

The Bible Christian,

MONTREAL, AUGUST, 1847.

CREED BONDAGE.

There is slavery of body, and slavery of mind. But many persons who enjoy freedom of body, are held in sore bondage of mind.—The mind is the nobler part of the man, and if that be enslaved how deplorable is the slavery. The highest subject on which a man's mind can be engaged, is the subject of Religion. How doubly deplorable then to find men's minds fettered on this all-important topic. Yet notwithstanding all the enlightenment we boast of in this advanced and advancing age, we can still find churches and clergy eager to chain down the immortal mind with their humanly made creeds instead of leaving it free as God intended, and pointing it to the Bible as the only fountain of everlasting truth and bidding it drink its fill there. Freedom in body and in mind is the inalienable birthright of every human being. Yet, when certain religious systems are to be upheld, we find multitudes striving to strangle the intellect of man in the very cradle, by the coils of a worn-out, technical theology. How successful have been their efforts and how melancholy the consequences of that success he that runneth may read. If a voice is raised in defence of the rights of the human mind—if the fetters of the creed are cast aside and its authority renounced—if some truth-loving man in the spirit of Galileo assert and exhibit some great, neglected doctrine, in opposition to wide-spread popular error,—although the dungeons dare not now be resorted to as in his time, yet the very same spirit which broke the heart that exalted man, will be manifested in whatever form the age will admit of. In this age the man who sets himself in opposition to popular error in ever so trifling a degree, has his name cast out as evil, and himself stigmatized as a heretic and a dangerous person. If he differ from popular opinion on one point, be it ever so plain and intelligible, his whole system of opinions will be misrepresented—in many cases they will be so caricatured that it is almost impossible for himself to recognise the true distinguishing features. This will ever be the case until Education has done its perfect work in the world, and until Christ be firmly seated upon his throne in every heart; then will every man be brought to understand his own true value, and respect the mental rights of others; then will he permit no other man to interfere between God's voice and his own soul; then will he not submit to any human authority in matters of religion, unless the man presuming to interfere can show a special patent from Heaven, authorizing him to do so.

But this is not the whole extent of the injury brought on by creed-bondage. Here we have seen the evils it would inflict upon the man who escapes from its fetters. It would pursue him as the slave-holder would pursue a runaway slave; and who sees in the liberty gained by one, an additional reason to look more closely after those which remain.—Hence it is that in places where liberal churches have been planted, there has generally been a disposition amongst the leaders of creed-bound churches to enforce with greater stringency their peculiar creeds and articles of faith. This leads to the anomaly we so often witness, of multitudes holding fast to a bible belief with one hand, and grasping a creed belief with the other, fearing, as it were, that the Bible should bring them too far away from their favourite faith. In this condition thousands are perfectly satisfied to re-

main. Hence it is that we find men assenting to such a dogma as this—that all mankind are created with a nature totally corrupt—whereby they are "utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite to all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually." Hence it is, I say, that we find men assenting to such a dogma as this, and at the same time professing a belief in the teaching of the wise King of Israel, who states as plainly as words can do, that "God made man upright, but they sought out many inventions." Why, if the former doctrine were true, man would be the only plague-spot in God's fair universe. And the christian mother, to be consistent, should loathe her little laughing babe and push it from her as a mass of moral corruption. And the christian man, to be consistent, should seek the deepest depths in the wildest wilderness he could find, and there bury his head in the dust, and be ashamed and afraid to look out upon the Sun. But the feelings of the mother and the reason of the man both revolt at it. Solomon is right, and the Westminster Catechism is wrong. Let us illustrate this matter by another example. Multitudes assent to this dogma, that God has, by an eternal decree, predestinated a certain and definite number of men and angels to everlasting life, and fore-ordained a certain and definite number to everlasting death; and all this without any reference whatever to the faith or actions of the creatures so predestinated and foreordained. They assent to such a dogma as this, and at the same time affirm that God is just and merciful, and that those Scriptures are true which teach that "God is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation he that worketh righteousness shall be accepted with him." and that every man shall be rewarded according to his works. Could doctrines be more opposed to each other than these are? Another example and we have done. Multitudes hold it as a fundamental article of faith, that "God the FATHER, and God the SON, and God the HOLY GHOST, are CO-ESSENTIAL and CO-ETERNAL;—THREE PERSONS EQUAL IN POWER and GLORY." They hold this, I say, and at the same time regard those scriptures as true, which declare that there is but one God, and that "God is one;" they regard that Apostle as divinely inspired who asserts that "there is but one God, the Father;" and they profess a deep respect (and really have a deep respect) for the teachings of that Saviour who has himself declared, that the Father is "the only TRUE God." Now, how are these anomalies to be accounted for? On no other subject whatever, do we find men thinking and speaking as they do on the subject of Religion. On all other matters, they are generally consistently right, or consistently wrong. But on this, the highest of all subjects, all is anomalous. How, we ask again, is this to be accounted for? It is the creed system that has done it all. It has cramped men's minds and brought them into bondage. It has discouraged honest enquiry, by arrogating an authority to interfere between the honest enquirer and the Book of life. The indifferent and the feeble-minded will always rest contented enough under the shelter of a creed; they are thus saved the trouble of thinking for themselves, and persons of this description will not be likely to perceive their true position. But the man of unshackled thought and independent action can hardly remain so. He will make his choice of standards, and adhere to the standard which he selects. If the Bible; he will join us in our endeavour to raise that Book supreme over all mere human forms. Would it not be well for mankind, if all these were consigned to the dust, where their framers have gone long since? Then would the spirit

of Sectarianism soon sink after them, and the genius of pure and uncorrupted Christianity rise triumphant over all, and work out its great design, the elevation of mankind—the salvation of the world. Under its sway there would be no bondage, either of mind or body. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is perfect liberty."

ANNIVERSARY OF THE MEADVILLE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL.

The order of services was as follows:—Prayer. MIDDLE CLASS: 1. "Advantages of the Study of Ecclesiastical History." By Charles M. Taggart, Ky. 2. "Martin Luther." By Rush H. Shippen, Pa. 3. "English Versions of the Bible." By Noah Michael, O. 4. "Christ a dependent being." By Samuel McKown, O. 5. "1 John v. 7." By Evans W. Humphrey, O. 6. "Samaritan Pentateuch." By James Elliot, O. 7. "Sunday Schools." By Wm. Cushing, Mass. 8. "The Character of Balaam." By Alvin Coburn, Vt. 9. "Peter's Sermon on the day of Pentecost." By Nathaniel O. Chaffer, Mass.—10. "Religious Liberty." By Liberty Billings, Me. 11. "Critical Editions of the Greek Testament." By Stillman Barber, Mass.—SENIOR CLASS: 12. "The Characteristics of Effective Preaching." By Daniel Boyer, Pa. 13. "Piety in a Minister." By Peter Petch, N. Y. 14. "Moral Reform and the Ministry." By George S. Ball, Mass. Prayer.

A correspondent of the New York "Christian Inquirer" writes the following letter:

"Meadville, Penn., July 1, 1847.

"MR. EDITOR—This has been to me an interesting day. Our Theological School in this place has reached the close of its third year. To-day I have witnessed its anniversary exercises; and since the public services, I have met the students of the School, the Professors, the visitors and friends, at the delightful mansion of H. J. Huidekoper, Esq. My hope for the progress of Liberal Christianity in this country was never so strong as now. The establishment of this School creates a new era in this good cause.

"But, first, let me tell you of the closing exercises. Yesterday there was an examination of all the classes in the studies of the year. Conclusive evidence was given that the year has been filled with hard work. The great principles of Theological Education were brought to view by the Professors, and the students in their answers evinced an acquaintance with them and their various applications which nothing but faithful study can give. After the examination, in the evening, the Anniversary Sermon was preached in the Unitarian Church, by Elder J. E. Church, of Spring, Penn. His subject was the coming of Christ.

"The anniversary exercises to-day have been excellent. Indeed, we have had a fine commencement here in Western Pennsylvania. The meeting was in Divinity Hall Chapel. A highly respectable audience were present, nearly filling the chapel, which might hold two hundred and fifty. A platform was erected, on which sat the Professors; and in front, upon a slightly raised platform, was a table at which the students read their dissertations. Mr. Stebbins, who is President of the Board of Instruction, presided with much dignity; and when he came forward and addressed the graduating Class, and gave them their certificates, the whole audience were moved to tears. The dissertations were all good, and some of them excellent. Some were plain and sensible, some were quite cogent and logical, and three or four I could mention, which were highly finished, beautiful compositions. All were both written and spoken in a remarkably earnest spirit. I am deeply interested in these young men. They come, some from the plough, some from the mechanic's shop, and some from the pulpit of the Christian Connection, in which they have begun to preach as they could, without theological education. They are here because they hunger and thirst for knowledge, that they may be useful ministers. They are right earnest, ready to turn any way, to live any how, to dress in any manner, ready to work, to save, to receive gifts, that they may be prepared to preach the Gospel effectually—truly. I heard of instances of self-sacrifice among the students, and of brave labour that surprised me. One man is to start at day-light tomorrow morning, travel on foot, carrying with him such clothes as he needs, through the whole length of Ohio. He goes to preach; and he has sent on his appointments before him, averaging one every day until the close of the vacation, when he will be here again for the study of another year. This case is not one alone; other students go in other directions. So they did last summer; and so they do every vacation. Here we have something of the spirit of the early Christians.

"I am interested too in the catholic spirit which fills this School. Here are young men from four or five different denominations, from every part of the northern half of our republic—their speech marked by the peculiar accent of many nations and tongues; but they all live in harmony—they are all one in Christ Jesus. The West and the

East, the Jew, the German, the Welchman, the Englishman, all are brothers. Such life is in Liberal Christianity. I believe that this School is to do much to draw together and unite the broken parts of the Church of Christ. I care not by what name these students call themselves when they shall go forth from this school of the Prophets. They may be Unitarians, they may be Christians. No matter what the name, if they go forth with the free spirit of Christ in their hearts, free themselves from the shackles of bigotry, and are earnest to make all others as free as themselves. This School is destined to diffuse theological learning in our country, and the learning it imbues with piety."

NOTICE.

The hours of Public Worship in the Montreal Unitarian Church are—ELEVEN o'clock a.m., and Half-past SEVEN, p.m.

Persons desirous of renting Pews or Sittings in the Unitarian Church are requested to make application to the Elders, after any of the public services.

BOOKS FOR SALE,

AT G. BRYSON'S BOOK-STORE, ST. FRANCOIS XAVIER STREET.

THE Entire Works of WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING, D.D., in two volumes.

The Entire Works of the Rev. ORVILLE DEWEY, D.D., Pastor of the Church of the Messiah, New York, one volume, 8vo. pp. 887.

A COMMENTARY ON THE FOUR GOSPELS. By the Rev. A. A. Livermore.

THE ESSENTIAL FAITH OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH, Deduced from the Sacred Records. By Harriet Martineau.

LA FOI DE L'EGLISE UNIVERSELLE; D'APRES LES SAINTES ECRITURES. Par Dlle. Martineau. Traduit de l'Anglais.

SCRIPTURE PROOFS AND SCRIPTURAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF UNITARIANISM. By John Wilson. 3rd Edition, revised and enlarged.

"Every text connected with the Trinitarian controversy on both sides of the question, is noticed in this volume. The book is divided into two parts. The first of these contains 'the Scripture evidence of Unitarianism;' the second, 'the alleged Scripture evidence for Trinitarianism.' In the first part, besides quoting the texts as they appear in the authorised version, Mr. Wilson furnishes us, in many cases, with a variety of renderings, by scholars of acknowledged eminence; and throughout the whole he presents us with a series of, forcible and pertinent remarks of his own. In the second part, he not only cites the controverted texts in full, but also gives 'illustrative texts' to throw light on the meaning of the prominent terms which appear in them."—Boston Christian Examiner

THE CONCESSIONS OF TRINITARIANS; being a Selection of Extracts from the most eminent Biblical Critics and Commentators. By John Wilson.

HISTORIC AND ARTISTIC ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE TRINITY; showing the Rise, Progress, and Decline of the Doctrine, with Elucidatory Engravings. By the Rev. J. R. Beard, D.D., of Manchester, England.

PRAYERS for the use of Christian Families. With a Preface recommending the Practice of Family Worship. By the Rev. J. Scott Porter.

LECTURES ON CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE. By the Rev. A. Peabody, Pastor of the South Congregational Church, Portsmouth, N. H.

THE APOLOGY OF THE REV. THEOPHILUS LINDSAY, M. A., on resigning the Vicarage of Catterick, Yorkshire.

THE REMONSTRANCE OF A UNITARIAN. Addressed to the Right Rev. Thomas Burgess, D.D., Lord Bishop of St. Davids. By Capt. James Gifford, R. N.

THE ATONING SACRIFICE—a Display of Love, not of Wrath. By the Rev. Noah Worcester.

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO RELATIVES AND FRIENDS, chiefly in Reply to Arguments in Support of the Doctrine of the Trinity. By Mary S. B. Dana, author of the "Southern and Northern Harps," "The Parted Family," &c.

THE RECOLLECTIONS OF JOTHAM ANDERSON. By the late Rev. H. Ware, Jr., of Cambridge University, New England.

SERMONS. By the Rev. F. W. P. Greenwood, D.D., Minister of King's Chapel, Boston. In two volumes.

A COLLECTION OF PSALMS AND HYMNS for Christian Worship. By the Rev. F. W. P. Greenwood, D.D.

JUST RECEIVED,

A SUPPLY OF

"WARE ON THE FORMATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER."

Books may be obtained on loan from the Unitarian Congregational Library, on application to the Librarian.