

THE BIBLE CHRISTIAN.

The faithful discharge of any duty, cannot be unfavourable to the general interests of morality; especially when that duty, as in the present instance, is closely connected with all others. To "judge what is right" is an important step towards *doing* what is right. Experience loudly proclaims the utility of education, and great efforts are made to render it universal. What is morally advantageous to the child will not be prejudicial to the adult. To make men wiser is commonly to make them better; and this result is most probable when the knowledge is self-acquired, and has for its object the doctrines of revelation. The promise of Christ to those who persevered in attention to his instructions was, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The bigotry which estranges good men, of different opinions on religious subjects, from each other's esteem and affection, is principally to be attributed to a practical belief in the infallibility of sects or leaders. It will gradually retire as Free Inquiry advances. The well informed of all denominations are the most liberal. Those who are most forward to censure persons of a different persuasion, and even to pronounce on their eternal destiny have generally received the creed of a party without examination, and only read the Scriptures under the influence of notions whose truth they will not suffer themselves to discuss or doubt. There is a bigotry of the creed, and a bigotry of the heart. Candid Inquiry is fatal to both; and it frequently destroys the latter in those who do not sufficiently pursue it to rid themselves of the former.

A general endeavour among Christians thoroughly to understand the religion which they profess, would be a happy presage of the return of its original purity, and its original success. Christianity would soon be distinguished from the absurdities which have usurped and disgraced its name, and impeded its progress. Again would it appear *worthy of all acceptation*, and great would be its triumphs over prejudice, scepticism and opposition. By restoring the simplicity and credibility of the Gospel, we do more towards extending its belief and influence, than by sending forth crowds of missionaries to preach a system which some will abhor as idolatrous, and others despise as irrational.

Let every one then attend to this often disputed, but still oftener neglected duty; attend to it promptly and habitually. Let us all value as our birth-right, claim as our dearest privilege, and discharge as a sacred obligation, Free Inquiry. . . . Free Inquiry, the friend of Christianity, the precursor of knowledge and of truth, the parent of liberality, virtue, and devotion! Free Inquiry, the source of improvement in every science, especially in theology; at whose inspiring voice religion awoke from her long torpor, spurned the chains of tyranny, and called on the nations to read the Gospel, and behold their God! Free Inquiry, that even now stands, like the angel which John saw in vision, with one foot on the sea, one on the dry land, lifts a mighty arm to heaven, and swears "by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that time," the time of error, superstition, and idolatry, "shall be no more!"

SELF EDUCATION.

Costly apparatus and splendid cabinets have no magical power to make scholars. In all circumstances, a man is, under God, the master of his own mind. The Creator has so constituted the human intellect, that it can grow only by its own action, and by its own action it most certainly and necessarily grows. Every man must, therefore, in an important sense, educate himself. His books and teachers are but helps; the work is his. A man is not educated until he has the ability to summon, in case of an emergency, all his mental power in vigorous exercise to effect his proposed object. It is not the man who has seen most, who can do this: such an one is in danger of being borne down, like a beast of burden, by an overloaded mass of other men's thoughts. Nor is it the man that can boast merely of native vigor and capacity. The greatest of all the warriors that went to the siege of Troy, had not the pre-eminence because nature had given him strength, and he carried the largest bow, but because *self-discipline* had taught him how to bend it.—*Wester.*

A DIALOGUE

BETWEEN A CHRISTIAN AND WESLEY'S HYMN BOOK.

Hymn Book.—O taste the goodness of your God, And eat his flesh, and drink his blood.—H. 2, v. 4.

Christian.—There is nothing in Scripture about eating the flesh and drinking the blood of God. The Scriptures tell us that "God is a spirit;" and Christ tells us that "a spirit has not flesh and bones;" where then did you learn to talk about the flesh and blood of God? Christ speaks in John vi. about people eating *his flesh*, and drinking *his blood*; or as he explains it in verse 63, receiving the doctrine which he illustrated, demonstrated, and sealed by the sacrifice of his life,—by the shedding of his blood; but Christ never speaks about giving men the flesh and blood of God to eat and drink. That strange and unnatural way of talking has come up since Christ left the earth.

H. B.—God, who did your souls relieve,
Died himself, that ye might live.—H. 6.

C.—Did God then die? Could God die? Could the world live, and the affairs of the universe go on, without God? Did Moses or the prophets,—did Christ, or his apostles, ever say that God died? What horrible kind of principles must these be, that lead men to conclude that God could ever die? The Scriptures frequently teach us that Jesus both died and rose again, but they never say that God did either. What a thing to teach people such notions as these, and encourage them to sing them too in worship!

H. B.—Earth's profoundest centre quakes;
The great Jehovah dies!—H. 552, v. 1.

C.—It is utterly impossible. It is neither reasonable nor scriptural to assert such a thing.

H. B.—He dies for me,
I feel the mortal snarl!—H. 552, v. 4.

C.—No such thing: it is all nonsense, or worse than nonsense.

H. B.—I thirst, thou wounded Lamb of God,
To wash me in thy cleansing blood,
To dwell within thy wounds.—H. 26.

C.—I cannot understand what you mean by dwelling within the wounds of Christ. If you mean no more than simply bearing Christ's sufferings in mind, and remembering his love with affection and gratitude, you might use a great deal better expressions than what you do use. There is nothing in the Bible about dwelling within Christ's wounds. I think such expressions turn plain truth into mystery and error. Besides, I see no Scriptural authority for addressing our prayers to Christ during his absence. Christ directs us when we pray, to say, *Our Father*. He never tells us to pray to him. The only passage which bears on this subject of praying to Christ during his absence, and when out of our sight, is John xvi. 23. "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." You appear to go just contrary to this. You ask Christ for every thing, and seldom ask God for any thing. You have a dozen addresses to Christ, I should think, for one to God.

H. B.—See, sinners, in the gospel-glass,
The Friend and Saviour of mankind!
Not one of all th' apostate race,
But may in him salvation find!
His thoughts, and words, and actions prove,
His life and death, that God is love.—H. 31.

C.—I like this. This sounds like Scripture. If Christ be God's image, God must be love.

H. B.—Christ has for me a ransom paid,
To change my human to divine:
To cleanse from all iniquity,
And make the sinner all like thee.—330.

C.—This also is very good. It is the doctrine of the whole New Testament, that Christ gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

H. B.—Pardon and grace and heaven to buy,
My bleeding Sacrifice expir'd.—H. 330.

C.—There you go wrong again. The Scriptures say nothing like that. They talk of Christ buying us from sin, but they say nothing about Christ buying pardon, or grace, or heaven. God's grace is free, according to the Scriptures, and his pardons are the same. God sells no blessings, that I know of. And I believe I should have known, if the Scriptures had said any thing about him selling his blessings. It is true there is one passage in which the prophet calls on the people to come and buy; but it is such a kind of buying as would, in common prose, be called getting things given. I will give you the passage.

"Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."—Isaiah lv. 1. And if God gives things freely to his younger children, who are sometimes very defective in their obedience, he could never think of demanding a price of his eldest Son, who pleased him and obeyed him in all things. I know your notion is, that God the Father sells blessings to God the Son, and that it is God the Son that gives them out free. But Scripture does not warrant such a representation of the subject. The Scriptures do not speak of any God the Son. They teach us that there is but *one* God even the Father. They call Jesus Christ the *Son of God*, but they never call him *God the Son*. Your dialect wants a thorough reformation. Your way of talking on religious subjects, is completely wrong; it is neither rational nor scriptural. It is neither so creditable to God, nor so useful to man, as it should be. It would be far better to let your old unscriptural phrases drop and begin to speak in a purer, simpler, more scriptural, and more intelligible way.

H. B.—Believe, and all your sins forgiven;
Only believe, and yours is heaven.—30.

C.—But I do not believe you; the Scriptures say the contrary. "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."—1 Cor. xiii. 2. "You see then how by works; a man is justified, and not by faith only."—James ii. 24. If people were to act on your principle, they would never get to heaven at all. I could hardly have believed that your doctrines were so flatly contrary to the doctrine of Christ and his apostles, if I had not heard it from your own lips.

H. B.—And am I only born to die?—H. 41.

C.—Of course not; we are born to live forever; and if we spend our life as we ought, we shall live and rejoice in everlasting blessedness.

MRS. RANBY'S SINFULNESS.

[From Mrs. Hannah More's *Catechisms*.]

"In the evening, Mrs. Ranby was lamenting in general, in rather customary terms, her own exceeding sinfulness. Mr. Ranby said, 'You accuse yourself rather too heavily my dear: you have sins to be sure.' 'And pray what sins have I, Mr. Ranby?' said she, turning upon him with so much quickness that the poor man started. 'Nay,' said he, meekly, 'I did not mean to offend you; so far from it, that, hearing you condemn yourself so grievously, I intended to comfort you, and to say that, except a few faults—' 'And pray what faults?' interrupted she, continuing to speak, however, lest he should catch an interval to tell them. 'I defy you, Mr. Ranby, to produce one.' 'My dear,' replied he, 'as you charged yourself with all, I thought it would be letting you off cheaply, by naming only two or three such as—' Here fearing matters would go too far, I interposed; and, softening things as much as I could for the lady, said, 'I conceived that Mr. Ranby meant, that though she partook of the general corruption—' Here Ranby interrupting me with more spirit than I thought he possessed, said, 'General corruption, sir, must be the source of particular corruption. I did not mean that my wife was worse than other women.' 'Worse, Mr. Ranby, worse?' cried she. Ranby for the first time in his life, not minding her, went on, 'As she is always insisting that the whole species is corrupt, she cannot help allowing that she herself has not quite escaped the infection. Now to be a sinner in the gross, and a saint in the detail—that is, to have all sins, and no faults—is a thing I do not quite comprehend.'

"After he had left the room, which he did as the shortest way of allaying the storm, she, apologizing for him, said, 'he was a well meaning man, and acted up to the little light he had; but added, 'that he was unacquainted with religious feelings, and knew little of the nature of conversion.'

"Mrs. Ranby, I found, seems to consider Christianity as a kind of free-masonry, and therefore thinks it superfluous to speak on serious subjects to any but the initiated. If they do not return the sign, she gives them up as blind and dead. She thinks she can only make herself intelligible to those to whom certain peculiar phrases are familiar: and though her friends may be correct, devout, and both doctrinally and practically pious, yet, if they cannot catch a certain mystic meaning,—if there is not a sympathy of intelligence between her and them,—if they do

not fully conceive of impressions, and cannot respond to mysterious communications, she holds them unworthy of intercourse with her. She does not so much insist on high moral excellence as the criterion of their worth, as on their own account of their internal feelings."

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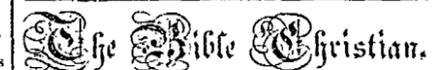
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MONTREAL, AUGUST, 1845.

"WHO BY SEARCHING CAN FIND OUT GOD?"

THE TWO ANSWERS.

One of the common charges made against Unitarians is, that they make too free a use of reason in religious investigation,—that they are accustomed to array it in opposition to revelation. It is commonly said, that the cause of their rejection of certain doctrines is to be found solely in the difficulty they experience in bringing those doctrines within the limits of human reason, and making them harmonize with their rational convictions. But such a charge is generally made without reflection, and listened to with unquestioning confidence. It is one of those things, therefore, which pass current in the world,—the multitude neither knowing why nor caring wherefore.

It contains a mis-statement of the whole matter. We reject certain popular doctrines, not simply because they are incomprehensible or irreconcilable with reason, but because they are unrevealed in the sacred records. Take for example that doctrine, the rejection of which separates us from the rest of the Christian world: we mean the doctrine of a tri-personal God. We say it is not true, because it is not only not revealed in the Bible, but is contradicted in that volume,—because it is not only *non-scriptural*, but *anti-scriptural*. We say, Prove the doctrine from the records of divine revelation, and we will believe it. We say it is because this cannot be done that we reject it.

There is a wide difference between that which is incomprehensible and that which is contradictory in itself. There are many facts connected with our own nature which we cannot comprehend or explain. This inability, however, will not prevent us believing in the fact. But if any assertion be made which confounds numbers, and palpably contradicts first principles, we are compelled to reject it as unfounded and untrue. There is a marked difference also between that which is incomprehensible and that which is unsustainable by proper evidence. Nothing is more common, however, than for theologians, in their writing and speaking, to glide from the one to the other, as if no such distinction existed. The hidden operations of the natural world are frequently referred to for theological purposes. We are told that in the shooting of a blade of grass a phenomenon is presented which transcends our comprehension, and that we should not, therefore, be surprised if we failed to comprehend the sublime mystery of three Persons subsisting in the Divine Being. But the obvious and important difference is, that the one fact is established and admitted, and the other is not. The grass springs up and flourishes before our eyes, and carries the proof of the fact along with it;—