

"On what occasions then do these great orators and doctors kindle and glow? When is it that they exhaust the powers of language, and return upon their theme, as if they could never think that they had done it justice? Is it when they are holding forth, before the multitude, the glory of the Saviour of sinners? Is it when they are blowing the silver trumpet of mercy, in the hearing of the guilty? Alas! it is not. The Saviour, not denied indeed, but not glorified, is left, by these orators, to sleep in the hinder part of the ship or he is imprisoned in the creeds and liturgies of the church, while commendations, which Grecian and Roman sages would equally have loathed to have pronounced, and have blushed to have received, are lavished upon the heroes of the church and its anchorites.

"Are these representations fair or not? I appeal to those who will go with fresh and modern Christian feelings, into the company of the fathers. But if the facts be such as I allege, will any pretend that an unaffected and heart-stirring proclamation of the gospel—the glad tidings of mercy, free, and adapted to all men's acceptance, was likely to consist with so much bombast and frippery, about the merits of miracles, and virtues of the shoals of saints that burden the calendar? Two such abhorrent elements will never coalesce; and if the church must and will have her demi-gods, to adorn her state in the eyes of the prostrate multitude, she must even forego the presence of her Lord.

"A dry, polemic orthodoxy, severed from the gospel, is the doctrinal description of ancient Christianity: and I here refuse to be put to silence by any who shall return the phrase 'the gospel,' upon me, as if I used it in the cant sense of this, or that, modern sect; and as if it conveyed some restricted and special scheme of doctrine. By the gospel, I mean nothing more or less than the frank declaration of God's mercy to guilty man, assuring to him, through faith in Christ, the full and absolute remission of his sins, and an exemption from "all condemnation," and fear of wrath. I do not affect to speak as a theologian; nor care to cut and trim the phrases I may employ, so as shall make them square with this or that 'confession.' Does the Bible offer no broad and universally intelligible sense, even on the most momentous subjects? If it do, then it does so in conveying, to the troubled conscience, a message of joy—authentic, simple, efficacious, and such as subdues the grateful heart to obedience.

"Now, meaning this by—the gospel, I affirm that, from beginning to end of the patristic remains, the clearness and brightness of the message of mercy is obscured, its simplicity encumbered, and its efficacious power almost entirely nullified. In entering the awful and gorgeous edifice of the ancient church, one's feelings are very much such as might belong to a descent into some stalactite cavern, the grim magnificence of which is never cheered by the life-giving beams of heaven; for there is no noon there—no summer. The wonders of the place must be seen by the glare of artificial light; human hands carry hither and thither a blaze, which confounds objects, as much as reveals them, and which fills the place more with fumes than with any genial influence. In this dim theatre, forms stand out of more than mortal mien, as if a senate of divinities had here assembled; but approach them—all is hard, cold, silent. Drops are thickly distilling from the vault; nay, every stony icicle that glistens in the light, seems as if endued with penitence, or as if contrition were the very temper of the place: but do these drops fertilize the ground on which they fall? No, they do but trickles a moment, and then add stone to stone—chill to chill. Does the involuntary exclamation break from the bosom in such a place—Surely this is the very gate of heaven! Rather one shudders with the apprehension that one is entering the shadows of the valley of death; and that the only safety is in a quick return to the upper world."

BEATRICE; OR THE UNKNOWN RELATIVES. By Catherine Sinclair. New York: DeWitt & Davenport. Toronto: T. Maclear.

This is a very popular and clever book. The object of the authoress is to set forth the wishes and intrigues of Rome, and to guard all, and especially "silly women" from being led from the truth. Her truth, her church, her christianity, however, are all pretty much in the Church of England; and therefore among Episcopalians, especially, it is calculated to be very useful. Yet we recommend it as a spirited, well written, indeed exciting portraiture of that master agent of evil in the Romish Church—Jesuitism.

IRISH PRESBYTERIAN. Terms, One Dollar a year, paid in advance, for which it will be sent *postage free* to any Post Office in Canada. Agents, Rev. Robert Irvine, Toronto, and Mr. McLellan, Hamilton, to whom remittances, *pre-paid*, may be addressed.

An excellent monthly periodical, containing religious and missionary intelligence bearing on the Presbyterian Churches in Europe and America, is being issued under the editorship of Rev. R. Knox, A. M., Belfast, Ireland. Two numbers have reached us. The present state and prospects of Ireland—The ruinous effects of Popery on the country, and cognate subjects, will be discussed in its pages.

ERRATUM IN FEBRUARY No.—Page 119, column 2—for Rev. Mr. Fayette's congregation, read Rev. Mr. Fayette, £10.

Miscellaneous.

INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE.

It is said that we must understand the Bible by the same means by which we understand any other book; that the Bible must be interpreted by the common laws of language, just as every other book must be interpreted. This statement may convey a great, fundamental, practical truth, or it may enwrap an error which shrivels the spirit, kills the soul, and denies God—either, according to the application which is made of words.

It is plain enough, from the very nature of the case, that if God gives to any of his creatures a revelation, oral or written, it must be given in some language to which they are accustomed, which they can understand, as they understand other languages that they speak and read, otherwise it is no revelation to them; they still need another to let them into the mysteries of the first, and if this explanatory revelation be not in common speech, there must be still another, and another, and another, till you come at last to one that is given in the common style of verbal communication—and this last is, in fact, *the only revelation* made to those who receive the communications; and God is he who does the last thing first, when the doing of the last supersedes the necessity of all the rest.

All this is obvious from the very nature of the case; and when we turn to the matter of fact, as it really exists on the pages of the Bible, we find all this, and much more than this of the same kind, to be true of the revelation therein presented to us. Revelation, as it stands in the Bible, is given not only in the common language of the generation to which it was addressed, but also in the peculiar style and manner of each one of the persons originally chosen to be the channels of the revelation; the style essentially changing, not only with each different generation, but with each different person, however near to, or remote from, his co-workers in time and place—the same diversities appearing in the same manner as among an equal number of any other writers, who give utterance to their own thoughts merely, without suggestions from the Divine Mind. In the language and style of the different works of the Bible, the influence of each writer's own peculiar genius and temperament; his education, the incidents of his life, his employments, the circumstances by which he was surrounded, the society, the scenery, the climate with which he was familiar, is all just as clearly and as strongly marked as in the case of any writer's whatever. Inspiration, though it be plenary and direct from the Almighty, removes none of these influences, touches them not; it lies back of them all—it sets them all in motion, but it obliterates not; scarcely fades even any of the peculiarities arising from them. As the Jewess Rebecca stood at the window of the tower, and described, in her own animated speech, to the wounded Ivanhoe, the exciting incidents of the battle which was raging outside the walls, so the holy seers, in ecstatic vision, witnessed things divine; and each in his own peculiar style and manner, gave utterance to what he saw and felt, the divine affluus exerting no other influence over his language than what was necessary to make the description accurate.

In Isaiah we see a self-possessed, mighty, sublime Hebrew mind, with a thorough Hebrew education, using language and imagery derived from the scenery, the sacred books and the historical incidents of the Hebrew land and nation; in Ezekiel, a Hebrew education, acting on a Hebrew mind, excitable, enthusiastic, aerial, fanciful, overflowing with imagery derived from the wild scenery and brilliant and coruscating skies of the country of the captivity, along the banks of the great northern river Chebar; in Daniel, still a Hebrew mind, but of different structure from either of the preceding, and a Hebrew education too, but superadded to it all the Chaldean culture, and an imagination shaped, verified, populated by the luxurious courts, the gorgeous palaces, the gigantic sculptures of the barbaric capitals, Babylon and Shushan and Ecbatana. The modern traveller, now visiting the stupendous ruins of the ancient cities of the East, sees at the present day the book of Daniel, as to its most striking peculiarities, all reproduced, as it were, before his eyes.

There is, then, a great, a fundamental, a practical truth in the statement, that we must understand the Bible by the same means by which we must understand any other book—that the Bible must be interpreted by the common laws of language, just as every other book must be interpreted. And yet, taking this statement in a one-sided aspect, and not recognising the great peculiarity of the Bible, as God's living word, these same words enwrap a wretched, pernicious error.

The volume we call the Bible, though written by parts, in ages and climes widely remote, in language diverse, and by writers, in many instances, of no personal intimacy with each other, is not a bundle of disconnected tracts, without harmony, concert, or design. Many minds and many hands, throughout many ages, were employed to produce the volume; but there was one superintending Spirit, and one continuous plan throughout the whole. The actual author of the Bible throughout, is one; it is he who *knoweth the end from the beginning, who is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever*. If the Book gives a true account of itself, when the sacred penman put down the first chapter of Genesis, the Divine Spirit saw clearly the last chapter of Revelation, and all the intermediate parts, which, in *continuance were fashioned*, came together at the proper time, and in the right place, with, at least, as much of place and continuance, and previous design, as were manifest when the different pieces of Solomon's temple, which received their perfect finish in the forest and quarry, were put together in the city of the