

Poetry.

TO A YOUNG CHORISTER.

The bird that hails first breathings of the Spring... Sing on, fair boy! the meaning of thy song...

ON THE ALLEGED PRESBYTERIANISM OF THE ENGLISH REFORMERS.

From "A View of the Organization and Order of the Primitive Church, &c." by the Rev. A. B. Chapin, M.A.

It is said, that the Reformers of the Church of England... and the Church of England herself, gave up, at the time of her Reformation...

It must be borne in mind, that all the Reformers of the English Church had been educated in the Romish faith.

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doctrine. Seventeen questions were proposed for consideration. Those who wish to see the whole paper, will find it in Burnett.

The next paper usually cited in proof, bears date 1543, and is drawn from a work entitled, "The Necessary Errand of a Christian Man."

With this book published five years before the death of Henry VIII., and seven years before the compilation of the Book of Common Prayer...

It, therefore, were the opinions of the Reformers on one point, they are pertinent to the Reformers on any other point, they are pertinent to the Reformers on any other point...

Having examined the books published before the reign of Edward VI., usually cited to prove the Presbyterianism of the English Reformers...

THE CHURCH. "ART. 19. The visible Church of Christ is a Congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments are duly ministered..."

OF THE MINISTRY. "ART. 23. It is not lawful for any man to take upon himself the office of public preaching, or ministering the sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called and sent, to execute the same."

THE MINISTRY DIVINELY INSTITUTED. Collect at the ordination of a Deacon.—"ALMIGHTY GOD, who by Thy divine Providence hath appointed divers orders of ministers in Thy Church..."

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according to CHRIST'S ordinance; that by the ordinance of CHRIST, no man may take upon himself the office of public preaching, or ministering the sacraments, before he is lawfully called and sent to do the same;

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unreal and distorted proportions. It was like viewing the visible world through a window, one pane of which was a large magnifying glass.

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which remains after every man has subtracted the doctrines against which he entertains a prejudice, &c.—Dew of Hermon, pp. 10, 11.

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1. That in the way of principle—though this is a mere truism—there is no difference between the dominant sect in Scotland, and our own dissenters: indeed neither party affect to deny this identity.

2. That, according to the terms of the proposed evangelical union, the Church of England cannot be admitted to this new "Protestant Model of Unity;" and that, be the principles of our Church what they may, anyhow they are not of that protestant and truly evangelical calibre which is now desiderated.

3. By thus excluding the Church of England as such, the projected union of sects has pronounced its judgment, that certain familiar doctrines, viz. 1. The doctrine of justification; 2. Of regeneration; 3. Of the sacraments; 4. Of the apostolical succession—are the true and undoubted doctrines of our Church, (whether they are "Popish or Tractarian," is beside the question), and are marked out as grounds of rejection from the new covenant; and, therefore, that they who in the Church, oppose, deny, or explain away such doctrines, are unfaithful to their own avowed principles: friends and foes alike being judged.

4. That is obvious—That it ought to be a most inspiring thought, that we have that unity, for which all parties within the Church are pining and wasting; that we have the "one body," as well as the "one spirit," the "one mouth," as well as the "one mind;" and that it must be ours to preserve the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

And, 4.—which requires caution both to say and to receive—That all these endeavours after a more extended intercommunity on the part of a sectarian body like the Scotch establishment, should realize to us the great duty of endeavouring to restore true unity, a practical living unity (not that theoretical paper unity which, in England, we have been long content) among all true branches of Christ's Holy Catholic Church; and that we are all concerned to heal the breaches in the great communion of saints whosoever or by whomsoever caused or continued.

On some future occasion, we will examine other projected schemes of comprehension, lately mooted by the common English dissenters.

HEATHEN ORIGIN OF THE WORSHIP OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(From "Vestiges of Ancient Manners and Customs discoverable in Modern Italy and Sicily," by the Rev. J. J. Blunt, B. D.)

Few phenomena in the Christian world have seemed to me more extraordinary than that the Madonna should have usurped in all Roman Catholic countries, particularly in Italy and Sicily, so much of that reverence which is only due to the three Persons of the Trinity.

To pay such respect to the memory of the mother of our Lord as we owe to a creature selected by the Spirit of God for the mysteries of the incarnation, is highly proper; and by the better informed Roman Catholics, perhaps such respect is all that is offered. At the same time, none can be so blind as not to perceive that the honours assigned to the Madonna by the Italians in general, are of a very different description. Are they in danger? Upon her they call for help. Have they experienced any signal deliverance? To her influence it is ascribed. The most splendid of their processions are dedicated to her glory—the oaths they utter in conversation are commonly in her name—their first exclamation of wonder or grief is, Santa Maria! Whence does all this proceed? Perhaps it is only to be accounted for by the nature of the religion of ancient Rome.

A vast variety of female deities, some of which were not less powerful, nor less the objects of propitiation and prayer, not placed in a lower rank in the scale of divinity, than the greatest of the gods of the other sex. On the contrary, the superiority of females was established in Egypt as a civil and religious institution, and the same order is observed in Plutarch's treatise of Isis and Osiris. (See Gibbon, vol. v. p. 103, note.) A precedence thus given to the female deities in Egypt, would probably have its operation in Italy also; a proposition of which no person will entertain much doubt who has observed the proportion which the gods of the Nile bear in every museum of Italian antiquities to those of Greece and Rome. Indeed, when Isis and Serapis were united in one temple in the capital of Italy, priority of place was assumed by the queen. It is natural, therefore, to suppose, that mankind, long retaining a propensity to relapse into idolatry, would endeavour to find some substitute for an important class of beings, which had for so many years exercised undisputed empire over the minds and passions of men, who, from climate and temperament, were perhaps peculiarly disposed to render the fair portion of the inhabitants of heaven a chivalrous obedience. The religion of Christianity, however, as it was taught by our Saviour and his immediate followers, afforded no stock on which this part of heathen mythology could be grafted. None of the three Persons of the Trinity could, without much effort, be moulded into the form of a goddess; and the circumstance, that some ancient heretics actually did maintain the Holy Ghost to be a female, only serves to show the reluctance with which mankind bade adieu to that sex as objects of worship.

On the other hand, the Virgin presented such an opportunity as could hardly escape the penetration of any age, much less of one which could call "Barabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercury, because he was the chief speaker." And indeed we find that a sect of persons, named Colyridians, arose amongst the Arabians, before the end of the fourth century, who offered cakes to the Virgin Mary as a goddess, and the Queen of Heaven. (Vid. Jortin's Eccles. Rem. vol. i. 332.) When we consider, therefore, on the one side, the natural disposition of converts from Paganism to mingle and confound the religion they had quitted with that they had espoused; and, on the other, the willingness which sincere but ill-judging Christians, such as Gregory Thaumaturgus displayed to come to an accommodation with the Pagans, in hopes that time and improved knowledge might lead them to a purer faith; (Vid. Saucer. verb. eccles.) we shall not be surprised to find that many of the rites and much of the reverence which attached to the several female deities of old, should have been concentrated in favour of the Madonna. An error so likely to arise in the common course of things, was perhaps confirmed by the title of Θεοτόκος and Mater Dei [Mother of God], which was assigned to the Virgin without scruple, till the famous Nestorian controversy brought the subject into debate, and occasioned the council of Ephesus in 428, which, after all, decided that the term might be used with propriety.

As this epithet in Pagan times was applied to Cybele, and as that goddess, from her primitive regard for the ancestors of the Romans—

(Hæc Mater amavit opes— Ilium, the mighty Mother ever loved)

was held in peculiar honour in the capital of the world, and celebrated there with a magnificence agreeable to the importance of her character—

Ille Deus peperit, cætere paravit, Principiumque dati mater honoris habet—

On. Fast. iv. 360.

The gods she bore—to her the immortal race Resign'd the honours of the foremost place—

so does it seem almost inevitable that some confusion in the minds of half-enlightened persons would ensue in consequence of so singular an identity of name.

A few incidental facts which I can mention,





