

THE BIBLE CHRISTIAN.

NOTICE.

The Unitarian Church Library is open to the public. Persons desirous of obtaining information concerning the doctrines and principles of Unitarian Christianity, will be supplied with suitable tracts or books, by applying at the church immediately after any of the services.

The Bible Christian.

MONTREAL, JANUARY, 1845.

OUR SECOND YEAR.

With the present sheet commences the second year of our labours. The *Bible Christian* was established a twelve-month ago, to serve a temporary and local purpose. It must be remembered what our objects were then stated to be. In commencing, we said our aim should be to diffuse information concerning the distinguishing principles of Unitarian Christians. This we proposed to do by submitting to the public, from time to time, specimens of our religious literature, practical, doctrinal and controversial. Much misapprehension prevailed, and still prevails, with regard to Unitarian views of Christianity—some misrepresentation too, both then and now. To remove the one and baffle the other, therefore, we proposed that course as the most effective and peaceable. We overlooked all that blind, unreasoning prejudice which is but too common every where, and appealed to a candid public for a candid hearing.

There was one grand aim, however, to which, we said, all our other efforts should tend, as to their supreme and ultimate object. That was the promotion of sound practical holiness in the world,—the enthronement of the spirit of Christianity in men's hearts. It is this, in our opinion, which is to regenerate and save humanity. Whatever be the alleged defects of the speculative belief of Unitarians, it is admitted on all hands, both by friends and opponents, that they tolerate no laxity of moral principle. "Their rules in this respect," says Bishop Burnet, "are strict and severe, and they seem to be very much in earnest in pressing the obligations to a very high degree in virtue." There should certainly be no difference, then, between them and their Trinitarian fellow Christians in this respect. "We and the Unitarians are said to differ," says Dr. Hey, in his Cambridge divinity lectures; "but about what? Not about morality or natural religion, or the divine authority of the Christian religion: we differ only about what we do not understand, and about what is to be done on the part of God."—Thus it is candidly conceded that the points of difference fairly allow of disputation. All admit the high importance of practical holiness:—we contend for its supreme importance. We contend for the supreme importance of personal religion, deeply seated in the heart and inseparable from the daily life,—manifesting itself steadily, patiently, and without ostentation,—unconnected with technicality and cant, undegraded by fanaticism, and untarnished by extravagance.

How far our proposed ends have been served during the past year, we pretend not to say with precision. We have reason to know, however, that some good has been done. Prejudice has in many cases been softened, misapprehensions have been removed, and in several instances conviction has been carried to the mind. Let us hope that more good will be done during the year on which we have just entered.

We continue to ask for a candid hearing. We make the demand of a Christian public, simply reminding them that candour in all things is a Christian duty. Yet there may be those who would not look on our sheet. We have a sufficient knowledge of the state of the community to be fully aware that many persons would not read a line that had been written by Unitarian hands. The mere name of 'Unitarian' fills them with a vague and morbid dread. Now, to say the truth, we are not anxious for any such particular designation. Affirming,

as we do, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the Son of the living God, and fully acknowledging him to be Head over all things to the Church,—submitting to his authority exclusively, in matters of religious faith and practice,—believing every thing he taught,—striving to do every thing he commanded,—we have no desire for any other designation than the general one of *Christian*, which is derived immediately from our glorified Lord and Master himself. Yet, we have no objection to be called *Unitarians*. The term 'Unitarian,' simply denotes a great truth which we conceive lies at the foundation of religion, namely, the simple Unity of God. Now, when ignorance and prejudice combine to put a ban on a term of this character,—so innocent, so useful, and, as we maintain, so true,—it would not become us to shrink from the name. Nor do we. We glory in it. We are Unitarians. We trust we have read the New Testament to better advantage than to shrink before popular prejudice and ignorance, when a great religious truth is assailed, or even slighted, directly or indirectly. These obstacles encountered the Saviour on every hand, yet he shrunk not, nor did "the glorious company of the Apostles." The unbelieving Jew, full of the prejudices of his age concerning the temporal glory of the promised Messiah, 'stumbled' at the idea of Christ's dying a malefactor's death;—he would not listen to it. The proud Greek, full of vain philosophy, curled his lip in scorn, and cried "foolishness!" when he heard that the Author of the new doctrines underwent a slave's punishment upon the cross. On account of the supposed shame of the cross, those persons closed their eyes and ears to the Gospel message, and put it under ban. But did Paul yield? Not a hair's breadth. The very point selected by ignorance and prejudice as that on which to fasten reproach was selected by the Apostle as that in which to glory. We believe that God, the Almighty Maker of the universe, is *undivided* and *indivisible*: and if the name of Unitarian, which denotes this belief, is to be cast out as evil, and if those who assume it are to be made the objects of popular denunciation, then we should be inclined to imitate the apostle, and make the proscribed name, a matter of glory.

We are aware that in this respect we differ from thousands who entertain a similar belief with regard to God's simple unity. Nothing will induce them to assume any particular denominational title—they will recognise no name but that of 'Christian.' We blame them not. We respect the motive which prompts them to give the weight of their influence to check the growth of party names in the Church. We wish there were fewer of these;—we wish there were none of them. At the same time, however, we hope that our friends of the 'Christian' denomination, will appreciate the motive which induces us to adopt the name of Unitarian.

Now, with regard to those who have a morbid dread of this name, we have but little to say. We can have very little to say to themselves, for if an angel from heaven were to write for their instruction in our columns, their prejudice would deprive them of the benefit of it. They would not read. We look upon such a class of people as a mere drag on all progress. Human improvement and religious reform must be accomplished by a far different class of minds. In course of time, they will be obliged to follow, though it be at a great distance.

There are others, however, of a 'more noble' turn of mind than those to whom we have alluded. There are many who are candid and enquiring—who are too just and too generous to condemn any cause unheard. We have a chance of being read by such as these—we know that our sheet does fall into such hands. We would simply caution them against receiving any statement of our views, from any quarter, too hastily. We do not say that the statements given by our opponents, are necessarily incorrect; but we do say that they are too frequently so to merit much reliance. A final

opinion should never be formed concerning Unitarian principles until the Unitarian himself has obtained a hearing in the matter. We think it necessary to say this much at least: for we solemnly declare that we have seen statements of the Unitarian faith, alleged and put forth by persons who pretended to information on the subject,—by men who held the office of Christian ministers, which have astonished and shocked us, and which bear about the same resemblance to Unitarianism as held by those who profess it, that a deformed and repulsive caricature does to the fair, properly developed portrait. We simply ask that both sides should be heard, and whether the candid reader agrees with us, or differs from us, we are not going to respect him the less, and in any case we ask him to exercise Christian charity towards us likewise.

We have another class of readers to whom we would say a word before we close. Those are they who sympathise with us in religious opinion. We caution them against yielding their assent to any thing they see in our columns, unless it be sustained to their satisfaction by the evidence of the sacred record of God's Word. We have a great aversion to any thing like a passive obedience in such matters. We wish to be sustained in our efforts by a body of intelligent believers. The circumstances of the times require that all Unitarians should be of this character. It is also necessary that they should be alive and active. Let them be so. To borrow the language of a certain class of writers, we regard their mission as one of vast importance. Not so much perhaps in the way of converting men to their peculiar opinions, as in exhibiting a generous and enlarged spirit in all things;—in reaching above and beyond all narrowness and sectarianism. Thus may they administer an emphatic rebuke to all intolerance and bigotry. Thus may they make their influence felt, in some measure, throughout the community, though it would scarcely be recognized. While they seek truth, and discover it,—while they avow it, though it be unpopular,—let them do all this temperately. Let them, at least, remember that no degree of correctness in belief can atone for the violation of Christian charity.

WHO ARE THE ORTHODOX?

'Orthodoxy' has long since got to be a term of very loose usage in the religious world. Almost every party claims it, and almost every party has it conceded to them. Its use has become so indiscriminate that some do not care for seeking it. As a party term, it is frequently used as antagonistic to Unitarianism. When speaking of our Trinitarian fellow Christians, we feel no hesitation in giving it to them as such. We are not of those who quarrel about mere terms. In designating parties, we are generally disposed to use those names which are least offensive to the parties themselves.

Yet, when we come to seek the precise meaning of this term, we may discover that it does not lie so near the surface as many suppose. Who are the orthodox? Let an accomplished Trinitarian Professor answer the question; we mean Dr. Campbell, Professor of Divinity and Principal of Marischal College, Aberdeen.—"As to orthodox," says Dr. C. "I should be glad to know the meaning of the epithet. Nothing, you say, can be plainer. The orthodox are those who in religious matters entertain right opinions. Be it so. How then, is it possible I should know who they are that entertain right opinions, before I know what opinions are right? I must therefore unquestionably know orthodoxy, before I can know or judge who are orthodox. Now, to know the truths of religion, which you call orthodox, is the very end of my inquiries; and am I to begin these inquiries on the presumption, that without any enquiry I know it already? . . . There is nothing about which men have been, and still are, more divided. It has been accounted orthodox divinity in one age, which hath been branded as ridiculous fanaticism in the next. It is at this day deemed the perfection of orthodoxy.

chanically repeat itself and copy the past, which does not live on its old virtues, which does not enslave itself to precise rules, but which forgets what is behind, listens for new and higher monitions of conscience, and rejoices to pour itself forth in fresh and higher exertions.

I call that mind free, which is jealous of its own freedom, which guards itself from being merged in others, which guards its empire over itself as nobler than the empire of the world.

In fine, I call that mind free, which, conscious of its affinity with God, and confiding in his promises by Jesus Christ, devotes itself faithfully to the unfolding of all its powers, which passes the bounds of time and death, which hopes to advance for ever, and which finds inexhaustible power, both for action and suffering, in the prospect of immortality.—*Channing.*

CONSISTENT PROTESTANTISM.

Consistent Protestants do not admit that there is any one universal *visible* church at all. In their view, all true Christians, of whatever communion, are members of one universal *invisible* church; which consists of the faithful, not only of one age, but of all ages; and is gathering to itself from the many visible churches, whatever is devout and holy in each—to assemble at last in that 'all-reconciling world,' where Bossuet and Liebnitz shall dispute no more, and where 'Luther and Zwingle shall be well-agreed.'

'Variations,' which Catholics pretend to exclude, but never do, Protestants not only admit may exist, but contend that they cannot but exist. Their theory is very simple and intelligible. They maintain, with Chillingworth, that every man of sane mind, who honestly inquires, will arrive at sufficient truth to save him; that if there be any one who thus honestly inquires, and falls into perfectly involuntary error, that error will not condemn him; that, if a man has *not* honestly inquired, his error is chargeable upon him in the degree in which he has, by his own negligence and wilfulness, invited it; that these principles have, in fact, seemed as great an approximation to unity as the system which, after admitting the maxims which must infallibly issue in spiritual despotism to attain it, fails to do so, and that, lastly, this is shown by the general harmony of Protestant confessions on points which as much transcend 'Church principles' in importance, as they surpass them in clearness.

Which of these two views of the subject is the nobler, the worthier—which best harmonizes with the instincts and exercises of Christian charity—which affords the more reasonable hope of an essential, though not an external union, we cannot now stay to enquire.—*Edinburgh Review.*

LOWELL FACTORY GIRLS.

As for the noble deeds, it makes one's heart glow to stand in these mills, and hear of the domestic history of some who are working before one's eyes, unconscious of being observed or of being the object of any admiration. If one of the sons of a New England farmer shows a love for books and thought, the ambition of an affectionate sister is roused, and she thinks of the glory and honor to the whole family, and the blessing to him, if he could have a college education. She ponders this till she tells her parents, some day, of her wish to go to Lowell, and earn the means of sending her brother to college. The desire is yet more urgent if the brother has a pious mind, and a wish to enter the ministry. Many a clergyman in America has been prepared for his function by the devoted industry of sisters; and many a scholar and professional man dates his elevation in social rank and usefulness from his sister's or even some affectionate aunt's entrance upon mill life, for his sake. Many girls, perceiving anxiety in their father's face, on account of the farm being encumbered, and age coming on without release from the debt, have gone to Lowell, and worked till the mortgage was paid off, and the little family property free. Such motives may well lighten and sweeten labor; and to such girls labor is light and sweet.

In the mills the girls have quite the appearance of ladies. They sally forth in the morning with their umbrellas in threatening weather, their calashes to keep their hair neat, gowns of print or gingham, with a perfect fit, worked collars or pelerines, and waistbands of ribbon. For Sunday and social evenings they have silk gowns, and neat gloves and shoes. Yet through proper economy,—the economy of educated and thoughtful people,—they are able to lay by for such purposes as I have mentioned above. The deposits in the Lowell Savings Bank, were, in 1843, upwards of 114,000 dollars, the number of operatives being 5000, of whom 3800 were women and girls.—*H. Martineau.*

WORTHY OF NOTE.—It is a curious fact, that the church in Geneva, (Switzerland,) in which Calvin preached—who in the sixteenth century caused Servetus, the Unitarian, to be burnt at the stake for his alleged heresies—is now used by a congregation who weekly listen to the preaching of the Unitarian, Cheneviere.