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CONTENTS.

ART. I. CHURCH MUSIC, 157

II. REVIEW OF PASCAL'S PROVINCIAL LETTERS.
Provincial Letters; containing an Exposure
of the Reasoning and Morals of the Jesu-
ists. By Blaise Pascal. Originally pub-
lished under the name of Louis de Mon-
talte. Translated from the French. First
American edition. New York and Bos-
ton. 1828. Pp. 319. 12mo, 170

III. REVIEW OF PAYNE'S MENTAL AND MORAL
SCIENCE.
Elements of Mental and Moral Science: de-
signed to exhibit the Original Susceptibili-
ties of the Mind, and the Rule by which
the rectitude of any of its states or feel-
ings should be judged. By George Payne,
A.M. J. Leavitt. New York. 1829.
Pp. 451. 8vo, 183

IV. THE AMERICAN SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION.
The Annual Reports of the American Sun-
day School Union, from 1825 to 1829 in-
clusive, 210

V. REMARKS ON A CERTAIN EXTREME IN PURSU-
ING THE TEMPERANCE CAUSE, 242

Contents.

VI. REVIEW OF DR COX'S SERMON ON REGENERATION, AND THE MANNER OF ITS OCCURRENCE.

Regeneration, and the Manner of its Occurrence. A Sermon from John v. 24. Preached at the Opening of the Synod of New York, in the Rutgers street Church, on Tuesday Evening, Oct. 20, 1829. By Samuel H. Cox, D.D. Pastor of the Laight Street Presbyterian Church. New York. 1829. Pp. 42, 250

VII. REVIEW OF DR GREEN'S LECTURES ON THE SHORTER CATECHISM.

Lectures on the Shorter Catechism of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, addressed to youth. By Ashbel Green, D.D. Philadelphia; A. Finley, and Tower and Hogan, 297

VIII. LETTER OF DR COOKE, AND REPLY OF THE EDITORS, 310

IX. SELECT LIST OF RECENT PUBLICATIONS.

Biblical, 312
Theology, 314
History and Biography, 315
Prophecy, 316
Sermons and Addresses, 317

The Review of "Essays and Dissertations in Biblical Literature," which was promised in our last Number, did not come to hand in time to be inserted. We regret that such has been the case; and the article (which has been delayed in consequence of the distance of the writer from the press) may be expected in the number for July.—Ed. Bib. Rep.

THE
BIBLICAL REPERTORY, AND THEOLOGICAL
REVIEW.

FOR APRIL 1830.

CHURCH MUSIC.

How shall a reform in the music of our churches be effected?

In a former number of this Journal, we endeavoured to show, by comparing the original design of church music with the art in its present state, that a reform is both necessary and practicable. The argument, thus far, we presume, has been satisfactory. But here, in the minds of many, a serious difficulty presents itself. A good thing, which is in its own nature practicable, cannot always be carried into effect against the habits and prejudices of the community. To obviate this difficulty, it is necessary to show, somewhat in detail, how a reform can be effected. This is the object of the present article.

We shall take it for granted that in the present day of activity, some share of enterprise and self-denial might be easily enlisted in favour of a reform in church music, if once its full importance were to be distinctly seen. There are men in our country who know how to give an impulse that will be felt in every portion of the land. Only let it be seen that such an impulse is really needed, that the best interests of religion and of good order in the community require it, and the thing will be certainly done.

of his last commands, addressed to one of the most distinguished of his apostles, "Feed my lambs." Oh! how blessed will be the lot of that faithful Shepherd who has been the means of saving many of the precious lambs of his flock! Who will be able to say, at the coming of the Great Shepherd, "Behold I, and the children which God hath given me!" But how awful will be the condemnation of that unfaithful pastor who now permits the lambs to wander from the fold, on the dark mountains of sin, to become a prey to ravenous wolves ever ready to devour!

This cursory view of the history of Sabbath schools, their importance, and the operations of the American S. S. Union, we design as an introduction to our future labours in this department. Our readers may expect often to find in the succeeding numbers of the Repertory brief reviews of books prepared for the instruction of our youth, and especially such as are written for Sabbath schools.

REMARKS ON A CERTAIN EXTREME IN PURSU- ING THE TEMPERANCE CAUSE.

MESSRS EDITORS.

Every friend of religion, of good morals, and of human happiness must, undoubtedly, have rejoiced to witness the recent triumphs of the Temperance cause. The formation of Temperance Societies in every part of our country, and the zeal manifested by many of these associations in enlightening the public mind, in overcoming prejudices, and in rescuing to all appearance multitudes of the young and the old from the jaws of that monster which is daily swallowing up thousands;—cannot be contemplated by any benevolent man without heartfelt pleasure; without cordial thankfulness to that God who has put it into the heart of his people to take these measures, and who has been pleased thus far to crown them with an abundant blessing.

It is also the firm opinion of the writer of this article, that

the plan upon which all Temperance Societies ought to be formed—the *only* wise and efficient plan, is that of *total abstinence* from ardent spirits, unless when prescribed by a physician as a medicine; and a physician, too, who is not himself a tippler. The idea of parleying or treating with such an insidious enemy is as hopeless as it is criminal. He keeps no faith with his votaries. There is every reason to adopt with decision the opinion of the venerable and eloquent *Dr Dwight*, that he who *habitually* drinks *any portion* of ardent spirits, *however small*, ought to deem himself, and to be regarded by others, as in the high road to intemperance, and as in real danger of coming to that deplorable result. Indeed it is delightful to perceive that the public mind is more and more approximating to the conclusion—undoubtedly the correct conclusion—that for persons *in health, of all ages*—WATER is the only proper drink: the most healthful, the most strengthening, and in every respect the most salutary drink. Our *children* ought to be trained up in this habit, both by example and precept; and no one who wishes to live out all his days, and to make the most both of his mind and body, ought ever to allow himself in any other habit. There can be no mistake about this matter. That *all* stimulants, in proportion to their concentrated power, consume the vital principle, and thus undermine the physical strength, is just as demonstrable as any proposition in mathematics. The only wonder is, that enlightened and thinking people should have been so extremely slow in coming to a conclusion which ought, centuries ago, to have been universally admitted and acted on. And here, Messrs Editors, I cannot help expressing my gratitude to the “American Temperance Society,” for taking the lead in this business, and for a large amount of benefit which that Institution and its numerous auxiliaries have been the means of conferring on our nation and the world. When I reflect on what has been done, in the course of two or three years, to inform and influence the minds of the American population on this subject, I am filled with wonder, and am constrained to exclaim, ‘What hath God wrought!’

That there is a special call for these voluntary efforts in our own country, seems to be generally granted. If we were inhabitants of *France*, of *Spain*, or of some other countries, where, however enormously prevalent other forms of

vice may be, intemperate drinking is comparatively rare ; I should not feel that we were called upon to make any such special efforts. But *here* the appalling predominance of the evil certainly demands a peculiar system of measures. But it is of the utmost importance that our course of proceeding be cautiously devised, and such as, in all its stages, will command the approbation of our wisest and best citizens. The intemperate and infidel part of the community will rejoice to see us doing any thing calculated to produce distraction and division among ourselves.

Now nothing appears to me more fitted to retard the progress, and to discredit the character of this great cause, than adopting, with the honest design of promoting it, such rash and extreme measures as cannot fail to shake the confidence of many in our general system ; totally to alienate others ; and, in the end, to produce a serious counteraction, which may prove deeply injurious, if not finally destructive, to the great plans which we are pursuing. It is by no means a new thing under the sun, that indiscreet, rash, and extravagant friends should do more to injure the cause which they advocate, than the most determined open enemies.

These remarks have been prompted by the intelligence, received through various channels of religious information, that a number of churches in New England and some within the bounds of the Presbyterian church, have adopted the pledge of total abstinence from ardent spirits, unless when prescribed as a medicine, by a physician, as a term of christian communion. So that, from this time, no one shall be admitted to membership in their respective churches, unless he will give this pledge. I observe, also, a notice in the public prints, that a benevolent individual has offered a premium of \$250, for the best *Tract*, to be devoted no doubt to the support of the same system of measures. I must say, that I have read these statements with deep regret, and with no little apprehension that, if they be correct—of which I fear there can be no question—the consequences can scarcely fail to be unhappy.

I am altogether at a loss to know on what authority it is, that the pledge in question can be required as a term of christian communion. We are accustomed to believe and say, that as the church is Christ's property, and governed by Christ's laws, it is not consistent with our allegiance to him, to "teach for doctrines the commandments of men," or to

erect standards of faith or practice which he never sanctioned. Now, though intemperance is undoubtedly forbidden in scripture, and is, therefore, a proper ground of exclusion from the privileges of the church; yet I have never seen in the Bible a law which forbids the use of ardent spirits, or any other kind of stimulating drink, in all degrees, and in all cases whatsoever. Of consequence, if a person be in the habit of drinking a small portion of this kind of strong drink every day, under the sincere impression that it does him good, and I have known many such people, however much it may be to be regretted, and however entire our conviction may be that such an individual is labouring under an entire mistake; still if he manifest no intemperance; if none of the visible effects of the intemperate use of strong drink are discernible in his case; by what law of Christ is he to be excluded from the church? Does the great Head of the church require, in his word, such a pledge as that which is now in question? It may be confidently affirmed that he does not. From what source, then, is it derived? Who gave man authority to demand it? And who, of course, gave authority, if it be refused, to make it the ground of exclusion from the sacred family?

It cannot be doubted that there are thousands ready to concur in the "total abstinence" system, and ready to give a personal voluntary pledge to that amount, who would steadfastly resist every attempt to make that pledge a term of communion. Thus, by the adoption of such a measure, churches would inevitably be distracted and divided, and the cordial friends of the temperance cause arrayed against each other.

Will it be said that the principle on which the demand of such a pledge is maintained, is that on which Paul acted when he said, "For meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if any man see thee, which hast knowledge, sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols, and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died? But when ye sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to

offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." I say, is this the alleged warrant for making the pledge in question a term of communion? If it be, I am persuaded it will by no means sustain the weight which is attempted to be laid upon it.

The apostle is here making an appeal to christian principle and feeling in behalf of tender consciences. And after deciding that there is no sin in eating meat; nay, that, in itself considered, there is no sin in eating even the meat which has been exposed for sale in an idol's temple; yet he thinks and pronounces that it is very improper to run the risk of giving any offence by doing that, which though not in itself unlawful, will be very likely to be misconstrued, and to put a stumbling block in a brother's way. He, therefore, with that magnanimous and disinterested spirit for which he was remarkable, resolves, that, if eating meat should make his brother to offend, he would eat none as long as he lived, lest he should make his brother to offend. But does the apostle direct that giving a similar pledge on the part of every candidate for church membership at Corinth, shall be a term of admission? Nothing like it. The truth is, there are many christian duties, plain, undoubted and important, which, yet, can never be enforced as terms of communion. It is manifestly the duty of every one to contribute to the relief of the poor, and to the propagation of the Gospel throughout the world; and to do it "according to his ability," and "as God hath prospered him." But does one professing christian in a thousand really do this, in the spirit, and to the extent of the command? Probably not even this proportion. But does any reasonable man dream of making a rigid, or even a tolerably decent compliance with this law, a term of christian communion? No, the very suggestion would be considered as an extravagance to be at once rejected. In fact, such a law could not be enforced. Every such thing must necessarily be left to the conscience, and to the voluntary decision of each individual. And if a church member, or a candidate for membership, possess thousands, or even millions of silver and gold, and cannot be prevailed upon, at the same time, to give more than a trifling pittance to benevolent and religious objects; still, it is presumed, no one would think of excluding him from the church on this account alone. His friends may lament the fact, may mourn over it, and consider it as deserving of severe censure; yet the idea

of making it the ground of rejection or excommunication from the privileges of the church, probably never occurred to the mind of any reasonable man, as either practicable or safe; and he who should attempt the execution of such a plan, would be very soon taught, by the mischievous operation of his scheme, and by the frowns of all prudent men, that he had not been guided by that wisdom which is from above. The same principle may be applied to a thousand other things. The spirit, nay the express law, of our holy religion, requires all christians to be kind and tender hearted, forgiving and amiable in all their social and domestic relations. But it is only the grosser and more palpable violations of this law, that can possibly be made the subject of church discipline. If a man be guilty of lying, slander, fraud, or gross cruelty, in his social or domestic intercourse, he will not be received into any church that is pure and faithful; or if already in it, he will be immediately cast out. But is there not an undefinable range of churlishness, harshness, perverseness, and the total absence of every thing like a spirit of accommodation and benevolence, which though criminal in the sight of God, and hateful in the sight of all good men, can never be made the ground of formal rejection from the fellowship of Christ's family? In short, would not the visible church be involved in perpetual and destructive conflicts, if many things, which, though duties, and very important duties, were not left to the consciences and volitions of each individual, but were attempted to be enforced by ecclesiastical sanctions?

Another illustration of the great principle for which I contend, may be given. The use of tobacco, as a habit, is, as I believe, next to that of ardent spirits, one of the most pernicious of those that now curse society. It is pronounced by wise physicians, to be highly injurious to the nervous system and stomach in multitudes of melancholy cases; to be the means of gradually undermining the health, and ultimately destroying the lives of thousands. It is doubtless a powerful, and often fatal provocation to intemperate drinking; and is the parent of countless mischiefs in society. But what then? Besides exerting every fair and moral influence, by the circulation of suitable tracts, and by every method of private address, for the purpose of producing voluntary abstinence from this noxious weed; suppose, for a moment, that the use of tobacco, in any way, were made

the ground of church censure, and the total abandonment of it, in every form, were proposed as an absolute term of christian communion? Would any prudent ecclesiastical body be willing to demand the pledge? Yet why might it not be demanded, upon the same principle with that which is urged in the case before us? The truth is, when we once enter such a province as this, and undertake to form and enforce laws which Christ never made, we open a door to a thousand caprices of popular delusion, and cannot foretel where the mischief will end.

Perhaps it will be said that the pledge in question is not designed to be a term of communion in any cases excepting those of new churches about to be formed, and of new members, hereafter to be admitted into churches already organized. Now, in such cases, it is thought by some, that a voluntary agreement between the church session and those who may hereafter come in, may form a lawful compact; and that where it is acceded to, no injury is done. But is it doing no injury to an individual, who resides within the bounds of a particular church, loves it, and is earnestly desirous of being received into its bosom—to reject him on grounds which the Bible knows nothing of? Surely for so serious a decision we ought to be able to show a “thus saith the Lord.” But besides this: who authorized us to institute one rule for those who are already, and have long been members of the church, and another for those who are to be newly introduced? It seems, in this case, that if the old members are detected in using ardent spirits, provided they be guilty of no intemperance, they will incur no censure. But if the new ones do the very same thing, they must be excommunicated. Why spare the former? I suppose it will be answered, because they violate no acknowledged law of Christ. The latter, then, are to be cast out of Christ’s visible family, not for breaking any of his known laws; but for violating a voluntary pledge, or compact! Now who does not see that if voluntary compact may thus come in, and make a term of communion of whatever it pleases, total abstinence from tea and coffee, as enervating injurious liquors, or total abstinence from the use of imported sugar, or broad-cloths, as hurtful to some of the important interests of the country—may be agreed upon as a term of ecclesiastical communion, and the most guarded use of them made the ground of solemn excommunication!

The superstitious Romanists, we know, adopted in old

times from the Pagans, the plan of a double code of laws; one for perfect christians, and another for the imperfect. It is hardly necessary to say, that the operation of this plan made strange work, and led to many corruptions. Should we not be in danger of introducing a state of things somewhat similar, if the scheme against which I am contending were generally adopted? One thing is certain, that until the old members should all "die off," we should have two different rules in operation for the older and the younger ranks of professors.

It were well if such of the advocates of this proscribing system as belong to the presbyterian church, would calculate the consequences of the adoption of that system. Church members who are visited with censure under it, will have a right to appeal to their respective Presbyteries, and, ultimately, if they should see cause, to the general assembly. But is there the smallest probability that our higher judicatories would or could confirm such an unscriptural sentence? And if not, will not the pronouncing such sentences, in the first instance, have a tendency to discredit and weaken the cause of scriptural discipline? It is believed that, in at least one instance, a sentence of this kind has been already reversed by a higher judicatory. And this must ever be the case, especially in the last resort. A presbytery may perhaps be found, here and there, which, from local excitement, may fall in with such a scheme of discipline. But the time is, probably, far distant when a synod, or a general assembly will be disposed to take the same course.

If it be asked, what course professing christians, as such, shall take as far as possible to banish this destroyer from our land—I reply,

1. Let them go on with untiring and growing zeal to do what they have so laudably and efficiently begun to do. Let them fill every town, village, congregation, college, academy and private school in the United States with voluntary temperance societies, formed upon the total abstinence plan. Let these societies circulate, as numerously and widely as possible, well written, popular tracts, adapted to enlighten and impress the minds of all classes of people on this subject. Let ministers, elders and private christians co-operate with zeal in forming such societies, in circulating such publications, and in expressing suitable sentiments on the sub-

ject, on every proper occasion, in public and private. In short, let them endeavour to enlist the whole population of the land in voluntary associations, and in voluntary efforts, of all wise and lawful kinds, to put down so enormous an evil. But let them all be *voluntary*, entirely *voluntary*; and they will all be, unless I utterly mistake the character of the human mind, on that very account, the more acceptable and the more effectual.

2. Let all our churches be more careful than they have ever yet been to exercise vigilant and faithful discipline when any of their members subject themselves, in the least palpable degree, to the charge of intemperance. There have been by far too much indulgence and laxity on this subject in most of our churches. Aberrations of this kind have, in many cases, passed unnoticed, until they became habitual and gross. This ought no longer to be the case. Let the rulers of our churches be as watchful and decisive in calling to an account and censuring those who are visibly intemperate, as they usually are with respect to some other sins, not more destructive either to personal character, or to social order, than this, and the consequences will, undoubtedly, be happy.

A Friend to Temperance Societies.

REVIEW.

Regeneration, and the Manner of its Occurrence. A Sermon from John v. 24. Preached at the Opening of the Synod of New York, in the Rutgers street Church, on Tuesday Evening, Oct. 20, 1829. By Samuel H. Cox, D.D. Pastor of the Laight Street Presbyterian Church. New York. 1829. Pp. 42.

Voltaire, in one of his historical works, sneeringly inquires, "how were the priests employed while the Saracens were desolating the fairest portion of their church?" "Disputing," he answers, "whether Christ has one will or two!" It will be well, if the theologians of the nineteenth century do not furnish occasion to some future infidel historian for