plato—that popular philosophy which ended in merging the philosophy of Greece in the mysticism of the East—pointing out at the same time such of the Gnostic tenets as we may deem traceable to each source.

I. The Eastern doctrine of a good and evil principle. It seems certain that the Persian religion recognized two beings or principles, which, in some way or other, exercised an influence over the world and its inhabitants. To one of these they gave the name of Ormuzd, whom they invested with the attributes of light and beneficence. The other they called Ahremen or Ariman, and identified him with the notions of darkness and malignity. There is evidence, indeed, that a difference of opinion existed between the Magi upon this subject, some of them embraced what has been called the Dualistic system, or the notion that both principles were uncreated and eternal; while others continued to maintain the ancient doctrine, either that one principle was eternal and the other created, or that both proceeded from one supreme self-existing source. This fundamental difference of opinion, together with the idolatry which was fast gaining ground, seems to have led to the reformation effected by Zoroaster in the reign of Darius Hytaspes.

From this Eastern doctrine was probably derived that constant hostility which existed in Gnosticism, between the supreme God and the creative aeon or Demiurge, aided perhaps by what the Scriptures say of Satan the great adversary of man. Those of the Gnostics who embraced the doctrine of two principles, said that the world was created by the evil one.

2. The mystical philosophy of the Jews called the Cabbala. It was ever a prevailing sin of the Jews to fall into idolatry. In consequence of this their city was destroyed and they themselves banished to weep by the streams of a foreign land, where they came in contact with a new system of superstition. When released from captivity, the Jews who returned to their native country would doubtless bring with them the rites and customs of the people amongst whom they had dwelt. Besides, the mixed races who, in the mean time, had settled in Samaria, had already joined a variety of idolatrous notions and rites with the worship of the God of the Jews; and Josephus shows that a constant communication was kept up between the Jews and those Eastern nations, among whom the religion of the Magi had lately been reformed by Zoroaster. The Cabbala contains many doctrines concerning the genealogy of angels and other mystical points, which could only originate from an Eastern source. The secondary or allegorical interpretation of Scripture with which the Cabbala abounds, began soon after the return from the captivity.

The resemblance of these to the principles of the Gnostics is evident. The Cabbalists taught that God being a spirit who pervaded all space, the universe also was not material but spiritual, and proceeded by emanation from God. The first emanation, was called in their language the first man, or the first begotten of God, and he was supposed to be the medium of producing nine other emanations or *sephiroth* from which the universe was formed. How mystical all this, and how like the system of the Gnostics who interposed their aeons and emanations between the supreme God and the creator of world! Again, the Gnostics carried so far the mystical interpretation, introduced by the Cabbalists, that to interpret Scripture literally was the exception. The rule of these knowing ones, was to extort a hidden meaning from every passage and to make every word and almost every letter contain a mystical allusion.

3. It only remains, in the third place, to make a few observations on Platonism, which, according to Dr. Burton, was the greatest, or at least, the more immediate cause of Gnosticism. The Greeks had their own way of getting over the stumbling block, which at the outset met every system imaginative or rational that had been previously made, viz.: the Origin of Evil. The Grecian philosophy did not adopt the system of emanation. They all held that matter was eternal and such undoubtedly was the opinion of Plato. "This was their mode of rescuing God from being the author of evil—thus most unphilosophically limiting his omnipotence and subjecting him to the influence of evil, for a being who is all good and yet restricted in his power, is undoubtedly subject to evil. Plato conceived that God acted upon matter of his own free will and by calling order out of disorder formed the world. He held that everything in heaven and earth has a celestial archetype or pattern in the thoughts of the eternal Father. The Gnostics agreed with him in making matter co-eternal with God. They also believed according to Irenaeus, that the material world itself was formed after an eternal and intellectual idea, a mystical notion which was the very soul of Platonism. May we not suppose, too, that the aeons of the Gnostics were just personifications of the ideas of Plato? Or may we not say generally, that the Gnostics formed their system of aeons by combining the intellectual beings of the Platonic philosophy with the angels of the Jewish Scriptures?

Mosheim and others have taken a different view of this matter, and it may be that Burton has laid rather too much stress upon Platonism as the chief source of Gnosticism; at the same time we cannot agree with Mosheim, who speaking of the ancient teacher, says "*quum nonnulla Gnosticorum dogmata Platonis non haud esse dissimilia cernerent, totam eorum disciplinam ex conjunctione Platonica philosophia cum Christiana religione natam esse, sibi persuadebant*," and then adds "*Ego vero, subductis probe ac circumspecte rationibus, in Platonis sectatoribus nullo modo Gnosticarum scholarum principes posse, certissimus factus sum*." Doubtless they differed materially in some points, e. g., according to Plato, God ordered the intellectual beings whom he had produced to create the world; and he delegated the work to them, that he might not himself be the author of evil. But according to the Gnostics the Demiurgus created the world without the knowledge of God. May not these two hypotheses, however, one of which is as rational as the other, have grown into each other, during the frequent agitation of the question concerning the origin of evil, we are inclined to assent to the remark of Dr. Potter, who, in his criticism of Dr. Burton's work, says: "The ancient cause of this heresy (Gnosticism), more ancient than the theosophy of Babylon, must be sought in the mixed good and evil principles of human nature, which have so often led to folly in opinion, as well as to crime in conduct. But the immediate cause of Gnosticism may certainly be traced to types and shadows in the philosophy of Plato."

MR. BARRAS will call attention at next meeting of Glasgow North U. P. Presbytery to "the objectionable announcement" of the Irish Secretary regarding the endowment of a Romish university in Ireland.