

THE
BIBLICAL REPERTORY.

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ART. I. *The Life of William Farel, prepared from original authorities*, by Melchior Kirchhofer, Minister at Stein on the Rhine, in the Canton Schaffhausen, &c. Vol. I. Zurich, 1831. 8vo.*

THE lives of some men are an integral part of history; and of none is this statement more emphatically true than of the Reformers. Notwithstanding its immediate and ulterior effects, the Reformation is an event which has not yet been fairly estimated by the world. The time is coming when this mighty revolution will be seen to surpass, in every attribute of grandeur, all political convulsions put together; and when those who were the instruments of bringing it about, will, by general consent, take precedence of all who have been recognised as heroes. In the mean time, it is pleasant to extend our knowledge of their personal history, especially in the case of some, with the details of whose biography we have not been familiar. Among these we may reckon that impetuous thunderbolt, and terror of the papists,

* Das Leben Wilhelm Farel's, aus den Quellen bearbeitet, von Melchior Kirchhofer, Pfarrer zu Stein am Rhein, Cantons Schaffhausen, Mitglied der Schweizerischen geschichtsforschenden Gesellschaft in Bern und korrespondirendes Mitglied der Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der Geschichtskunde zu Freyburg im Breisgau.

and will feel, that in self-defence, it is necessary to go a great deal further in the line of deviation from orthodoxy than has yet been done. Whoever lives to see another generation of men rising to maturity, will see that the "New Divinity" is the stepping-stone to German neology.

ART. IV.—*A Treatise on the Millennium; in which the prevailing theories on that subject are carefully examined; and the true Scriptural Doctrine attempted to be elicited and established.* By George Bush, A. M. *Author of 'Questions and Notes upon Genesis and Exodus.'* New York, J. & J. Harper. 1832. Pp. xii. 277. 12mo.

WE have long wished to see the peculiar gifts which Mr. Bush possesses fairly exercised in such a way as to command attention. This end will in some degree, we trust, be answered, by the work before us; for whatever may be thought of its hypotheses and reasonings and interpretations, it has literary merits quite sufficient to preserve it from neglect. Were it only as a writer, Mr. Bush deserves distinction, though we fear that his profession, and the theme which he discusses, will prevent his ever gaining it among mere men of taste. Our literary journals and our current works of fancy might be searched in vain for finer specimens of rich and nervous English than we have met with in this slender duodecimo. Both its merits and its faults are, indeed, of a kind almost unknown to our American reviewers, bards, and novelists. The perfection of fashionable excellence at present seems to consist in a stereotype monotony of thought, and perfect weakness of expression. Now of these faults Mr. Bush is seldom guilty. If his style ever languishes, it is not from debility, but plethora. He often wastes enough on one distended paragraph to furnish, if adroitly spun and woven, the entire material of a tolerable Annual; and we sometimes find more poetry in one of his expressive solecisms, than falls to the lot of many a poet by profession. There are passages in this book which, if found in the pages of a novel or review, would be completely daubed with eulogy; but which, as they stand, are not likely to be even read by many except theologians. This, so far from lowering our own estimation of the treatise, is, in part, our motive for reviewing it at all. We are not disposed to acquiesce in the monopoly of literary honours so ambitiously asserted by the witlings of the world. As the church has in times past sent her giants and her mighty men into the amphitheatre,

so ought she to do now. Christian ministers especially are under obligations to convince the world that the religion which they teach is not an enemy to mental cultivation, and that genius when subdued by grace, is, instead of being quenched, baptized with fire. We are far from apprehending that excess of erudition and refinement which is such a bug-bear in the eyes of some alarmists. Intellectual culture is at least as favourable, both to truth and virtue, as vulgarity and ignorance. The literary fame of Hall and Chalmers never hurt the cause of orthodoxy; which is more than we can say of the unlettered honesty of some among her champions. We have no desire to see the effeminate graces of a false refinement introduced into the church; but a very strong one to see muscular strength and manly elegance assume the place of that which calls itself simplicity, but ought to be called meanness. In accordance with these sentiments, we are disposed to welcome every appearance of an effort to enlist real literary talent in the service of religion. And as we know Mr. Bush to be possessed as well of genius as of learning, we shall not wait to chime in with the tardy praise of others, but embrace this opportunity to testify of his gifts.

The cardinal excellence of Mr. Bush's style is that it has a soul. It is sometimes heavy, but never dull. What he writes is not a lifeless carcase, every now and then convulsed by the galvanic impulse of affected animation. There is a quickening influence pervading all its parts, which makes it always readable and almost always interesting. Indeed we are aware of no contemporary writer more remarkable for uniform and unremitted vigour. This is the more observable, because Mr. Bush is not, in one sense of the phrase, an easy writer. It would often be very hard to read him, were it not for this *vivida vis* which we are speaking of.

But besides this general vivacity and vigour, there are seasons when he rises into eloquence. In proof of this, we may refer to some of the passages in which he applies his exegetical hypotheses to history. In these cases, he is far from being satisfied with a jejune detail of facts; but after a patient and perspicuous statement of the proposed interpretation, he presents the corresponding points of history, with a distinctness, clearness, and impassioned earnestness, which are exceedingly effective. Historians are almost always frigid; and even when, like Gibbon, they are skilful rhetoricians, there is commonly an artificial gloss upon their pictures, which detracts from their effect. But in the few brief specimens of this kind which our author furnishes, he seems to enter into the events as fully as Æneas into those portrayed upon the walls of Dido's palace. Nor could he well have exhibited a

more lively personality of interest, had he been literally able to exclaim,

Quae ipse miserrima vidi,
Et quorum pars magna fui.

Now the secret of the effect thus produced is nothing more than that the author did not write till he was full to overflowing. Here is the mystery of eloquence, the arcanum of rhetorical effect. The most ordinary intellect might sometimes scintillate, if fairly brought into collision with an animating subject. But while the plan is adhered to, of composing first and feeling afterwards, no electric apparatus can provoke a spark. It is Mr. Bush's heartfelt interest in what he writes about, that vivifies his language. There is of course, therefore, nothing like a set-speech in the volume; no convulsion or grimace such as commonly accompanies mere declamation. We should be sorry indeed to have it thought from our expressions, that the work before us, or its author, is in any degree chargeable with school-boy fustian. With the exception of a somewhat jacobinical invective against crowned heads with which the third chapter closes, the volume is free from even the semblance of mere bombast. The author never rises to the tone of declamation, except when his feelings and his subject raise him to it; and then merely pours out of his fullness, in the first words that present themselves, which, of course, are not invariably the best.

But in characterizing Mr. Bush's style, we may proceed still further. There is more to be said than that he writes in earnest, and at times with fervour. A quality still more distinctive is the graphic richness of his phraseology. His sentences are pictures, and the very sins which he commits against the purity of language often seem to conjure up a train of vivid imagery. This agreeable property of Mr. Bush's diction may no doubt be referred, in some degree, to the original susceptibilities and bias of his mind. Still more may it be ascribed to his familiarity with works of taste and genius, the standards of our own and other languages. We meet, in almost every page, with gratifying proofs of the refining influence exerted by such studies. But the largest part of the effect alluded to we trace to another cause. Although we doubt not that this characteristic quality would have displayed itself in different circumstances, we believe that the remarkable degree in which it now appears, is directly owing to the nature of Mr. Bush's studies for a few years past. He has applied the prophetic taper to the niches and vaults of history, until he feels at home there; and we need not say, that there is majesty enough in the *phantasmata* of prophecy and history

combined to fill the largest fancy. In a particular manner we can see, that the Apocalyptic imagery has at least cast its shadow on our author's pages.

We have often wondered, that when critics undertake, *more rhetorico*, to laud the Bible; they are so apt to forget the splendid panorama at its close. Without any reference to prophecy, theology, or even style, we think the book of Revelation is the grandest specimen of imagery extant. It is distinguished from all others by the independence of its finest beauties on the language which conveys them. It may be translated into any dialect, with scarcely any loss upon the score of grandeur. There are parts of this mysterious scroll in which the concentration of sublimity is awful. A single verse sometimes transcends the entire machinery of many an epic. Some minds owe their first experience of sublime emotion to the symbols of the Apocalypse; and through life retaining the impressions of their childhood, never cease to feel a thrill when it is read, as though they heard the "noise of thunder" or the "sound of many waters." If such be its effect upon the occasional and casual reader, how profound must the impression be which it produces when it is itself the leading object of attention, and when in addition to its mere poetical or pictorial beauties, it is recognised as prophecy, and as such intertwines itself not only with the thread of past events, but with the complicated tissue of the present and the future. Who can wonder that the light which, as it were, steals through the hangings of this mystic temple, should impart a tinge to those who worship on its threshold? Who can wonder that our author, as was once said of another, catches eloquence from his theme, and, like the giant of old, gathers strength from the ground on which he treads?

After this minute account of Mr. Bush's merits as a writer, our impartiality as critics will not suffer us to leave his faults unnoticed. On the score of purity, the best that can be said of Mr. Bush's diction is, *abundat dulcibus vitiis*. He seems quite indifferent to custom or example in his use of words, and even inclined, where other things are equal, to give barbarisms the preference. Some of the words which he has coined and borrowed from writers little known, are mere gratuitous substitutes for those in common use; while others (such as "*septemcephalous*") are such gross violations of analogy and rule, that they are quite unworthy of a scholar's pen. In a few cases he appears to have intended to employ a common form, but to have failed in hitting it, as when he says, "*ecclesiastico-politico*," which may be good Italian, but is certainly not English. It is not, however, to be understood that there is any laborious affectation of outré expressions in the work before us. The fault in

question is the effect of negligence. An absorbing interest in the subject treated, and long familiarity with various forms of speech, very naturally lead to the employment of some phrases, which are only endurable because they are expressive. To the same neglect upon the author's part we may ascribe the want of neatness, due proportion, and compactness, in the structure of his periods. As Mr. Bush's faults are for the most part those of redundancy, not deficiency, the occurrence of pleonasm in his style is not surprising. In the first sentence of his first chapter he speaks of an *import denoting* something; and in another place (p. 90) points out the *design* of a *scope*.* In a work so full of tropical and figurative language, it would be mere hypercriticism to take notice of mixed metaphors. Indeed, we should not go into details at all, were it not that we consider these offences against taste as the only thing that can deprive our author of an elevated standing among English writers. Were his merits less conspicuous, his faults would not deserve specification. We are not without our fears that his absorption in the subjects which he handles, will forbid the *limæ labor* that is absolutely necessary to remove these blemishes. If not, we know that Mr. Bush has taste enough, and a sufficient knowledge both of principles and models, to exhibit in his style a chaste refinement not a whit inferior to its copiousness and vigour.

We have not included in this list of faults a slight approach to the *pomposo* in our author's general manner. It is so far removed, as we have said before, from vulgar bombast, that we prefer to let it pass for one of those peculiarities which stamp a writer's manner as his own; although we doubt not that to some readers it will prove offensive and perhaps excite the feeling of resistance to what certainly looks something like dictation.

It is time, however, to dismiss the question of mere literary merit, and proceed to view Mr. Bush in a character far more important, that of an interpreter. Some of the needful qualifications for this office, he is well-known by the public to possess in ample measure. Of his acuteness, diligence, and accurate acquaintance with the languages of Scripture, there can be no doubt. In his present situation he has access, we believe, to many valuable sources of information; and his recent works on Genesis and Exodus sufficiently attest his deep devotion to this study. The little that we have to say on this point, has exclusive reference to the specimen of exegesis which the work before us furnishes. Founding our judgment upon that alone, we are prepared to say,

* The most pleonastic sentence in the book, perhaps, is on the title-page. Short and simple titles are the most agreeable to modern usage, and to good taste likewise.

that Mr. Bush, in our opinion, has a just conception of the principle on which interpretation should proceed, and of the mode in which it ought to be conducted. His object, in the present case, was to determine the true import of certain prophetic symbols. For the attainment of this purpose, he has resorted, very properly, to a thorough investigation of Scriptural usage, and by a minute induction has endeavoured to fix the uniform sense of every phrase and symbol. In so doing he displays at once research and ingenuity, and certainly develops his conclusions to the reader in a manner highly plausible and striking. These are qualifications so seldom found combined, that we are gratified to see one who possesses them engaged in this employment. There is a single point, however, with respect to which we are not wholly satisfied. Skilful as Mr. Bush is in collecting and illustrating the details of evidence, he does not seem so happy in his mode of weighing them, and giving each its just proportion in the mass of proof. He speaks too much as if he did not recognise degrees of clearness and conclusiveness in argument. Not that we charge him with allowing an equality of influence to all, in the original formation of his own decisions. What we mean to say is that his method of exhibiting the items of the evidence, in favour of his doctrines, leads the reader to conclude that he expects an equal stress to be laid upon them all. And this impression is confirmed by the unvaried tone of confidence in which he speaks of almost all his own conclusions as alike in point of certainty and clearness; whereas, even admitting the correctness of them all, some are certainly less obvious and convincing than the rest.

We confine ourselves to these general remarks, because minuter criticism would require citations, which we have not room for, to explain and justify it, as well as an analysis of the treatise, which we do not mean to give. Our reasons for not giving it are two. In the first place it would be impossible to furnish any abstract, within reasonable limits, which would not do great injustice to the author's argument. In the next place, we expect such of our readers as the subject interests, to read the book itself, and do hereby recommend it to their notice, without any fear or scruple, notwithstanding Mr. Bush's premonitions of "imputed heresy."

The phrase just quoted brings to mind a circumstance which struck us very forcibly while reading Mr. Bush's treatise. We mean the tone of mingled apprehension and defiance, in which he forestals reproach and censure. For the author's own sake we regret this very much. It is always ill-judged in a writer to anticipate too large a measure of abuse and opposition. And in the

present case, especially, the mighty preparations to withstand a coming storm, are so entirely disproportionate to any consequences likely to ensue, that they seem to us inexplicable. So far are we from apprehending any great convulsion from the doctrines of this work, that we believe it easy to admit them all without a change of principle. Mr. Bush himself says, that the leading doctrine which he tries to prove, was held at least as early as the seventeenth century. The names of Lightfoot and Usher, Marck and Turretin, would be sufficient of themselves to save our author from the fires of persecution. But even on the supposition that this doctrine were a novel one, it could not be expected to make much disturbance. Mr. Bush appears, in this case, to have been misled by names. Because the word *Millennium*, which is commonly applied to an expected glorious condition of the church, is borrowed from the "thousand years" of the Revelation, he concludes, we think too hastily, that what he calls the "popular Millennium" coincides throughout with the Apocalyptic one. Our own belief is, that the word *Millennium*, in colloquial usage, means no more than what our author calls the *latter day glory*, without any idea of restriction or vicissitude. The expectations of Millennial purity and blessedness, so prevalent throughout the Christian church, are founded, therefore, not as he supposes, on tradition, but on the same explicit prophecies which he considers as prefiguring a halcyon period yet to come. It is true, that the *binding of the dragon* has been commonly reckoned as one of these predictions, and that the name *Millennium* came in this way to be applied. But we think it very clear that this Apocalyptic vision is not the foundation of the popular opinion, and that, therefore, any novel exegesis of the former can affect the latter in a very slight degree. The utmost that we can imagine to be proved by Mr. Bush, is, that one of the passages supposed to be prophetic of a state of things yet future, has received its full accomplishment, and that the name *Millennium*, as commonly applied, is inappropriate and erroneous. Further than this, he leaves the popular belief just where he found it, in entire coincidence, so far as we can compare them, with his own.

Allowing then the utmost that can possibly be asked for Mr. Bush's arguments, the issue, which they lead to, is a very harmless one; so harmless, that to some, we are afraid, his large expressions will appear ridiculous. The solemn tone in which the author sometimes speaks, as though he were indeed lifting up the axe against the carved work of the sanctuary, and revealing secrets which must make the ears of those who hear them tingle—raises expectations which are not fulfilled. The work, upon in-

spection, proves to be a critical commentary with a historical introduction. Had the author left the reader to discover, by perusal, the uncommon merit which it certainly possesses, as a specimen of criticism and composition, all would have been in good taste and agreeable to truth. But when the public are mysteriously forewarned of something terrible, and put upon their guard against some mighty shock to be sustained by ancient doctrines, expectations are created to which nothing in the disclosures of the treatise corresponds. What in itself is interesting, thus becomes jejune, and the bewildered reader tries in vain to understand the martial air with which the author in his closing chapter casts up his intrenchments. All this seems so much out of place in such a work, that it subjects the writer to the imputation of a self-importance which does not belong to him.

Another objection to the same thing is, that it is likely to beget unjust suspicions in the minds of many readers: struck with the incongruity of these protestations and provisos against the charge of heresy, when the doctrines of the book are so innocuous in themselves, they will be apt to imagine that "coming events cast their shadows before," and that these prophylactic measures have a bearing upon some ulterior changes in opinion which have not yet been disclosed, or which as yet have no existence save in the author's second-sight. Under this impression it would not be strange if they should draw the inference, that Mr. Bush is actually preparing to explain away the doctrine of a future judgment and corporeal resurrection, though in fact they are not affected, in the least degree, by this millennial theory. We regret that Mr. Bush should have afforded any colour to these dark surmises, by a gratuitous anticipation of what never will take place, and still more by the expression of so strange a sentiment as that which is propounded in the following paragraph:

"In answer to this, we have only to say, that we cannot see the justice of being held responsible for consequences having relation to other truths, provided our main point, the proof of which is conducted independently of all correlate tenets, is solidly and conclusively made out. It must be obvious to the reader that we have proposed to ourselves a single object of inquiry and proof, viz. that the Millennium of John is past. This position we have treated as capable of being established upon independent grounds, by a train of argument having no respect to any kindred dogmas whatever. If we have succeeded in our attempt, if the demonstration be in itself sound, the conclusion must stand, however it may be impugned on the ground of being at variance with other commonly-received articles of faith. For any such discrepancy the conclusion cannot be deemed responsible, nor does it fairly devolve upon us to show how the result we have reached is to be harmonized with those points of revelation with which it is supposed to be in conflict. Leaving this task, therefore, to those who think it needful to be accomplished, we challenge a rigid scrutiny to our grand position, and to the chain of proofs upon which it rests. Let it stand or fall upon its own merits. And let him who shall take up the gage, be reminded, that if he denies the signification which we have assigned to the prophetic symbols, it devolves upon him to state the reasons of his dissent, and to show *what they do mean.*"

Without taking notice of the curious alternative proposed in the closing words, we must express our wonder, that the mind of Mr. Bush could, for a moment, harbour so grotesque a paradox as that any tenet admits of independent proof without regard to any other, and that consequently no one has a right to make objections to one doctrine, on the ground of its collision with another. This sentiment is flatly contradicted, not by common sense alone, but by the constant practice of the writer who has broached it. To illustrate or establish what is doubtful or disputed, he appeals throughout to what is acknowledged and believed. Ought he then to forbid a similar appeal in opposition? Is analogical reasoning like the pillar of cloud, all darkness one way and all light the other? It is needless to say, that such a canon would unsettle all the laws of argument, and by a sort of logical nullification would establish the sovereign independence of each petty dogma on the ruins of that mighty system which we call *THE TRUTH*.

We make these strictures, it will be observed, not upon any of the specific tenets which this book was meant to advocate, but on a general principle, admitting of extensive application, which is only not dangerous because it is absurd. It might be stricken out without the slightest mutilation of the treatise which contains it, and in our opinion, to its very great improvement. Of the treatise itself we say, as we said before, that though a hasty judgment of its doctrines would deserve no notice, and we therefore do not give one, we believe that those doctrines might be honestly adopted without any deviation from the strictest orthodoxy. What subtle nexus may exist between this theory and others less innocuous, we are not endowed with optics to discern; but so far as any thing is visible at present, so far as this one is alone concerned, we think our author needs no bulwark to repel "the missiles of imputed heresy."

We cannot conclude without an expression of our satisfaction, that on this occasion we have found our learned countryman as much superior to the "prophetic school" of England in sobriety and sense, as in the graces of his style. We take leave of him with unfeigned wishes for his rich success in this delightful occupation, and shall look with some impatience for the maturer fruits of his attempt to rend the veil of the Apocalypse.