

Religious Communications.

For the Christian Observer.

SKETCHES OF THE REFORMATION, NO. III.

IN my last, p. 265, I gave a succinct detail of the circumstances which led to the publication, in 1540, of the work entitled, "A necessary Erudition of any Christian Man." I shall now proceed, agreeably to my promise, to lay before the reader an abstract of its contents, from which it will appear that, since the year 1536, when the Ten Articles were framed, but little progress had been made in the work of reformation.

ABSTRACT OF THE NECESSARY ERUDITION, &c. OF 1540.

I. FAITH, as this work affirms, stands in two several senses in Scripture: the one a persuasion of the truths both of natural and revealed religion, wrought in the mind by the Holy Spirit: the other such a belief as begets submission to the will of God, and hath hope, love and obedience to God's commandments joined to it. This last was Abraham's faith, that also which according to St. Paul works by charity, and which is professed in baptism; whence Christians are called the *faithful*. Those Scriptures, where it is said that *we are justified by faith*, do not mean that we are justified by faith, as it is a separate virtue from hope and charity, fear of God, and repentance. They mean faith neither only nor alone, but, with the foresaid virtues coupled together, containing the obedience to the whole doctrine and religion of Christ. As for the definition of faith, which some proposed, as if it were a certainty that one was predestinated, it was asserted, that no such account of it, could be found either in Scripture or the Doctors: nor indeed could such a thing be known; for though God never failed in his promises to men, yet such was the frailty of men that they often failed in their promises

to God, and so did forfeit their right to the promises which are all made on conditions that depend on us.

II. Faith having been thus explained, there followed a large paraphrase of every article in the CREED. In this exposition, however, there is nothing which would have been controverted between the Papists and Reformers, excepting the definition of the Holy Catholic Church, which it is said, "*comprehends all assemblies of men over the whole world that receive the faith of Christ, who ought to hold an unity of love and brotherly agreement by which they become members of the Catholic Church.*" Much is subjoined to prove the unreasonableness of making unity to consist in submission to the Pope.

III. The number of SACRAMENTS was fixed at seven*. 1. *Baptism* which was explained in the same manner as in the former articles (p. 261), except that original sin was more enlarged on. 2. *Penance*. Under this head the merit of good works was rejected, though they were declared to be necessary: and men were in-

* It is worthy of remark, that this question was decided contrary to the opinion of Cranmer, whose sentiments upon it may be seen at length in the Twenty-first Number of the Collection of Records, contained in Vol. I. of Burnet's History of the Reformation. If we possessed equal means of forming a judgment with respect to the other points discussed, we should probably discover that Cranmer had found it necessary to make considerable concessions to the prejudices of his brethren. But even admitting this work to be a fair exposition of the opinions entertained by Cranmer in the year 1540, a very slight perusal will satisfy the candid reader that there were some of these which he did not long retain, but which his increasing acquaintance with scriptural truth induced him to abandon.

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structed to depend wholly on the sufferings of Christ. 3. *The Eucharist*. Transubstantiation and the benefit of hearing mass were fully asserted, and communion in both kinds declared to be unnecessary, because of the concomitancy of the blood with the flesh. Some good rules, however, were added respecting the disposition of mind which ought to accompany a participation of this sacrament. 4. *Matrimony*, the bond of which was said on no account to be dissoluble. 5. *Orders*, which were to be administered according to the New Testament; the particular forms of electing, presenting, or appointing ministers, being left to the laws of every country. Their office was to preach, to administer the sacraments, to bind and loose, and to pray for the whole flock; which office they must execute with such limitations as were fixed by the laws. 6. *Confirmation*, which was of great advantage, though not necessary to salvation. 7. *Extreme unction*, whereby remission of sins was obtained to those who by penance were restored to a state of grace.

IV. An explanation of the TEN COMMANDMENTS succeeded, which contained many valuable rules of conduct. The *second* appeared as a distinct commandment, the words, "For I the Lord thy God," &c. to the end being left out*. With regard to worshipping images and praying to saints, nearly the same directions were given as in the articles of 1536. (p. 263.) A rest from labour every seventh day was said to be ceremonial, and to be obligatory only on the Jews; the spiritual meaning of this rest being to abstain from sin and carnal pleasures. We are bound, however, by the fourth commandment to cease from labour, that we may serve and worship God, on the days appointed for that purpose; and on those days we ought to examine our conduct during the past week, amend it where it has been amiss, and give ourselves to prayer, reading, and meditation.

V. In the Exposition of the LORD'S PRAYER it was stated, that prayer should be made in the vulgar tongue, in order that the minds of men might

be more effectually stirred up to devotion.

VI. In explaining the AVE MARIA, which was to be used in commemoration of Christ's incarnation, and in praise of the blessed Virgin, the history of Christ's coming into the world was opened.

VII. The succeeding Article respected FREE-WILL, which, it was said, must be in man, otherwise all precepts and exhortations would be to no purpose. It was defined to be "a power of the will joined with reason, whereby a reasonable creature, without constraint in things of reason, discerneth and willeth good and evil; but chuseth good by the assistance of God's grace, and evil of itself." This faculty was said to have been perfect in paradise, but to have been greatly impaired by Adam's fall. Now, however, by an especial grace, (which was offered to all, but enjoyed only by those who with free-will do accept it), it was restored, that with great watchfulness we may serve God acceptably. But though free-will be still in man, the grace of God both preventing and assisting, is necessary both to begin and to perform every good work. All men ought therefore most gratefully to receive and follow the motions of the Holy Ghost, and to beg God's grace with earnest devotion and stedfast faith; and in that case it will be granted according to God's promise. God, it was added, is not the author of sin, nor the cause of man's damnation; as men draw on themselves destruction by sin. Preachers, therefore, were enjoined neither so to preach the grace of God as to take away free will, nor so to extol free-will as to derogate from the grace of God.

VIII. The doctrine of JUSTIFICATION was next laid down. The miseries of man by nature, the guilt of sin, and the unspeakable goodness of God in sending Christ to redeem us by his death, having been premised, Justification was stated to be the making us righteous before God, whereby we are reconciled to him, and made heirs of eternal life; that by his grace, walking in his ways, we may be reputed just in the day of judgment, and so attain everlasting happiness. God is the chief cause of justification, yet man, prevented by grace, is by his free consent and obedience, a worker towards attaining it. For though pro-

* This omission was agreed to, in order to meet the objections of Gardiner, who had wished both to shorten the commandment and to combine it with the *first*.

cured only through the merits of Christ's death, yet many things must be done to attain a right and claim to that which, though offered to all, is applied but to few. We must have a stedfast faith, true repentance, real purposes of amendment, committing sin no more, but serving God all our lives: and if we fall from this state, it being certain that we may fall away from our justification, we must recover it by penance, fasting, alms, prayers, with other good works, and a firm faith, going forward in mortification and obedience to the laws of God. All curious reasonings about Predestination were to be set apart: there being no certainty to be had of our election, but by feeling the motions of God's Spirit in us, by a good and virtuous life, and by persevering in it to the end. Therefore it was to be taught that as, on the one hand, we are to be justified freely by the grace of God, so, on the other hand, when it is said, *we are justified by faith*, it must be understood of such a faith as includes the fear of God, repentance, hope, and charity. All these must be joined together in our justification, and though imperfect yet God will accept them freely through Christ.

IX. GOOD WORKS were stated to be absolutely necessary to salvation, and to consist not in outward actions merely, but in inward spiritual affections, as the love and fear of God, patience, humility, and the like: not in superstitious observances, and human inventions, nor in moral works done by the strength of natural reason; but in works of charity flowing from a pure heart, a good conscience and faith unfeigned; all which were declared to be meritorious towards attaining everlasting life. Fasting, alms-deeds, and other fruits of penance, were also particularized. The merit of Good Works was to be reconciled with the freedom of God's grace, because our works are done by his grace, so that we have no cause of boasting, but must ascribe all to the grace and goodness of God.

X. The last chapter gave the same view of PRAYERS FOR SOULS DEPARTED, which was contained in the Articles of 1536. (p. 263.)

For the above abstract of "A Necessary Erudition of any Christian Man," as published in 1540, I am chiefly indebted to Bishop Burnet's

History of the Reformation*, to whose account Strype refers† as authentic. The work itself is said, by Strype, to have been "chiefly of the Archbishop's (Cranmer) composing." We have already alluded, however, to some points on which the opinions of that great man were evidently at variance with those exhibited in the formulary‡: and if a comparison be instituted between the sentiments which are here maintained on the points of faith and justification, with those expressed in the discourse of Cranmer written three years after, and inserted in the *Christian Observer*, for April, p. 190, a very remarkable difference will be discovered. But I will reserve to another opportunity the remarks which may be requisite for fully elucidating this subject.

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To the Editor of the Christian Observer.

THE annexed Memoir of that eminently pious woman Mrs. Savage, is extracted chiefly from her Diary, and though in an imperfect state, I transmit it to you, that you may judge whether its probable utility gives it any claim to insertion in the *Christian Observer*. The well known character of both her father and brother (Philip and Matthew Henry) may render it interesting to your readers.

Your's,

E. P.

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE OF MRS. SAVAGE, ELDEST DAUGHTER OF THE REV. PHILIP HENRY, OF BROAD-OAK, IN FLINTSHIRE.

THIS excellent woman was born August 7th, 1664. At the early age of seven years, she could readily construe a psalm in the Hebrew Bible. The disposition which she manifested to engage in the pursuit of Hebrew literature induced her father to compile an English grammar for her use. He also taught her to write, and at ten years old she used to write the sermons which he preached with tolerable exactness. She mentions in

* Edition 1715. Vol. I. p. 274, &c.

† Life of Cranmer, p. 77.

‡ See notes, p. 325 and 326.

be directly obviated or repelled by arguments drawn from critical knowledge, it is desirable, both for the credit of Christianity, and, (it may prove,) for the benefit of the objectors themselves, that those who have the means should qualify themselves to defend the religion which they embrace, even upon the ground which its enemies have chosen for assailing it. Every acquisition; indeed, however valuable, is attended with peculiar trials: nor is knowledge, the first seducer of our race, exempt from them. Even when chastised by humility and religious reverence, it has its dangers and its pains. How often do the first draughts of knowledge, as we frequently mis-cally error, only furnish us with doubts, which it requires much subsequent labour to resolve and dissipate! The question, however, is, whether in the midst of danger of a far more certain and formidable kind, we should be armed or unarmed. Hardly a company now can be entered, in which a loquacious and proselytizing infidel is not to be found: hardly a book, however remote the subject, can be taken up, which does not in some part contain the obvious or lurking poison of irreligion. The security of ignorance is entirely cut off; and it remains to be determined, whether our knowledge should be only of that kind which is pernicious.

Religious persons in general do not appear to be sufficiently sensible of the real importance of that body of *external* evidence, as it may be called, by which God has fortified his revelation, and certainly not in vain. The circumstances of the times require, that they should make themselves in some degree acquainted with it, and helps for this purpose are by no means wanting. It may, perhaps, be safely affirmed, that there never has been a work so feebly written upon the Evidences of Christianity as not sufficiently to prove its truth. If it would not lead us too much beyond our ordinary limits, we might take the occasion, here offered to us, of considering how far, and under what circumstances, it is proper that such subjects should be introduced into the pulpit. It is, indeed, sufficiently disgusting and unprofitable to hear of nothing else; yet, as many persons acquire no divinity but what is provided for them at Church, it might not be amiss to consult their benefit,

by supplying them with some of those reasons of the Christian hope, which directly obviate the most popular objections against it. This, however, should be done both sparingly and discreetly; and the study, undoubtedly, is the properest place for pursuing inquiries, which, under the most dignified management, must be considered as falling somewhat below the sanctity suited to the house of God, and which respect rather the bulwarks of Christianity than Christianity itself.

The Beneficial Influence of the Gospel.

A Sermon, preached before the Society in Scotland, (incorporated by Royal Charter), for propagating Christian Knowledge in the Highlands and Islands; at their Anniversary Meeting, in the High Church of Edinburgh, Thursday, June 14, 1804. By the Rev. WALTER BUCHANAN, A. M. one of the Ministers of Canongate, Edinburgh. Edinburgh, 1804. Svo. pp. 72.

ANNIVERSARY Sermons preached before societies, instituted for the promotion of Christianity, can seldom be expected to possess much originality, since the nature of the duty generally requires that the same subject should be principally attended to in all. It is evident, however, that a general subject may be very differently treated; and that while in the hands of one preacher it may be a complete soporific, in those of another it may excite and keep in action the most lively interest.

This reflection has been excited by our perusal of the present correct, judicious, and impressive discourse. The text is taken from St. Paul's Epistle to Philemon, ver. 11. *Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me.* After some observations, elucidating of the circumstances of this interesting Epistle, Mr. Buchanan divides his subject into two parts—"I. Of the state and character of those who are strangers to the Gospel; and, II. Of the happy effects which the Gospel produces on all who truly believe and cordially embrace it."

The representation given of the heathen world, to p. 18., is just and striking. Although representations of this kind are frequently to be met

with in addresses from the pulpit, especially on such occasions as that of the sermon before us, we do not consider them by any means as superfluous. Although to every person acquainted, in the slightest degree, with the moral state of the heathens, both of antient and of modern times, nothing can be more evident, as well as disgusting, than the deep depravity in which they have always lain immersed; yet are there writers of a certain class, who employ the greatest assiduity in representing them as the ornaments of the world, and as the best models for imitation, even in Christian nations. When the agents of iniquity are thus industrious in propagating a lie with all the deceivableness of unrighteousness, it is certainly no time for the guardians of truth to be idle, and virtually acquiesce in these representations of the worst enemies of mankind.

But our author, with the fidelity of a christian preacher, warns his audience not to look for heathens, or strangers to the Gospel, in heathen lands alone.

"You will observe," says Mr. Buchanan, "that Onesimus was a member of a Christian family at the time to which the Apostle referred, in the first part of the text. Every unconverted man, whatever advantages he may derive from the light which shines around him in a Christian land, however affectionate he may be to those with whom he is nearly connected, and however usefully he may discharge some of the outward duties of his station, yet, in many, nay, in the most important respects, he is 'unprofitable.' What acceptable service, I ask you, can he render to God, who is under the power of a carnal and worldly mind? He may assume the exterior of religion, and shew a respect to its public institutions; but he knows nothing of its power, and is incapable of rendering that homage of the heart which God expressly requires, and chiefly regards. What spiritual advantage can his wife, his children, his domestics, derive from the example, and conversation, of one 'who minds only earthly things?' He may provide for their perishing bodies; but what care does he take of their immortal souls? Does he pray with them, and for them? Is he at pains to instruct them in the principles of religion,—to impress their minds with a sense of the divine presence,—to convince them of their need of a Saviour,—to warm their hearts with the love of God and goodness,—to guard them against the snares and temptations to which they are exposed in this evil world,—and to direct and animate them in the

way to heaven? While, in these important respects, he is altogether unprofitable, who can calculate the mischiefs that result from his conduct and conversation, by which, as far as his influence extends, he teaches those around him to condemn God, to neglect their souls, and to seek their happiness in the things that perish? Were we to trace the baneful effects of his conduct upon those with whom he is immediately connected, and to whom his influence extends, it would be easy to shew you, that the little good which such a man may do in the world, is far outweighed by the moral evil of which he is the occasion. And, least of all, is he profitable to himself. He may be active and successful in the management of his secular concerns; he may be respected and applauded by his friends and acquaintance; but, alas! 'what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' (p. 18—20.)

Under the second head Mr. Buchanan observes, that the native tendency of the Gospel is to produce the happiest effects; and after having shewn that upon its first promulgation these effects were actually produced, he proceeds:

"As Christians multiplied in the world, the happy effects of the Gospel became more and more apparent. The knowledge of their principles, and the influence of their example, were gradually diffused through the community, and produced an important alteration in the opinions and usages of the people at large. Gross idolatry, with its train of attendant abominations, vanished before it; men began to entertain juster conceptions of God, and their duty: a higher standard of morals was introduced; and crimes, which formerly stalked abroad without a blush, fled from the view of men, and took refuge in the shades of night. In every country where Christianity prevailed, it meliorated the condition, and exalted the character of man. It encouraged the arts of peace, mitigated the calamities of war, gave protection and consequence to the lower ranks of society, and rescued the female sex from that degraded and servile state to which they were subjected throughout the whole heathen world. While it taught the poor to be contented and industrious, it restrained the power of the great, checked the arrogance of the rich, and infused into the breasts of all who felt its power a tender sympathy for the woes of others. In the whole range of Pagan antiquity, no traces are to be found of any asylum for the indigent and afflicted, the helpless orphan, and the destitute widow: but wherever the Gospel extended its influence, institutions were formed, and houses were opened, for the relief of almost every species of human sorrow. In fine,

it has contributed more than any, nay, than all other causes, to humanize the heart, and to civilize the manners of mankind." (pp. 33—36.)

In illustration of this fact Mr. Buchanan quotes a striking passage from Mr. Cecil's Sermon before the Society for Missions to Africa and the East; and another from a Missionary in Bengal, who, contrasting that province with Europe, writes, "but here, O miserable state! I have found the path-way stopped up by sick and wounded people, perishing with hunger, and that in a populous neighbourhood, where numbers pass by, some singing, others talking, but none shewing mercy; as though they were dying weeds, and not dying men."

The effects here ascribed to the Gospel, Mr. Buchanan justly observes, have never been produced by any other cause, pp. 37, &c.; and to the objection, that they are not universal, but that some professing Christians are as profligate as the Heathens, he replies,

"But let me ask you, Do these persons really believe the doctrines and obey the precepts of the Gospel? If they do not, which their conduct plainly proves, is it reasonable to blame Christianity for their faults? Is it fair to lay to her charge, the crimes of those over whom she has no influence; nay, crimes which she expressly condemns and forbids? Is a physician to be blamed, because his medicines do not cure those who refuse to take them? Is a lawyer to be condemned for the misconduct of a client, who rejects his counsel, and follows his own opinion? And ought Christianity to be condemned for the wickedness of those who neither understand nor believe it? Certainly not; and if the enemies of the Gospel were possessed of the smallest candour, they would impute the sinful practices of professing Christians, not to religion, but to the want of it; not to Christianity, which condemns their practices, but to the corrupt propensities, and guilty passions, by which those who commit them are governed. Much has been said, by modern infidels, about wars, persecutions, and massacres, of which they assert, Christianity was the cause. It is readily acknowledged, that wars have been waged, persecutions carried on, and thousands massacred, in the name of Christianity: but what does that prove? Not that these enormities are countenanced and encouraged by our holy religion, but only that those who have used her venerable name to justify their unchristian conduct, were either deplorably ignorant, or desperately wicked." (pp. 39, 40.)

We shall conclude with one additional extract from this well written Sermon.

"Partially, however, as Christianity prevails, and numerous as are the obstacles which impede its progress and counteract its effects, its influence in the world is immense. Its importance to society, by restraining vice, relieving misery, preserving peace, and promoting social order, domestic comfort, and public security, is beyond calculation. Nor let it be forgotten, that these effects, important as they are, are but secondary to what is the chief design of the Gospel—the glory of God, in the personal and everlasting salvation of those to whom it is addressed. This peculiar and interesting effect may be overlooked by men who support Christianity merely from motives of worldly policy, and disregarded by those who feel no concern for their precious souls: but, though silent and unobserved, more valuable far than language can express is the influence of our holy faith, in purging the conscience from dead works, in purifying the springs of action, in fortifying the mind against temptation, in supporting and comforting the wounded spirit, in assimilating the soul to God, and in preparing it for His heavenly presence." (p. 51.)

Letters of St. Paul the Apostle, written before and after his Conversion. Translated from the German of the late Rev. JOHN CASPAR LAVATER, Minister of the Gospel at Zurich. London. 1804. 8vo. pp. 115. Price 3s.

THAT these Letters are not the genuine production of St. Paul we need hardly apprise our readers; and to suppose, that the author either expected or wished them to pass as such, would be to attribute to him the height of folly and presumption. The fiction which Mr. Lavater has here employed was probably chosen by him as offering a convenient vehicle for conveying to the world his conceptions of the character and doctrine of St. Paul; and as promising, at the same time, from its novelty, to invite readers, and to render interesting and impressive the truths designed to be inculcated. Whether the choice was wise, and the effect be likely to answer these expectations, it is not easy, perhaps, to determine; so various is the taste of mankind, and so different consequently the impression which the same performance will often make on different minds.