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# REVIEW

OF

## AMERICAN UNITARIANISM.

[Extracted from the *Panoplist*.]

*American Unitarianism; or a Brief History of "the Progress and Present State of the Unitarian Churches in America." Compiled, from Documents and Information communicated by the Rev. JAMES FREEMAN, D. D. and WILLIAM WELLS, jun. Esq. of Boston, and from other Unitarian Gentlemen in this country, by the Rev. THOMAS BELSHAM, Essex Street, London. Extracted from his "Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. THEOPHILUS LINDSEY," printed in London, 1812, and now published for the benefit of Christian Churches in this country, without note or alteration. Third Edition. Boston; Nathaniel Willis. 1815. pp. 48.*

has gradually increased; has silently and covertly extended itself into a considerable number of congregations in the vicinity; and has been, in a few instances, openly avowed. From a great variety of anonymous publications, it has been evident, that the defection had proceeded in the downward course to the lowest degrees of Socinianism, and to the very borders of open infidelity. Further than this;—it has not been in a few solitary instances only, that persons, who have been near the centre of all these operations, have heard from the pulpit both sermons and prayers, which neither expressed nor implied any thing more than sober Deism, and which were totally at variance with the Gospel. These things, and many more of a similar character, have warranted such disclosures through the medium of our work, and of other publications, as have fully apprized the Christian public of the existence of such a defection, as has been briefly described above. But as the work of error was carried on for the most part in secret;—as many well-meaning people were led in the dark;—and as proselytes were made principally by suppressing truth, rather than by explicitly proposing and defending error, it was a

WE regard the appearance of this pamphlet as one of the most important events, which have taken place for many years, in reference to the interests of religion in our country. It has been known, for at least a quarter of a century, by those who have been well-informed on the subject, that there has been in Boston a defection from those doctrines of the Bible, which have usually been denominated orthodox in Protestant communities. It has been known, that this defection

difficult matter so to expose the evil, as to present its character, extent, and design, in full view, before the eyes of its friends and its enemies. It has been an artifice practised systematically by a majority of the clergymen, who have led the way in this apostasy from the faith of the Protestant churches, and, as we believe we may safely add, in this apostasy from Christianity, to inculcate the opinion, that they *did not differ materially* from their clerical brethren through the country. This artifice has been carried so far as to induce them to complain, in bitter terms, that they were slandered by our work, when represented as thus differing, and as promoting the circulation of Socinian books; although every representation, which we have made on the subject, has been warranted by most abundant evidence. They have complained, that they were not invited to preach when travelling through the country; and have imputed this neglect to the effect of slander. It is to be remembered, that the slander complained of is the allegation, that they *differ essentially in religious doctrine* from the great body of the American clergy. Within a very few months, a clergyman, who we feel authorized to say is a decided Socinian of the German school, complained that he was not invited to preach in New York; which he imputed to the slanders of the orthodox: and yet, at the very time of making this complaint, he must have known, that his *real opinions*, if openly avowed, would exclude him from nearly every pulpit south of Massachusetts. He must have known,

also, that no representations, made by the orthodox, ever placed the Boston clergy, generally, lower on the scale of religious doctrine, than his own opinions actually were.

We should not be thus particular, were it not that the cry of *calumny* has been raised with considerable effect, and with the most unblushing confidence. But this cry cannot be raised hereafter on the same account, and in the same manner. The pamphlet before us furnishes most decisive evidence, on the subject of the state of religion in Boston and the vicinity. It is evidence which can neither be evaded, nor resisted, by the liberal party; as it is taken wholly from a book, published by Mr. Belsham, who is at the head of that party in England, and who lays before the reader original letters from Dr. Freeman and Mr. Wells, authenticated by their proper names.

It will be asked, perhaps, what is the meaning of *Unitarianism*, as the word is used in this pamphlet? The inquiry is natural; and we answer it as follows. Mr. Belsham considers himself a consistent and decided Unitarian. He evidently supposes, also, that all consistent and decided Unitarians, on both sides of the water, agree substantially with him. That the reader may become acquainted with Mr. Belsham's opinions, we shall quote his own words. The length of the quotations will be excused, when the importance of the subject is considered.

The publisher of the pamphlet has introduced it with a very suitable preface, containing large extracts from *Belsham's Review*



of *Wilberforce's Treatise*. The greater part of these extracts we shall cite below, and add to them several passages from Mr. Belsham's *Calm Inquiry* and *Memoirs of Lindsey*.

“God is the Former, the Father, and Benefactor of the human race, whom for wise reasons, unknown to us, but perfectly consistent, no doubt, with his magnificent plan of universal order and happiness, he has been pleased to place in circumstances of frailty and danger, the natural consequence of which, in their progress through life, is the contraction of a certain degree of moral pollution, which in the nature of things, and by the divine appointment, exposes them to a proportionate degree of misery here or hereafter.

“But this fact by no means proves a preponderance of vice and misery in the world; otherwise we must conclude that the Maker of the world, whose character we learn only from his works, is a weak or a malignant being. The truth is, that although the quantity of vice and misery actually existing is very considerable, there is, nevertheless, upon the whole, a very great preponderance of good in general, and with few, if any exceptions, in every individual in particular.

“The almost universal desire of life and dread of dissolution, amount to a strong presumption, that life is in general a blessing. And the disgrace universally attached to flagrant vice, proves that such vice is not common. Character is the sum total of moral and intellectual habits, and the proportion of virtuous habits in the worst characters, exceeds that of vicious ones. But no character takes the denomination of virtuous unless *all* the habits are on the side of virtue: whereas *one* evil habit is sufficient to stamp a character vicious.

“God cannot be unjust to any of his creatures. Having brought men into existence and placed them in circumstances of imminent peril, though in the nature of things misery is necessarily connected with vice, we may certainly conclude that none of the creatures of God in *such*, or in *any* circumstances, will ever be made *eternally miserable*. Indeed it is plainly repugnant to the justice of God, that existence to any of his intelligent creatures, should be upon the whole a curse.

“The light of philosophy affords a few plausible arguments for the doctrine of a future life: there are some appearances physical and moral, which cannot be satisfactorily explained upon any other supposition. But since the sentient pow-

ers are suspended by death, and admit of no revival but by the revival of the man, a fact the expectation of which is entirely unsupported both by experience and analogy, the speculations of philosophy would commonly, and almost necessarily, terminate in the disbelief of a future existence.

“Here divine revelation offers its seasonable and welcome aid. God has commissioned his faithful and holy servant, Jesus of Nazareth, to teach the universal resurrection of the dead, and by his own resurrection to confirm and exemplify his doctrine.

“Jesus hath authoritatively taught, that the wicked will be raised to suffering: nor could it possibly be otherwise, if they are to be raised with the same system of habits and feelings with which they descended to the grave, and without which their identity would be lost. But since eternal misery for temporary crimes is inconsistent with every principle of justice, and since a resurrection from previous insensibility to indefinite misery, to be succeeded by absolute annihilation, is a harsh supposition, contrary to all analogy, and not to be admitted but upon the clearest evidence, we are naturally led to conclude, that the sufferings of the wicked will be remedial, and that they will terminate in a complete purification from moral disorder, and in their ultimate restoration to virtue and happiness. In this conclusion we seem to be justified by those passages in the apostolical writings which declare, that the blessings of the Gospel shall be far more extensive than the calamities of the fall, and that Christ shall reign till all things shall be subdued unto him. (Rom. v.—1 Cor. xv.)

“The apostles were commanded to preach the Gospel to the idolatrous heathen as well as to the chosen family of Abraham, and they were authorized to confirm their doctrine by miracles. These extraordinary powers are in the Scriptures called the Spirit of God, and the Holy Spirit; and the great change which took place in the views, feelings, and character of pharisaic Jews and idolatrous heathen, when they sincerely professed the Christian faith, is called, a *new creation, regeneration, rising from the dead*, and the like. And as conversion to Christianity was usually produced by the evidence of miracles, this new creation, regeneration, sanctification, or passing from death to life, is in this sense ascribed to the Spirit of God.

“The Jews, having been chosen by God to peculiar privileges, entertained a very high notion of their own dignity, and expressed themselves in the most contemptuous language of the idolatrous gentiles, who were not in covenant with Je-

hovah. Of themselves they spoke as a *chosen and a holy nation, sons of God, and heirs of the promises*. But the heathens were represented as *sinners, as aliens, as enemies to God*, and the like. In allusion to which forms of expression, the converted gentiles being entitled equally with converted Jews, to the blessings of the new dispensation, they are therefore said to be *forgiven, reconciled, and saved*, to be *fellow-citizens* with the saints, and of the household of God.

“The death of Jesus is sometimes called a *propitiation*, because it put an end to the Mosaic economy, and introduced a new and more liberal dispensation, under which the gentiles, who were before regarded as enemies, are admitted into a state of amity and reconciliation; that is, into a state of privilege similar to that of the Jews. It is also occasionally called a *sacrifice*, being the ratification of that new covenant into which God is pleased to enter with his human offspring, by which a resurrection to immortal life and happiness is promised, without distinction, to all who are truly virtuous. Believers in Christ are also said to have *redemption through his blood*, because they are released by the Christian covenant from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and from the bondage of idolatry. Dr. Taylor has in general well explained these Jewish phrases in his admirable *Key to the apostolic writings* prefixed to his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.

“The Scriptures contain a faithful and credible account of the *Christian doctrine*, which is the *true word of God*: but they are not *themselves* the word of God, nor do they ever assume that title: and it is highly improper to speak of them as such, as it leads inattentive readers to suppose they were written under a plenary inspiration, to which they make no pretension, and as such expressions expose Christianity unnecessarily to the cavils of unbelievers.

“Christianity sums up the whole of human duty in the love of God and our neighbor; and requiring that *all* our time should be employed to the best account, and that every action should be consecrated to God, lays no stress upon ritual observations, and expressly abolishes that distinction of days, which formed so conspicuous a feature in the Mosaic institute. To a true Christian every day is a Sabbath, every place is a temple, and every action of life an act of devotion. A Christian is not required to be more holy, nor permitted to take greater liberties upon one day than upon another. Whatever is lawful or expedient upon one day of the week is, under the Christian dispensation,

equally lawful and expedient on any other day. Public worship, however, must be conducted at stated intervals; and it has been usual for the earliest times for Christians to assemble together, on the first day of the week, to commemorate the death and to celebrate the resurrection of their Master.

“This appears to me to be the true doctrine of reason and revelation, in which the God of nature is not represented as frowning over his works, and like a merciless tyrant dooming his helpless creatures to eternal misery, with the arbitrary exception of a chosen few; but as the wise, benevolent, and impartial parent of his rational offspring, who is training them all, under various processes of intellectual and moral discipline, to perfect virtue and everlasting felicity. Such is the God of my faith and adoration, the God of nature and of revelation, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that God whose existence, attributes, and government are the joy and confidence of every enlightened and virtuous believer.” See *Belsham's Review of Wilberforce's Treatise, Letter II.*

“The Unitarians generally believe, that Jesus having exercised his public ministry for the space of a year, and perhaps a little more, suffered death publicly upon the cross, not to appease the wrath of God, not as a satisfaction to divine justice, not to exhibit the evil of sin, nor in any sense whatever to make an atonement to God for it; for this doctrine in every sense, and according to every explanation, they explode as irrational, unscriptural, and derogatory from the divine perfections: but as a martyr to the truth, and as a necessary preliminary to his resurrection. And they hold, that it was wisely ordered, to preclude cavils, that his death should be an event of great public notoriety, and inflicted by his enemies.” See *Belsham's Calm Inquiry into the Scripture Doctrine concerning the person of Christ*, pp. 449, 450.

“The Unitarians further believe, that after having given sufficient proofs to his disciples, for forty days, of the truth of his resurrection, he was in a miraculous manner withdrawn from their society, a circumstance which is described as an ascension into heaven.” *Ib.* pp. 450, 451.

“The Unitarians maintain, that Jesus and his apostles were supernaturally instructed as far as was necessary for the execution of their commission, that is, for the revelation and proof of the doctrine of eternal life, and that the favor of God extended to the Gentiles equally with the

Jews; and that Jesus and his apostles, and others of the primitive believers, were occasionally inspired to foretell future events. But they believe, that supernatural inspiration was limited to these cases alone; and that when Jesus or his apostles deliver opinions upon subjects unconnected with the object of their mission, such opinions and their reasonings upon them, are to be received with the same attention and caution with those of other persons in similar circumstances, of similar education, and with similar habits of thinking.

"The Unitarians admit, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and especially the latter, contain authentic records of facts, and of divine interpositions; but they utterly deny the universal inspiration of the writers of those compositions, as a qualification to which indeed they make no pretension, and of which they offer no proof; and the assertion of which tends only to embarrass the evidences of revelation, and to give advantage to its enemies. And they judge of the genuineness, of the meaning, and of the credibility of these works, exactly in the same way as they judge of any other ancient writings." *Ib.* pp. 451, 452.

"The Unitarians disavow all those personal regards to Christ, and direct addresses to him, either of prayer or praise, which properly fall under the denomination of religious worship, as unfounded in reason, unauthorized by Scripture, derogatory from the honor of the Supreme Being, the only proper object of religious homage, and as in a strict and proper sense polytheistical and idolatrous." *Ib.* p. 454.

"The Unitarians think it superfluous to produce any arguments to prove, that a person, who is repeatedly called a man, who had every appearance of a human being, who was born, who grew, who lived, who conversed, who felt, who acted, who suffered, and who died like other men, who was universally believed to be a man by all who saw and conversed with him, and was addressed and spoken of as a human being by all his contemporaries, whether friends or enemies, was really what he appeared and affirmed himself to be, truly and properly a man, and nothing more than a man." *Ib.* pp. 455, 456.

"They observe, that there is no allusion at all to the supposed pre-existent state and superior nature of Jesus Christ, in three of the Evangelists, or in the history of the apostles' preaching, and of the first plantation of the Gospel contained in the

Acts of the Apostles; and that John is a very mystical writer, abounding in harsh metaphors and symbolical phraseology, very different from the simplicity which characterizes the other evangelists. Nor can they discern any traces of that surprise and astonishment, which must have seized the minds of the disciples and companions of Jesus, when it was first revealed to them, that the master with whom they had so frequently and familiarly conversed, was the Lord their Maker, or at least a great celestial spirit in a human shape." pp. 456, 457.

"The Unitarians do not presume to say that God might not, if he had pleased, have revealed other doctrines to mankind by Jesus Christ, besides that most important one of a future life. But they profess, that after reading the New Testament with the greatest attention, this doctrine appears to be the one great object of the Christian revelation, which is in this view most worthy of God, and most beneficial to men." p. 470.

"Believing that Jesus was in all respects like unto his brethren, and pursuing his principles to their just consequences, he [Dr. Priestley] argued that our Savior came into the world with the frailties and infirmities of a human being, moral as well as physical, and that, by the peculiar process of mental discipline to which he was subjected, he grew up to that consummate dignity and elevation of character, under which he appears in the writings of the Evangelists. And this truly Christian philosopher believed it to be not only a more rational way of accounting for the excellence of our Lord's character, and more agreeable to the language of the New Testament, which represents him as growing in wisdom and in favor with God and man, but, in truth, more honorable to our Lord himself, that his perfect moral excellence should be the result of his own exertion, vigilance, and fortitude, rather than of a supernatural operation." See *Belsham's Memoirs of Lindsey*, pp. 225, 226.

"In the present day, the alarm having subsided, and a cooler examination of the subject having taken place, it would, I believe, be hard to find any considerate and consistent Unitarian, who does not adopt Dr. Priestley's ideas concerning the formation of our Lord's moral character." *Ib.* p. 226.

"The Unitarian doctrine is, that Jesus of Nazareth was a man constituted in all respects like other men, subject to the

same infirmities, the same ignorance, prejudices, and frailties." *Ib. as quoted by Dr. Magee, in his great work, p. 510.*

"Jesus is indeed now alive. But as we are totally ignorant of the place where he resides, and of the occupations in which he is engaged, there can be no proper foundation for religious addresses to him, nor of *gratitude* for favors now received, nor yet of confidence in his future interposition in our behalf." *See Review of Wilberforce's Treatise, Letter VIII.*

#### MR. LINDSEY'S CREED.

"There is ONE GOD, one single person who is God, the sole Creator and Sovereign Lord of all things.

"The holy Jesus was a man of the Jewish nation, a servant of this God, highly honored and distinguished by him.

"The Spirit, or Holy Spirit, was not a person or intelligent being, but only the extraordinary power or gift of God, first to our Lord Jesus Christ himself in his life time, and afterwards to the Apostles and many of the first Christians, to empower them to preach and propagate the Gospel with success." *See Memoirs of Lindsey, p. 212.*

The foregoing quotations are sufficient to give the reader some acquaintance with the religious opinions of leading Unitarians. We will only add, that Mr. Besham clearly adopts the opinion of Dr. Priestley, that "our Savior was as much in the dark, as the most vulgar among the Jews, about possessions; and believed them in the gross literal sense."

Our readers will excuse us, if, for the sake of making a brief summary of doctrines held by Unitarians, as exhibited in the preceding extracts, we give the substance of the several articles by way of recapitulation. Unitarians hold and teach, then,

That God has placed man in circumstances of frailty and danger, the natural consequence of which is the contraction of a certain degree of moral pollution, which exposes them to a propor-

tionate degree of misery here or hereafter;

That there is a very great preponderance of virtue over vice in the world; and with few, if any, exceptions, in every individual;

That the proportion of virtuous habits in the worst characters, exceeds that of vicious ones;

That we may certainly conclude, from our own reason, that none of the creatures of God will ever be made eternally miserable;

That God commissioned Jesus of Nazareth to teach the universal resurrection of the dead, and by his own resurrection to confirm and exemplify his doctrine;

That the wicked will be raised to suffering, with the same system of habits and feelings with which they descended to the grave; but their sufferings will be remedial, and will terminate in their ultimate restoration to virtue and happiness;

That the Holy Spirit was nothing more than the power of working miracles;

That regeneration, and the new creation, mean only the conversion of the Gentiles to the profession of Christianity;

That as the Gentiles were converted to Christianity by the evidence of miracles, this new creation was in this sense ascribed to the Spirit of God;

That because the Gentiles were admitted to enjoy the blessings of the new dispensation, they are said to be forgiven, reconciled and saved;

That the death of Jesus is called a *propitiation* because it put

an end to the Mosaic economy;

That it is called a *sacrifice*, because it was the ratification of a new covenant, which promised a resurrection to immortal life;

That believers in Christ are said to have *redemption by his blood*, because they are released from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and the bondage of idolatry;

That the Scriptures were not written under a plenary inspiration;

That the Sabbath is no more holy than any other day; and, consequently, that it is lawful to do the same things on that day as on any other;

That Christ made no atonement for sin, in any sense whatever;

That the great object of Christianity was the revelation of a future life;

That whenever Jesus, or his apostles, deliver opinions on subjects unconnected with the object of their mission, their opinions are to be received with the same caution as the opinions of other persons;

That the Scriptures contain authentic records of facts and of divine interpositions, but were not written by men under the constant influence of inspiration;

That all religious homage paid to Christ is strictly polytheistical and idolatrous;

That Christ was no more than a man;

That he came into the world with all the frailties and infirmities of a human being, *moral* as well as physical, and his perfect moral character was formed by his own exertion, vigilance, and fortitude, without supernatural aid;

That after his resurrection he was miraculously withdrawn from his disciples, which was described as an ascension to Heaven; but we know not where he resides now, and ought not to feel gratitude to him for favors now received, nor to expect his future interposition in our behalf; and

That, on the subject of demoniacal possessions in particular, he, like the mass of his nation was involved in gross darkness, and actually believed that to be true, which the wisdom of modern times has discovered to be false.

Such is the Unitarianism which Mr. Belsham wishes to propagate, and of which he professes to write the history; so far, at least, as relates to its progress in this country. Of the existence of such Unitarianism, in the metropolis of New England, our readers have generally been well persuaded; but some have not believed that it was making any considerable progress, because they could not persuade themselves that men, occupying important places in church and state, and standing high in the public estimation were capable of concealing their true sentiments. Others have affected not to believe, because they feared the consequences of an exposure of sentiments so very diverse from those maintained by our pious fathers, and still cherished by a great majority of pastors and churches in the New England states. Some of our friends at a distance, who sit under their own vine and fig tree without molestation, occasionally feel, that our fears respecting the efforts to

spread Socinian principles are magnified beyond measure, in consequence of our living in the centre of Unitarian action. We almost envy them their peaceful undisturbed lot. One of the last things, which a Christian should desire, is, to be called to dispute with his fellow men, who bear the Christian name, respecting that blessed religion, which proclaims *peace on earth*, and breathes *good will to man*. Yet, however distressing this duty is, and however exposed to temptation one may be in performing it; there are times when the obligation becomes imperious, to *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*; and to place in their just light the efforts of those, whom we in conscience believe to be really striving to overturn this faith, whatever they may suppose to be the tendency of their measures.

There is a certain class of well-meaning people, who are reluctant to enter upon any controversial discussion, and who are ready to say, on all occasions, that they are sorry to see religious controversy. These persons ought to reflect much upon the meaning of such declarations. Do they intend, that the essential truths of the Gospel will never be attacked; or that, if attacked, they should never be defended; or that there are no essential truths of the Gospel; or that, if there are such truths, it is impossible to ascertain what they are; or that error will die of itself, if never exposed. If they will assume either of these positions, they will find it untenable. They ought to consult the history of the church,

which will convince them, that the purity of religion has never been restored, in a single instance, without religious controversy; and that it has never been preserved, for any length of time, without resorting to the same means of defence. We readily admit, that there has been much unnecessary, and much very pernicious controversy in the church; that long and bitter disputes have originated on trifling occasions, and been conducted with unchristian feelings, and for very insufficient reasons, on both sides. All this is a proof of human weakness and depravity; but we see not how it tends to prove that all controversies are wrong, as it respects all the contending parties.

Political disputes have, in a vast proportion of instances, been the means of incalculable evil. Yet who supposes it to be wrong to oppose political error? Would not the suppression of all political controversy bring the world immediately into a state of the most abject submission to the most corrupt and despotic rulers? The fact is, that important truth of every kind, whether scientific, political, moral, or religious, must be taught and defended; but particularly religious truth; for the natural feelings of men are much more opposed to this, than to truth of any other kind. We are far from considering controversy of any sort as in itself desirable; we are far from justifying a disputatious temper, or encouraging dogmatical habits; we could earnestly wish, indeed, that the Christian world were immediately freed from all occasion of controversy. The time

will come when controversy shall cease; but this time will not be hastened by the timid counsels of those, who would suffer the abettors of false doctrine to repeat their assertions and their sophistry without examination and without an answer. Controversy will only cease by the universal reception of the truth, not by a complaisant deference to be exercised by the friends of truth to the promoters of all kinds of error. One great complaint of the Papists against the leading Protestants at the commencement of the Reformation, was, that they introduced the terrible evil of *religious controversy*. What would have become of the Reformation, if that complaint had been admitted as valid, and the Reformers had shut their mouths and thrown away their pens? It may be confidently affirmed, that Luther, Calvin, and Zuinglius, with the word of God in their hands and the love of God in their hearts, did more good in a few years, by entering boldly into the lists of theological controversy, than the same men with all their great talents could have done in fifty centuries, (had their lives been thus prolonged,) in the silent course recommended by those, who affect to decry all controversy. Is not the truth as important now as it was at the era of the Reformation? Is not Christ as precious to the souls of believers now as he was then?

Before any person is entitled to stigmatize a controversial writing as useless or injurious, he must be satisfied, either that their is no occasion for it; that it relates to an unimportant subject; that it defends error rather

than the truth; or that it is conducted in an unfair manner, or with an unchristian temper. When a controversy can be truly described as liable to either of these objections, we will not justify it. But we shall always hold in high honor those servants of God, who have it in their power to employ learning and talents not only in teaching the truth, but in detecting and exposing the absurdities of error.

We are sincere believers in the great doctrines of the Reformation; in the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures; in the unity and perfections of the Godhead; in the Supreme divinity of the Son and Spirit; in the atonement and intercession of Christ; in the native and total depravity of the unregenerate; and in the reality and necessity of special divine grace to renew and sanctify the souls of men, that they may be capable of participating in the holy enjoyments of the heavenly world. These points do not constitute the whole of our creed, but they are among the prominent and fundamental articles of it; they are points in which we differ essentially from Unitarians.

Believing conscientiously, that these doctrines are essential to Christianity, we have ever felt it to be our duty to resist, so far as lay in our power, every effort to supplant them, by substituting others, which, as they appear to us, can neither administer present comfort, nor lay any just foundation for future hopes. We readily concede, that Christianity in any form, even in that of Catholic superstition, or the lowest Socinianism, is preferable, in a civil point of view, to Deism, or Atheism.

Even in its most degraded forms, Christianity superadds something to the moral restraints of men; and impresses in some degree the doctrine of future retribution. So far as this goes, it is an advantage to the community. But so far as the vital, evangelical spirit of Christianity is rejected, or contemned, just so far the prospect that religion will have a benign influence on society is obscured. If a denial of the divinity and atonement of the Savior, *be denying the Lord that bought us*, then, whatever character a man who does this may sustain among his fellow creatures, in the sight of God he is an unbeliever; and whatever may be the *degree* of his guilt and punishment, he is as *surely* exposed to final destruction, as the Atheist, or the Deist.

It has always appeared to us, that the divinity and atonement of the Savior are essential doctrines in the Christian System; not as subjects of speculation only, but as practical truths. Such being the fact we cannot help believing, that those, who reject and condemn these doctrines, have not a fair claim to be considered as standing on Christian ground. It is a sorrowful thing to be compelled to say, that there are now many persons, in the capital of New England, and not a few in its vicinity, who utterly reject the doctrines in question, and many others, essentially, if not equally, important. The Pamphlet before us offers evidence on this subject, which it is impossible to mistake.

Had the facts, which this pamphlet discloses, been stated on the authority of an orthodox

man, we should doubtless have been met at the threshold, with the allegation of "party spirit and misrepresentation." No orthodox man could ever have hoped for such materials to compile a history as are here presented. The writer has not gathered his information from a hasty survey of the exterior of the temple, which he describes; he has had access, as high priest of his order, to the very interior recesses, and has exposed to view the most secret transactions of those, who are initiated into the worship which he approves. He has shewn us, that like the Grecian philosophers of old, many of his order, in our country, would have one religion for the vulgar, and another for the wise; that it is a fundamental maxim among the great body of leading Unitarians here, not to expose their sentiments directly to the inspection of the world at large, and to challenge investigation, but to operate in secret; to entrust only the initiated with their measures; and to leave the vulgar to fall into the tracks of the wise, by the force of that principle of imitation which is capable of operating so powerfully upon them.

Our own convictions respecting the nature of Unitarianism in Massachusetts, and the manner in which the cause is promoted, are not altered by the pamphlet before us. Living in the centre of action, we have long had these convictions. The Monthly Anthology; the mangled Christian Monitor; the Hymns and Psalms of Mr. Buckminster and Mr. Emerson; the reply of Belsham to Wilberforce and to Dr. J. P. Smith; the Im-



proved Version of the New Testament; all published in Boston; and especially the General Repository, published at Cambridge, by some of the Officers of Harvard College, afford sufficient evidence, without detailing other circumstances, of a settled and persevering determination to prostrate orthodoxy, and to substitute Unitarianism in its place. But the evidence now before us is in some respects more important than any which has preceded it; as it is comprised within a small compass, is easily obtained, and is supported by the names of some of the principal parties concerned.

The Society which claims the honor of taking the lead, in the great work of reformation in our country, is, according to our historian, that which meets at the Stone Chapel in Boston; and Dr. Freeman, it seems, claims to be considered as at the bottom of all the revolutions, which have taken place there. So early as the year 1786, Dr. Freeman had persuaded his church to adopt a Liturgy, which the Rev. J. Smith, in a letter to Mr. Lindsey, describes as "perfectly Unitarian," (p. 11.) Dr. Freeman, however, in a letter, dated the same year, tells Mr. Lindsey, that "some defects and improprieties are still retained, for the sake of inducing them, (his congregation,) to omit the most exceptionable parts of the old service, the Athanasian prayers." (p. 12.) In 1811, however, a new edition of his Liturgy was published by Dr. Freeman, which, "with a very few alterations chiefly verbal, might be made," says Mr. Belsham, "perfectly unexceptionable." p. 12.

Dr. Freeman, it seems, was unable, on account of his heretical sentiments, to obtain Episcopal ordination. This misfortune was obviated, however, by his congregation, who, it should be remembered, still professed to be Episcopalians. They ordained him themselves, on Sunday the 18th of Nov. 1787.

Shortly after, a circumstance happened, which as Dr. F. declares in a letter to Mr. Lindsey, tended very much to satisfy the minds of his people, respecting the manner of his ordination.

"I mentioned in a former letter, that Bishop Seabury had ordained a priest in Boston. The members of my congregation in general attended. They were so shocked with the service, particularly with that part where the bishop pretends to communicate the Holy Ghost and the power of forgiving sins which he accompanied with the action of breathing on the candidate, that they now congratulate me upon having escaped what they consider as little short of blasphemy. Few of them had ever read, or at least attentively considered, the Ordination service. Since they have heard it, I have frequently been seriously asked by them, whether I would have submitted to so absurd a form. I confess that I am convinced I should have acted wrong if I had done it. I shudder when I reflect to what moral danger I exposed myself in soliciting ordination of the American bishops, for I certainly never believed that they had the power of conveying the Holy Spirit." pp. 14, 15.

Thus much for the history of Unitarianism at the Stone Chapel. This congregation is afterwards described in the pamphlet, as being the only one of *professed* Unitarians in New England. We must say, that the conduct of this Society and of their minister, in coming out openly, and avowing their sentiments to the world, is vastly preferable to a hypocritical concealment of them. Had other societies followed their example, we should

long since have known with whom we were contending; and not have been obliged to guard against ambushes, instead of combating in the open field.

From Dr. Freeman, so open and ingenuous in the profession of his sentiments, much of the information in our historical pamphlet is derived, as to the progress of Unitarianism in America. This father and apostle of the sect in question, in this country, seems to be more deeply interested, and better informed on the subject, than any other man, who appears in Mr. Belsham's pages. From him we learn, that in 1789, in consequence of the labors of Mr. Hazlitt among the Boston clergy, there were already "many churches in which the worship was strictly Unitarian." p. 12.

*Note.*

The method in which Dr. F. and others labor to propagate Unitarianism is thus graphically delineated, in a letter to Mr. Lindsey, written as it would seem, in 1796, or 1797.

"I consider it," says this intelligent correspondent to his venerable friend, "as one of the most happy effects which have resulted from my feeble exertions in the Unitarian cause, that they have introduced me to the knowledge and friendship of some of the most valuable characters of the present age; men of enlightened heads, of pious and benevolent hearts; *quibuscum vivere amem, quibuscum obire lebens.*"

"Though it is a standing article of most of our social libraries, that nothing of a controversial nature should be purchased, yet any book which is presented is freely accepted. I have found means, therefore, of introducing into them some of the Unitarian Tracts with which you have kindly furnished me. There are few persons who have not read them with avidity; and when read, they cannot fail to make an impression upon the minds of many. From these and other causes, the Unitarian doctrine appears to

be still upon the increase. I am acquainted with a number of ministers, particularly in the southern part of this state, who avow and publicly preach this sentiment. There are others more cautious, who content themselves with leading their hearers, by a course of rational but prudent sermons, gradually and insensibly to embrace it. Though this latter mode is not what I entirely approve, yet it produces good effects. For the people are thus kept out of the reach of false opinions, and are prepared for the impressions which will be made on them by more bold and ardent successors, who will probably be raised up when these timid characters are removed off the stage. In the eastern part of this State, or what is called the District of Maine, the Unitarian doctrine also makes progress, as I have just been informed by a worthy and judicious minister from that quarter. The Clergy are generally the first who begin to speculate: but the people soon follow, where they are so much accustomed to read and inquire.

"In the accounts which I give you of the state of religious opinions in this country, I always endeavor not to exaggerate, sensible that every zealous man (and I confess that I am zealous) is naturally disposed to rate his own party as highly as he can. It is possible that Unitarianism may be losing ground in one quarter while it is gaining it in another; and that I may not perceive or may not attend to the former. Indeed, I confess and lament that the opinion is scarcely known in the largest part of this vast Republic. It flourishes chiefly in New England; but not much in Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and the western counties of Massachusetts. A few seeds have been sown in Vermont, and an abundant harvest has been produced in the vicinity of Boston and the counties directly south of it. In Pennsylvania, much may be expected from the labors of Dr. Priestley." pp. 22, 23.

How far the sentiments in question have spread in Boston, has been often a subject of inquiry, and not unfrequently of debate. Mr. Belsham will inform us. "If," says he, "I am not greatly misinformed, divine worship in many of the *principal churches at Boston*, is carried on upon principles strictly, if not avowedly, Unitarian." p. 38.

If any thing be lacking in Mr. Belsham's account, it is suppli-

ed in a letter to him by William Wells, Esq. of Boston, a gentleman, who, from his extensive acquaintance with books and men, and his distinguished zeal in the cause of Unitarianism, may well be supposed to give us as exact a picture, as any man living could draw. We print the whole letter, as we shall have occasion to refer to it on various subjects.

“LETTER

From William Wells, Esq. of Boston, in  
New England, to the Author.

Boston, March 21, 1812.

“My dear Sir,

I AM glad to hear you received the Sermons safe. About six weeks ago I forwarded to Mr. Freese a parcel for you, containing the first No. of “The General Repository and Review.” For this you are indebted to Mr. B. I think a letter from him accompanied the Review, but am not sure, as I took no memorandum of the contents of the parcel. A second number will shortly appear, which shall be forwarded by the earliest opportunity. I believe I mentioned in my last the name of the Editor, Mr. Norton an excellent young man. Of his abilities you will be able to judge. I think the first article, and the Review of the Horsleian and Priestleian controversy display a soundness of judgment which at his age is rare. A number of young men who have taken their bachelor’s degree now reside at Cambridge as theological students. Several of them are the sons of men of fortune; some, as far as I can judge, of superior talents; and all are pursuing their professional studies with a zeal which is well directed by the very worthy and learned Dr. Ware, professor of divinity, and Dr. Kirkland the president, and an honesty which is entirely unfettered and unbiassed by any system whatever. We have to contend here, as you in England, for the first principles of protestantism, but I see no reason to fear that the ensuing generation will be destitute of able champions for the right of private judgment.

“With regard to the progress of Unitarianism, I have but little to say. Its tenets have spread very extensively in New England, but I believe there is only one Church *professedly* Unitarian. The Churches at Portland and Saco, of which you speak, hardly ever saw the light, and exist no longer. The Mr. Thatcher, who was formerly a Member of Congress, and the Judge T. whom Mr. Merrick men-

tions, are the same. He is one of the Judges of our Supreme Court, an excellent man and most zealous Unitarian. He is now on the circuit in this town, and tells me he is obliged on Sunday to stay at home; or to hear a Calvinist Minister. He is no relation to our friend.

“Most of our Boston Clergy and respectable layman (of whom we have many enlightened theologians) are Unitarian. Nor do they think it at all necessary to conceal their sentiments upon these subjects, but express them without the least hesitation when they judge it proper. I may safely say, the general habit of thinking and speaking upon this question in Boston, is Unitarian. At the same time this controversy is seldom or never introduced into the pulpit. I except the Chapel Church. If publications make their appearance attacking Unitarian sentiments, they are commonly answered with spirit and ability; but the majority of those who are Unitarian are perhaps of these sentiments without any distinct consciousness of being so. Like the first Christians, finding no sentiments but those in the N. T. and not accustomed to hear the language of the N. T. strained and warped by theological system-makers, they adopt naturally a just mode of thinking. This state of things appears to me so favorable to the dissemination of correct sentiments, that I should perhaps regret a great degree of excitement in the public mind upon these subjects. The majority would eventually be against us. The ignorant, the violent, the ambitious and the cunning, would carry the multitude with them in religion as they do in politics. One Dr. M. in a contest for spreading his own sentiments among the *great body* of the people, would at least, for a time, beat ten Priestleys. Not to dwell upon the consideration, that Unitarianism consists rather in *not* believing; and that it is more easy to gain proselytes to absurd opinions, than to make them zealous *in refusing* to believe. With what arms, when the *οι πολλοι* are the judges, can virtue and learning and honor contend with craft and cunning and equivocation and falsehood and intolerant zeal? Learning is worse than useless, virtue is often diffident of her own conclusions, and, at any rate, more anxious to render men good Christians, than to make them Christians of her own denomination; and that self-respect, which is the companion of virtue, disdains to meet the low cunning of her adversaries, or to flatter the low prejudices of her judges. I think then it must be assumed as an axiom, that a persevering controversy upon this question, would render the multitude bigoted and persecuting Calvinists. Then come

systems and catechisms in abundance. Every conceited deacon, every parishioner who has, or thinks he has, a smattering in theology, becomes the inquisitor of his pastor. In such circumstances learning and good sense have no chance. They cannot be heard.

"The violent party here have chosen to meet their opponents upon very unfavorable ground. Instead of making it a cause of orthodoxy against heresy, they have very unwisely preferred to insist upon a subscription to articles of faith. This has given great offence to many who are disposed to be in favor of their creed, and thrown them into the opposite scale. Dr. Osgood is really orthodox in sentiment, but a noble and determined supporter of the right of private judgment, and on the best possible terms with our Boston friends. This is also the case with the venerable Dr. Lathrop of West-Springfield, Mr. Palmer's friend, and many others. In short we are now contending for the liberty of being Protestants. If we can persuade the people (and we stand upon advantageous ground) that we have the right to think upon religious subjects as our consciences and the Scriptures direct, things will go on well. Learning, good sense, and virtue, will then produce their natural effects, and just modes of thinking upon subjects of this nature, as upon all others, will necessarily prevail.

"Will you, my dear Sir, excuse unintentional prolixity? I do not know that you will approve my sentiments, nor am I very confident of their justness; but I have seen the contest between truth and falsehood, *before the multitude*; between every thing which is respectable and every thing which is detestable, so unequal in politics, that I dread the event in matters of religion. Still I would be no advocate for timidity, much less for any thing like equivocation, or evasion; and it must be confessed that prudence often degenerates into these vices. I am, dear Sir, with the greatest esteem, yours affectionately,

W. WELLS, Jur. pp. 43—46.

Such is the testimony in the case under consideration; and we presume that no man, in his senses, will hesitate for a moment to give implicit credit to such witnesses. We shall feel ourselves warranted hereafter, to speak of the fact as certain, that Unitarianism is the predominant religion among the ministers and churches of Boston.

In the District of Maine, Mr. Belsham states, from his correspondent Dr. Freeman, that high hopes were entertained of the spread of Unitarian principles. Churches were established in Portland by the labors of the Rev. Mr. Oxnard, and in Saco by the zeal of Mr. (now judge) Thatcher. These hopes, however, were premature, as it appears by the letter of Mr. Wells.

New York and Philadelphia were also considered by Dr. Priestley, when he first came to this country, as affording great promises of an abundant harvest. Thus he writes to Mr. Lindsey.

"New York, June 15, 1794.

—With respect to myself the difference is great indeed. In England I was an object of the greatest aversion to every person connected with government; whereas here they are those who show me the most respect. With you the Episcopal Church is above every thing. In this city it makes a decent figure, but the Presbyterians are much above them, and the Governor (Clinton,) who is particularly attentive to me, goes to the meeting-house.

"But the preachers, though all civil to me, look upon me with dread, and none of them has asked me to preach in their pulpits. This however does them no good. Several persons express a wish to hear me, and are ashamed of the illiberality of the preachers, and some are avowed Unitarians, so that I am fully persuaded an Unitarian minister, of prudence and good sense, might do very well here. If I were here a Sunday or two more I would make a beginning, and I intend to return for this purpose. The greatest difficulty arises from the indifference of liberal-minded men as to religion in general; they are so much occupied with commerce and politics. One man of proper spirit would be sufficient to establish a solid Unitarian interest; and I am persuaded it will soon be done. As I am much attended to, and my writings, which are in a manner unknown here, begin to be inquired after, I will get my small pamphlets immediately printed here; and wherever I can get an invitation to preach I will go. With this view I shall carefully avoid all the party politics of the country, and have no other

object besides religion and philosophy. Philadelphia will be a more favorable situation than this, and there I shall make a beginning. It will be better, however, to wait a little time, and not show much zeal at the first; and as my coming here is much talked of, I shall reprint my *Fast and Farewell Sermons*.

"I have written to Mr. Belsham, whom I hope, some time or other, to draw hither. He will tell you my scheme. But as I am soon going to Philadelphia, I shall soon know more on the subject.

"I was never more mortified than I now am at not having with me any of my small tracts in defence of the divine unity, as my being here leads many persons to wish to read what I have written on the subject.—I shall reprint them, and I flatter myself they will produce a considerable effect. Indeed my coming hither promises to be of much more service to our cause than I had imagined. But time is necessary, and I am apt to be too precipitate. I want your cool judgment. You waited patiently a long time in London; but what an abundant harvest have you had there. J. PRIESTLEY." pp. 47, 48.

How well these ardent expectations were fulfilled Mr. Belsham informs us.

"Dr. Priestley's personal ministry in the United States was attended with very little apparent success. In Northumberland, where he resided, he collected but few proselytes; and in Philadelphia, where the chapel in which he preached was at first crowded with the principal characters in the United States, he was afterwards for some reason or other almost deserted. Yet here his labors were not wholly ineffectual. Since Dr. Priestley's decease a small, but highly respectable congregation, has been formed, in which, till a regular minister can be procured, a few of the most intelligent and best informed members conduct the service by turns; and the society, upon the whole, is increasing, though some, who once professed zeal in the cause, have turned their backs upon it. The Unitarians in Philadelphia are now erecting a chapel for religious worship, to which many of different persuasions have contributed liberally." pp. 23, 24.

In Connecticut, that land of steady habits, Unitarianism has had poor success. Two ministers, the Rev. J. Sherman, and the Rev. A. Abbot, who endeavor

to make disciples there to the sect in question, were both obliged to separate from their charges. Mr. Belsham has introduced a long account of the persecution, (as he is pleased to consider it) of these two "worthy confessors." We shall not enter upon the examination of these cases at present. We refer our readers for the examination of Mr. A.'s case to the *Panoplist* for August, 1812, p. 118, where they will find an ample review of it. Mr. Sherman's case is quite as unfortunate for Mr. B.'s cause. Mr. S. was dismissed, not by a Consociation, or an *ex-parte* council; but by a *Mutual Council*; by men whom he himself considered as favoring his cause. On some of the reflections which Mr. B. makes, with regard to his dismissal, we shall have occasion again to touch. We shall dismiss the case at present, with advising Mr. B. before he bestows the honors of martyrdom again, to wait until the martyr has had time to evince the stability of his profession.

Of Mr. S. we are altogether disposed to speak with tenderness. We have always greatly lamented his fall. He was an amiable man, and possessed respectable talents. But we believe that Unitarians themselves are not much gratified with his present standing.

Nothing but the merest spirit of party could ever have laid hold of the cases of Mr. Abbot and Mr. Sherman, as subjects of complaint. Nothing but a partial, colored, mangled statement of their cases, could be of any avail to the Unitarian cause. After all the means, which are before the public, of becoming

acquainted with the merits of these cases, we think it to be unnecessary to dwell any longer upon the subject.

Mr. Belsham informs us, that a Unitarian congregation has been formed at Oldenbarneveld, in the State of New York. Mr. Sherman was their first minister. He was, however, dismissed before long; and the congregation was fast dwindling away, when Mr. Belsham's book was written.

Mr. B. wrote too early to communicate some other curious information, on the subject of Unitarianism in the western part of the State of New York. We will supply the defect. Within two years, two Unitarian ministers, unable to procure ordination from the clergy in that vicinity, have been ordained by some of the ministers of Boston, and others in its vicinity, over Oldenbarneveld, and Canandaigua.

One of these ordinations took place lately in Boston; the other a year or two since in the neighborhood. This is rather a new practice in our country; but it has some recommendations. It saves much expense and time. A few years since, it was customary for Unitarian candidates, who were desirous of obtaining a settlement without exposing themselves to the scrutiny of orthodox clergymen, to send from distant places to Boston and the vicinity for an ordaining council. All this was attended with trouble, and was, besides, calculated to excite inquiry and distrust. But now, if a Unitarian candidate wishes to be ordained, whether he thinks it proper to avow his sentiments or not, he

can take a journey to Boston, where an ordaining council can be found without the least inconvenience. If some members of the congregation, not understanding the reason of so novel a proceeding, should require an explanation, it will be easy to say, that there is no place in the world, where so venerable, and wise, and learned, and liberal a council can be formed as in Boston. Our readers may be surprised at the measure here described: but we have long since ceased to be surprised at any measure, which could propagate the principles in question.

We must now come to a subject on which we should not touch without mature consideration. We mean the propagation of Unitarianism in Harvard College. We are fully sensible of the delicacy of the subject. That this noble institution has laid fast hold of the affections of the community, is a subject of congratulation rather than of wonder. It has been, in many points of view, the pride and glory of our western world. Its excellent founders and subsequent benefactors have endowed it in a manner unparalleled in this country; and it has been the nursery of a long and illustrious train of religious, civil, and literary characters, whose names will not be forgotten, while the history of the United States shall continue to attract the notice of mankind. Its literary character we are far from wishing to disparage, or undervalue. Its instructors are a highly respectable body of men. Among them are some, as we would hope and believe, who prefer the faith of our fathers to

the new philosophy of the day. Whatever we may think of the religious opinions of others, we are not in the slightest degree tempted to detract from any just estimation, in which they ought to be held, as men of talents and literature. If talents are perverted, or erudition misapplied, in the zealous propagation of the new philosophical religion, we must of course lament such a state of things; but this will neither warrant nor prompt us to treat the persons concerned with disrespect.

We are aware of the artifice, which has been resorted to by some distinguished names, to save this Seminary from animadversion. The moment we begin to express our fears respecting the tendency of its administration, they vociferate, "Why then you are enemies to learning! You want to pull down the college; to check the spirit of improvement and inquiry; and to bring us back to the dark ages?" This will do very well as a hasty appeal to the vulgar; but if it be intended as a specimen of the new philosophical reasoning, it is, we should suppose, not quite so happy as could be wished by its authors.

What! Are we enemies to learning, because we are convinced that learning misapplied and perverted may do great harm to the community? And because we are earnestly desirous, that this noble Institution, sacredly consecrated "to Christ and the Church," should regard its original destination, and not teach men to *deny the Lord of glory*, instead of worshipping him? Are we enemies to Harvard University, because we ar-

dently wish that the majority of its instructors had such views of Christianity as appear to us evangelical, instead of other views, which they now entertain and inculcate? The allegation is as contemptible as it is erroneous, and can never weigh a feather, but with persons, who are guided neither by reasoning nor by principle.

But may we not be mistaken, in our apprehensions respecting the administration of Cambridge College? Would to God we might be convinced of this; but the proof, from the pamphlet before us, is too plain to admit of doubt.

Mr. Belsham has told us what was done at Cambridge, more than 20 years ago, to introduce Unitarianism there.

"As a further means of diffusing the important doctrines of the proper Unity of God, and the simple humanity of Jesus Christ, Mr. Lindsey made a present of his own and of Dr. Priestley's Theological Works to the Library of Harvard College, in the University of Cambridge in New England; for which, "as a very valuable and acceptable present," he received the thanks of the President and Fellows. These books were read with great avidity by the students. But though there is reason to believe that the seed thus sown took deep root, and that in many instances it produced an abundant harvest; and though many persons eminent for rank and talent in the New England States openly avowed the Unitarian creed, it does not appear that any numerous societies of Christians have hitherto followed the example of the congregation at the King's Chapel, in making a public profession of the Unitarian doctrine." pp. 15, 16.

Again;

"In the state of Massachusetts, and particularly in the environs of Boston, the great cause of Christian truth," (i. e. of Unitarianism,) "is making a silent but rapid and irresistible progress. From the inquisitive and liberal spirit which pre-

vails in the University of Cambridge, which has never been checked at any time, but which there is reason to expect will receive every requisite aid and encouragement from the present learned and accomplished Principal, Dr. Kirkland, the happiest consequences may be expected to ensue." p. 37.

We refer also to the first paragraph of the letters of Mr. Wells, a distinguished and favorite alumnus of that college. If further evidence were wanting, we might find it, in the class of books recommended by the Professor of Divinity in that Seminary, as the best books in Theology; in the manner in which his Theological Lectures are managed, and in which the exercises of the Sabbath are conducted; especially, in the General Repository, a work, which declares the doctrine of the Trinity to be the grossest corruption of modern times; and in a letter of consolation and encouragement written by Dr. Kirkland to the New Unitarian Church in Philadelphia; which they, like their Apostle Belsham, have been complaisant enough to publish, by shewing it to several of their orthodox friends. But it is unnecessary to proceed in this detail, which might be enlarged to thousands of particulars. The gentlemen themselves, since Mr. Belsham has so unexpectedly and imprudently betrayed the matter, will not, we presume, for a moment hesitate to avow the principles which they hold.

There is one topic of proof, however, which is of a very solemn nature, and which deserves a separate notice. We refer to the prayers, offered by the President, at the public commencement. It will not be contended,

that these prayers, as they have been offered for four years in succession, afford an unfavorable specimen of the *kind* of religion, which is taught in the college. Indeed, the prayers of professed Christians, generally, are much less apt to be erroneous, than their direct, formal, instructions. At one commencement, that of 1813, the prayers were particularly observed, and their deficiencies noticed, even by children who had been accustomed to far other devotional exercises. At the close of the day, several gentlemen of education and respectability, from different parts of the American union, came to the unanimous conclusion, that the following *negatives* could be truly asserted concerning both the prayers: viz. That there was no mention of *sin*; of course no petition for forgiveness; no admission or implication that mankind are in a ruined state; no acknowledgment of exposedness to sin. There was no mention of *salvation*; nor the slightest allusion to any *church* as existing upon earth; nor to the holiness and happiness of heaven. There was no mention of a radical distinction among men; no admission of regeneration; no supplication for spiritual aid. There was no looking forward to a more blissful period of the world, when the truth shall be universally prevalent. In one of the prayers, there was no mention of Christ, nor the most distant allusion to Him; in the other, the only mention or allusion was in the three closing words, "through our Redeemer."

We should not have mentioned this subject, if it seemed pos-



sible that such prayers could have originated from mere forgetfulness, or accident. Were we asked for a *positive* description of them, we should say, that they were such as a candid and intelligent man would suppose Mr. Belsham to make, in perfect consistency with his creed.

It is to be remembered, that the departure of a class from the college, where they have been educated, is to them a solemn occasion; and that they *need*, whatever their instructors may think on the subject, to be earnestly and affectionately commended to the grace of God. They need the prayers of all, who have an interest at the throne of grace, that as they go forth into the world, and become more exposed to its manifold temptations, they may be preserved from sin, and sanctified by the Word and Spirit of God, made blessings to the church and the world, and prepared for endless happiness and glory.

Such, then, is the melancholy view of this important Seminary; which contains hundreds of promising youths, who are hereafter to act a conspicuous part in the important business of life. The most superficial observer must see, that such a seminary is the very heart of the commonwealth; every pulse it beats, if it be diseased, will send poisonous blood to the very extremities of the body politic. Let Christian parents look well to this. The men that raised up the College, and made it the glory of our western world, were men who consecrated it "*to Christ and the church.*" To them belongs the praise of making it what it has been. But it is no longer what

it once was. The lustre of science still shines, but the Sun of Christianity is eclipsed. Young men leave the place now, not with hosannas in their mouths to the Son of David; but with burning zeal to propagate the new philosophy. Does the parent, who bows the knee to Jesus, wish to have his son *deny the Lord that bought him?* If not, let him well reflect what destination he gives him, to be taught the principles of religion as well as science.

If the advocates for the present administration of the College are displeased with these remarks, they must thank Mr. Belsham for having elicited them. We never took our pen with greater caution, nor with a more imperious sense of duty.

We have done with the History of the progress of Unitarianism; but there are some incidental points in the pamphlet before us, which it will be proper to notice.

The *manner*, in which Unitarianism is propagated, deserves a few moments attention. Dr. Freeman, as has been seen already, describes certain cautious characters, "who content themselves with *leading their hearers*, by a course of rational but prudent sermons, gradually and *insensibly* to embrace" Unitarianism. Though Dr. F. does not entirely approve this mode; "yet," says he, "*it produces good effects.*"

Mr. Belsham has inserted in his work, (pp. 38—41 of the pamphlet,) a very "curious" letter, to use his own epithet; but has not told us who was the writer of it. We recommend this letter to our readers, as one

of the most admirable specimens of anility, which they will any where find. It contains a great deal of small talk, concerning the Boston Clergy and other things. The object of Mr. Belsham in publishing it, was, doubtless, to chastise the Boston clergy for their cowardice in concealing their religious opinions. Hear him commenting on this letter:

"Can it upon the common principles of human nature be reasonably expected of a body of clergy, nursed in the lap of ease and affluence, and placed in a station of such high secular consideration and comfort as that of the ministers of Boston, that they should come forward and by an open profession of unpopular truth voluntarily risk the loss of all their temporal dignity and comfort, and incur the contempt and enmity of many who are now their warmest admirers and friends? I say not this by way of disparagement to the present body of ministers in Boston and its neighborhood. Some of these I have the pleasure to call my friends, and know them to be possessed of talents the most distinguished, of piety the most fervent, and of benevolence and zeal the most ardent, active and laudable; and of the rest I have heard a most favorable character. It is the situation, not the men, which excites my apprehensions. And who will venture to say of himself, that his virtue would be equal to the trial. Yet still it cannot reasonably be hoped that truth will make any visible and rapid progress, till her advocates rise above the fear of man, and the love of ease, and are willing with the apostles of Christ and the reformers of every age, to forsake all and to sacrifice their dearest interests in her glorious cause. The encouragement and success which such faithful confessors would meet with in that populous and opulent city, would, I doubt not, be very great." p. 41.

"Faithful confessors!" What distinguished self-denial, simplicity, and godly sincerity! The crown of martyrdom surely awaits you. Are you not impatient to be gone, and grasp the immortal prize?

Mr Belsham takes the liberty to differ very much from his

Boston brethren, on the subject of concealing their sentiments in this manner. Mr. Wells has undertaken to become their advocate. His plea in their behalf has been already seen in the third paragraph of his letter.

We pass over, for the present, the very decorous appellations, liberally bestowed by Mr. Wells upon the orthodox; and remark merely, that the apology for his cautious brethren sufficiently indicates his views of their conduct in regard to their public teaching.

Thus it is, and thus it has been for years. Knowing that the cold skepticism of Socinianism cannot satisfy the wants nor alleviate the woes of plain common sense people, its advocates in general have not dared to be open. They have clandestinely crept into orthodox churches, by forbearing to contradict their faith, and then have gradually moulded them by their *negative* preaching, to the shape which they would wish. The people, after a while, never hearing of the atonement, nor of special grace, or any of the kindred doctrines, forget that they belong to the Christian system; and, by and by, regard a man as a kind of enthusiast, or monster, who preaches such doctrines. Who does not see, that there is great cunning, and that there is great policy in all this? But then—the honesty! That is another matter. Did the holy apostles act in this manner when they preached to Jews or heathens? Did *they* teach by *negatives*? Let those blush, who profess to follow the apostles, and yet behave in this base, hypocritical manner! Common honesty revolts at it. The idea that a minister believes

the truths of the Gospel to be of infinite importance, and still conceals them, is incompatible either with fidelity or integrity.

We appeal to the community at large, whether it is not a notorious fact, that candidates for the ministry, of the liberal party, generally conceal their religious opinions; and that they do this with particular care, when there is a prospect, or a hope, of their being settled over orthodox churches? We ask, also, whether it is not a notorious fact, that candidates of the orthodox school generally avow their religious opinions with the utmost frankness, and that they take particular care to do so, when there is a prospect of their being settled over churches and congregations, which are supposed to have a leaning towards modern liberality? A child can draw the inference; especially when informed, that inducements of a worldly nature would often be quite as great in the latter class of cases as in the former.

We know indeed, that *modesty* is the plea of these *negative* preachers! They do not wish to be over-confident! But let us see them undisguised; look at them in Mr. Belsham's pamphlet; and judge of this modesty and want of confidence in their own opinions.

"Unitarianism," says Mr. Wells, "consists rather in *not* believing." Yes, in *not* believing the doctrines of the Gospel; but not in having no creed. Some Unitarians are, indeed of this sort. They are universal skeptics, respecting every proposition that relates to Christianity. But most have a creed. What that is, we have seen from the

hand of the ingenuous Mr. Belsham; who, whatever other faults he has, is certainly not often chargeable with the faults of tergiversation and duplicity.

Of the manner in which Unitarianism is taught in Harvard College, Mr. Wells has given us a description in the first paragraph of his letter, to which the reader will please to refer. This accords, to be sure, very well with the accounts which we have often received, of the manner of instruction in divinity, at present, in that University. *System* in instruction, as a positive entity, is indeed sufficiently remote from the "direction" of the Instructors; but that religion, "which consists in *not* believing," is taught by a well concerted and uniformly executed plan of negatives. All systems but Unitarianism are openly, or secretly, impugned or ridiculed, while the "*not* believing" religion is dexterously substituted in their place.

We unite most heartily with Mr. Belsham, on the subject of propagating Unitarianism, in the 'wish to see all who are truly Unitarians openly such,' and that they would teach the doctrines of their creed, "as well as practise the rites of Unitarian worship." p. 41.

Let every honest man look at the above picture of Unitarianism, drawn by the leaders themselves. Hear Mr. Wells once more, on the spread of these principles. "Its tenets," (those of Unitarianism,) "have spread *very extensively* in New England, but I believe there is *only one* church *professedly* Unitarian." p. 44. Indeed! And are these the true representatives

of the Apostles and martyrs, glorifying God by an *open profession* of his Gospel, and not ashamed to own their Lord before men? Is this *the simplicity and godly sincerity* of the Gospel? And these the men, who claim all the reason, all the learning, all the charity, all the *integrity* of the community? Are these the men, who, according to the insinuation of Mr. Wells, are "every thing that is respectable," while their opponents are "every thing that is detestable?" The conduct of Mr. Belsham, rotten as he is, in point of doctrine, to the very core, is purity itself compared with the conduct of these.

There is another striking characteristic in the progress of Unitarianism in this country. We have, in various places, the history of the manner in which converts are made to this religion. The Boston clergy are represented by Dr. Freeman, as first converted by the labors of Mr. Hazlitt. The Rev. Mr. Oxnard, the father of the Unitarians at Portland, was "convinced by the works of Dr. Priestley and Mr. Lindsey." p. 16. "The publications of these men," says Dr. F. "have had, and probably will have, great effects." p. 17. By the same publications, was the Rev. J. Sherman convinced. p. 24. The works of other Unitarians make converts also at Oldenbarneveld, and other places. Dr. Priestley, in his letter already extracted, seems to consider his Tracts as necessary to his success.

All this, to be sure, is just what the orthodox have long affirmed; Unitarianism is not spread by the *Bible*. But then,

that the sect, which has such a loathing for all *systems*, and all human creeds, and compositions, should depend, and acknowledge its dependence, for all its success, on the works of Priestley, Lindsey, and a few others, is not quite so consistent as one might expect. Yes, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit of God, are not once named in the whole pamphlet, as the causes of conversion to Unitarianism; or as even co-adjutors in this work. The truth frequently owes its disclosure to accident. Mr. Belsham and his correspondents, did not mean to portray Unitarianism thus. But where there was no disguise; in the free expression of their hearts, they told the honest truth. To Priestley, and Lindsey, and their co-adjutors be all the glory of the spread of this sect! The Bible will, we apprehend, be the last to claim it.

There is another characteristic of Unitarians, displayed in this pamphlet, which is not new to us, but with which we have for many years been nauseated. It is the practice of universally be-daubing each other, with all the fulsome adulation which they can collect and invent. Let us see how this matter is managed by Mr. Belsham and his correspondents. We begin with the commencement of the book, and go on in course. The Rev. J. Smith is simply "respectable." Dr. Freeman has "a great deal of knowledge, good sense, and an excellent disposition." Mr. Hazlitt is "pious, zealous, and intelligent,—an honest man—and an honest good man;" all in twelve lines. Dr. Provost, who is represented as favoring Dr. F.

is a "man of great learning, liberal sentiments, and deep piety," as well as a "worthy prelate." Governor Bowdoin, who is also represented as favoring Dr. F. has "learning, good sense and merit." Mr. Carey is "worthy of the honorable situation which he occupies, and is well qualified to carry on the cause in which his *excellent* colleague is engaged." Mr. Oxnard is a "man of good talents, sincere piety, and of ardent zeal," a "worthy founder," and a "worthy man;" all in twelve lines. Gen. Lincoln is our "worthy Lieutenant Governor." Mr. Thatcher is a "gentleman of large property, and of excellent character; of active zeal, of high character, approved patriotism and distinguished talents." Mr. Bentley, (the Rev. Mr. Bentley of Salem) is a "man of a bold, independent mind, of strong natural powers, and of more skill in the learned languages than any person of his years in the state." Col. Mappa is a "gentleman of truly respectable character, and of considerable property." Mr. Vanderkemp is "learned and pious—and excellent and worthy." Mr. Sherman is a "worthy confessor,—a Christian confessor;" possesses "fortitude and zeal," with a "high elevation of character." Mr. Abbot is the "faithful champion of truth, the amiable, useful, and beloved pastor; the virtuous sufferer; an able, honest, and pious sufferer;" all within half a page. Mr. Wells is "intelligent, learned, and valuable," and has a "zeal for the truth which is beyond all praise." Mr. Norton is an "excellent young man." Dr. Ware is "worthy and learned;" and Mr. Buck-

minster is "reverend, and learned, and eloquent."

All this, and much more of the same kind, in about 30 pages. Truly praise must be plenty enough, when it rains down thus in showers. We wonder what new Lexicon of epithets Mr. Belsham and his correspondents have been studying. It must surely be a worthy book, by a worthy author, printed by a worthy printer, at a worthy press; besides being bound in a worthy manner by a worthy binder, and sold by a worthy bookseller, at a worthy price, to a worthy man, who has made a worthy use of it, in the composition of this *worthy* history.

But to be serious; it is nauseating, it is intolerable, to find such daubing on every page. Let a man only turn Unitarian, and he becomes at once a man of talents, and consideration. The newspapers puff his performances. He is flattered while he lives; and canonized when he is dead. Boston is, we believe, the only place in this country, where the manner in which duties are discharged in the pulpit, are made the perpetual subject of newspaper eulogy. The Editors of papers are not at the bottom of this. It lies in the taste of the Unitarian public. Cambridge is the only University which praises herself, and assumes a place above all her sister colleges. We are satisfied that Unitarianism has done this. It is one of the arts of proselyting. Mr. Belsham has shewn us how he can play off his actors in the drama. The disciples follow the example of their master. But it is high time to have done praising themselves; or at least

to be sensible of the awkward, disgusting manner, in which they discharge this essential part of their vocation.

All this, however, we may be told, proceeds from breasts overflowing with the milk of human kindness; from a fountain which sends forth ebullitions of universal philanthropy. Indeed! Let us look a little farther before we draw this conclusion. How do these *worthy*, and *pious*, and *candid*, and *liberal* gentlemen treat their opponents? Take the following specimens of liberality; and these too from leaders of the sect.

Mr. Belsham calls the opposers of Mr. Sherman, "ignorant and malignant persecutors," p. 26. Mr. Vanderkemp says, that Mr. Sherman has to struggle at Oldenbarneveld, "with furious bigotry and ignorant superstition," p. 35. Mr. Wells, speaking of an open contest about Socinian principles, indulges in the most violent invectives. Dr. Freeman tells Mr. Lindsey, that he is frequently angry "with error and bigotry;" and congratulates him, on his having "reclaimed many from the errors of idolatry and superstition."

Such are the undisguised expressions of these *kind* and *liberal* gentlemen toward the orthodox. All comment is superfluous. In pretence, all is politeness and liberality; in practice, we find a rancor bitter as death, and cruel as the grave.

Dr. Freeman has indeed gone to the *ne plus* of his sect. The orthodox are "*idolaters*"! Divine Savior! What, then, are those *ten thousand times ten thousand*, and *thousands of thousands*, around the throne of God, who

say with a loud voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor and glory and blessing*, and who *rest not day nor night* from this employment?

It is more than three years, since we resolved to take up, as a distinct article, the systematic practice of praising each other, which has been adopted by the narrow circle of leading Unitarians in this country. This practice we verily believe to have been carried to an extent absolutely unexampled. It has been so long continued, as to have become a proverb, and a by-word, in every part of the United States. Other pressing subjects have hitherto prevented us from accomplishing our intention. But from the complete success which attended a hasty glance at this subject, in a pamphlet on the controversy between Miss Adams and Dr. Morse, we are sorry that it has not long ago been examined and exposed.

But it is time to bring our Review to a close. We will touch on one or two subjects more, and we shall have done for the present.

We introduce the first subject, by extracting from Mr. Belsham the following passage.

"Notwithstanding however these strong facts, this noble profession, and this conciliatory spirit, the *prudent* Council proceed, as a matter of expediency, to dismiss Mr. Sherman from his connexion with the society: and while they bear honorable testimony to his character and talents, and "recommend him to the kind reception of those who may see fit to employ him," they cautiously subjoin, that they "do not consider themselves as giving their approbation of Mr. Sherman's *peculiar phraseology* or *circumstantial difference* of sentiment on the subject of the Trinity." And in their subsequent

advice to Mr. Sherman, they admonish him to guard against a bold spirit of speculation, and an inordinate love of novelty.

"It is not a little curious to contrast those differences of opinion which this venerable Council coolly describes under the soft expressions of *peculiar phraseology* and a *circumstantial difference* of sentiment. The man whom they gravely caution against a bold spirit of speculation and inordinate love of novelty, asserts the doctrine, that there is One God, the sole object of religious worship, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who is the prophet and messenger of God. While his orthodox opponents, to accommodate whom the Council think it expedient to dismiss their exemplary pastor, maintain as a doctrine essential to salvation, and which they "can never give up but with the Bible which contains it," that "the man Jesus is truly and properly God." Is the venerable Council serious in stating differences so glaring and so substantial as these, as nothing more than a "peculiar phraseology" and a "circumstantial difference of sentiment"? No! No! Opinions such as these can no more harmonize with each other than light and darkness, than Christ and Belial. They who hold doctrines so diametrically opposite cannot be fellow worshippers in the same temple. It was expedient that they should separate. So far the Council judged right." p. 30.

With all our hearts we subscribe to this frank and ingenuous comment. It does honor to Mr. Belsham. How different from the disguise of our Unitarians, and their whining complaints about illiberality in the orthodox in refusing to exchange with them. We repeat with Mr. Belsham, "Those who hold doctrines, so diametrically opposite, cannot be fellow-worshippers in the same temple." *How can two walk together unless they are agreed?* We hope these remarks of Mr. B. will stimulate his brethren here, to adopt his language on this subject; at least, to permit the orthodox to *come out and be separate*, without filling the churches and the newspapers with complaints of bigotry and uncharitableness. We

hope, too, that the orthodox will be stimulated to act more decisively on this subject, than they have done. It is the reproach and sin of Massachusetts, that while all the orthodox, from Connecticut to Georgia, are unanimous in withholding communion from Unitarians, she is lagging behind, and dallying with this awful and responsible subject. It is high time for decisive action on this point. We are aware who stand in the way. There are ministers, who make it their boast to shoot as near to orthodoxy as they can, and not hit it; who are waiting to see which way the tide will finally turn; who will write one half of a sermon to please the orthodox, and the other half to satisfy Unitarians; who mean to be popular with both parties, let the cause of religion fare as it may. For such, it requires the full exercise of Christian meekness not to feel contempt. We do feel sincere commiseration.

There are others, too, who are too *modest* and *unassuming* to preach or act decisively, because forsooth, they are not *satisfied* about certain controverted points. Let such persons abandon the office of teaching, and return to their studies until they *are* satisfied. What right have they to teach religion, when they themselves are not satisfied about its fundamental principles?

Both these parties are clogs to orthodoxy. Their *help* is deadly to the cause. We want none to labor in the work, who are not satisfied that it is the cause of God, and prepared to act accordingly.

Still, we would be the last to justify persecution, or party

spirit. We abhor both. Let the orthodox come out and be separate, as Mr. Belsham advises; but let them utter no reproaches; let them pass no hasty censures, no unchristian excommunications. Let them deal with their offending brethren in a solemn, affectionate, tender manner. Their business is to labor for the salvation of souls, not to exalt a party.

As to the utter incompatibility of Unitarianism with the faith of orthodox churches, we present our readers with the opinion of a very able man, and a distinguished champion of the truth.

“It is very obvious, that two systems, of which the sentiments on subjects such as these are in direct opposition, cannot, with any propriety, be confounded together under one common name. That both should be Christianity, is impossible; else Christianity is a term which distinguishes nothing. Viewing the matter abstractly, and without affirming, for the present, what is truth and what is error, this, I think, I may with confidence affirm, that to call schemes so opposite in all their great leading articles by a common appellation, is more absurd, than it would be to confound together those two irreconcilable theories in astronomy, of which the one places the Earth, and the other the Sun, in the centre of the Planetary System. They are, in truth, *essentially different religions*. For if opposite views as to the *object of worship*, the *ground of hope for eternity*, the *rule of faith and duty*, and the *principles and motives of true obedience*; if these do not constitute different religions, we may, without much difficulty, discover some principles of union and identity, among all religions whatever; we may realize the doctrine of Pope’s universal prayer; and extend the right hand of fellowship to the worshippers at the Mosque, and to the votaries of Brama.”

These sentences are taken from a work now in the press, and which will be presented to the public in a few days. It is a *Series of Discourses on the Socinian Controversy*, by the Rev. *Ralph Wardlaw*, of Glasgow, and

has been received with very great favor in Great Britain. Mr. Wardlaw probably did not know, that Pope’s Universal Prayer had been introduced with an alteration which did not affect the sense, into the public worship of an enlightened congregation, in the most enlightened place in the world. Yes, this prayer, which declares that the same God is worshipped by one, whom the New Testament describes as a *saint* or holy person, by a *sage*, who is laboring to emit the light of philosophy from the darkness of his own benighted mind, and by a *savage*, who is engaged in offering human sacrifices to his malignant deities;—this prayer is adopted by a Christian assembly to be used as a hymn of praise to the true God!

To return to the subject, from which we digressed a moment, let the orthodox separate in worship and communion from Unitarians; but let them meekly give a reason for their separation. To treat their opponents with asperity, with contempt, or reproach, is unworthy of them as Christians, or as men. They must feel, that their opponents have souls to be saved or lost; souls as precious as their own. The great majority of those, whose influence goes to swell the importance of the liberal party, are not involved in most of the censures, which this review implies, or expresses. They, only, who are the principal actors in Mr. Belsham’s drama, have been thus unwittingly exposed by their heresiarch. Their conduct deserves animadversion in many things, as it regards religion. In a civil and social respect, we are disposed to treat them with cour-



tesy. But we cannot, we ought not to let this courtesy paralyze our hands and make us indifferent, while the contest is pending, whether Christianity shall exist in any thing more than a name in our country, or be supplanted by the new philosophy.

Let our readers say, after the above development, whether the time is not come, in which we and they are to speak out, and to act with decision. If it is, then let them follow the example; and let the churches in this land, who yet reverence the religion of the Bible, (which was the religion of our fathers,) and bow the knee to Jesus, purify themselves, wherever it is necessary from the reproach which now lies against some of them.

Have you any doubts remaining on this subject after perusing the quotations contained in this Review? You have seen, Christians, in what manner your Bible and your Savior are regarded and treated. Ponder well on this. Shall your children be trained up in these principles? Remember that you are accountable to God for the manner in which you think and act on these subjects.

We are aware, that it will be charged against us, that the tendency of the preceding remarks is to give an unfair representation of the liberal party. It will be said, that the liberal party ought not to be condemned for the extravagant opinions of Mr. Belsham. It has been said, that Mr. Wells is an obscure man, and that his testimony does not amount to much. This is new to us. We had always supposed that Mr. Wells was far from be-

ing an obscure man among the liberal party; and we still believe that he is one of the most intelligent, active, and prominent men in their ranks. That he has been among the planners and executors of nearly all their literary publications will not be doubted. It is with pleasure that we mention one proof of genuine liberality in Mr. Wells: we refer to his republication of the *Christian Observer*. By presenting this work to the American public, he conferred a lasting benefit on this country; though, by doing it, he incurred the disapprobation of some of his Unitarian brethren. We believe, however, that Mr. Wells is not at present concerned in that publication.

But there is much evidence on this subject, besides the testimony of Mr. Wells and Dr. Freeman. We feel entirely warranted to say, that the *predominant religion* of the liberal party is decidedly Unitarian, in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word. The *Anthology*, published by the most prominent clergymen and laymen of the liberal party, clearly favored the Unitarian school. The *Général Repository* was still more open and undisguised. Both these works had the patronage of those, who have the entire control of the College; the latter issuing from the walls of that seminary. The *Improved Version* of the New Testament was patronized and praised by the same men. Of this Version Mr. Belsham says, in his *Calm Inquiry*, p. 460, that 'the notes were intended chiefly to exhibit the most approved interpretations of the Unitarian expositors.' Of this avowedly

sectarian publication the Reviewers in the General Repository speak thus, vol. iv, p. 207.

“We honestly profess, and without fear of losing reputation with those, whose good opinion we are very solicitous to retain, that we think it a work highly respectable, and adapted to be very useful.”

Again the Reviewers say, that the editors of the improved Version

“Have produced a version far more faithful, more correct, and more intelligible, than *that in common use*; a version therefore to an intelligent English reader of very great value.”

In the Anthology for May, 1811, p. 336, is a review of the *Memoirs of Dr. Wheelock*. This review was written, as we have reason to believe, by the President of Harvard College. If we have been misinformed, we will take the earliest opportunity of correcting the mistake. In the course of the article, there is much sly sarcasm in reference to the orthodox faith. The following passage we quote as a specimen.

“The early conversion of Mr. Wheelock is by no means the general privilege of the disciples of his school, however exemplary and regular their lives. The change, which they deem saving, is most commonly, in the case of those intended for the ministry, delayed till near the time when they must begin or relinquish their chosen calling. At that period, they often find themselves pursued, as a “murderer by the avenger of blood to the very gates of the city of refuge”—and they must enter or perish. If their reason survives the dismay or despondence of the law-work, the dreadful spasm passes off; and the agitation subsides into a calm, which enables them first to hear the whispers of hope, and then proceed to the exultation of joy. pp. 337, 338.

This passage is written in a style which exactly suits the views and feelings of the Unitarian school.

Could the founders, benefactors, and instructors of Harvard College, for nearly a century and three quarters, have foreseen the day, when the literary publications, patronized by the governors and instructors of that institution, should ridicule the idea of conversion by the agency of the Holy Spirit of God, with what deep and poignant grief would their hearts have been affected! And how great would have been their astonishment, as well as their grief, if informed, that the highest officer, in that venerable seminary, would think it a proper employment of his time to sit down coolly to the composition of a strain of sarcasm and raillery on such a subject:—and that, not for his own amusement only, but to be thrown into the world to furnish new jests for the profane, and increase the natural antipathy of men to religion!

It appears, then, that the College, and nearly all the influence of the liberal party through the medium of the press, are in favor of Unitarianism. If individuals dislike Mr. Belsham as a leader; if they are not willing to be classed among his followers; let them declare their own opinions openly. But let them not yield all their countenance to Unitarians and yet complain if ranked in the same class, by those who have no means of learning their opinions except by their conduct.

The pamphlet contains a curious letter from Mr. Jefferson to Dr. Priestley, which we have not room to describe. Speaking of Mr. Jefferson, Dr. Priestley says: “He is generally considered as an unbeliever: if so, however, HE CANNOT BE FAR FROM US,

and I hope in the way to be not only almost, but altogether what we are." This is what we have always thought, and frequently said. Unitarianism and Infidelity are nearly related indeed. Mr. Wells, who is a hopeful pupil of the Priestleian school, says that they are identical. "Unitarianism," says he, "consists rather in *not* believing," and he wishes to make men "zealous in *refusing* to believe." The words printed in Italics were so printed by Mr. Belsham, and were probably underscored by Mr. Wells. On reading this passage, we turned to the Improved Version, saying to ourselves, "Who knows but Mr. Wells may read Scripture thus: *He that believeth not shall be saved.*" We find that this conjectural emendation is probably reserved for some improved edition. Whether it is so reserved or not, it is quite as worthy of credit as several conjectural criticisms contained in that work.

We shall close with a few brief observations on Mr. Wells's letter; a letter which contains, within a small compass, a faithful epitome of the most common cant of the liberal party, as it has appeared in their publications, for ten years past.

It is curious to observe the truly meek and charitable manner, in which Mr. Wells arranges the parties to the Unitarian controversy. On his own side, are "honesty unfettered and unbiassed," "correct sentiments," "virtue and learning and honor," "spirit and ability," "good sense," "self-respect, the companion of virtue," "truth," and, in short, "every thing which is respectable." On the side of the orthodox, are "craft and cunning and equivocation and falsehood and intolerant zeal," "low cunning," "low prejudices," "and every thing which is detestable." So much for abstract qualities. When we come to persons, we find "Mr. Norton, an excellent young man," "the very worthy and learned Dr. Ware," "Dr. Kirkland the president," "most of the Boston clergy and res-

pectable laymen, (many of whom are enlightened theologians,) who do not conceal their sentiments, but express them, *when they judge it proper,*" and "Judge Thatcher, an excellent man and most zealous Unitarian:" these are drawn up in battle-array, in the liberal ranks. On the other side no names are mentioned except that of "Dr. M.)\* But we find that the orthodox consist of "theological system-makers;" of "the ignorant, the violent, the ambitious, and the cunning;" of "conceited deacons," and "bigoted, persecuting Calvinists." Really! This is an arrangement which, in point of liberality, has seldom been surpassed. Mr. Wells ought to be appointed grand marshal of the Unitarian corps.

Dr. Osgood and Dr. Lathrop are suffered to stand apart. This favor seems to have been granted them, because, to use the words of Mr. Wells, "they are on the best possible terms with our Boston friends."

Mr. Wells decides without the least hesitation, that Unitarian sentiments are the only sentiments to be found in the New Testament. It is not to our purpose to inquire, whence he derived his authority to dogmatize in this flippant manner. He speak, however, of Drs. Osgood and Lathrop as "really orthodox," and as "noble and determined supporters of the right of private judgment." Yet, if his decision is entitled to credit, these aged and "venerable" clergymen are the mere dupes of "theological system-makers;" and have been employed all their lives in teaching doctrines, which have nothing to support them in the New Testament.

Again; Mr. Wells speaks in the most confident manner as though all the learning in the world was enlisted on the Unitarian side, and had to contend with nothing but ignorance,

\* The manner in which Dr. M. is mentioned in this letter, and the influence which he is deemed to have, will account for no small part of the zeal, which some Unitarians have shewn to put him down. "Worthy" conduct in a "worthy" cause!

prejudice and bigotry. Is it possible that Mr. Wells can believe, in reference to this country, that all the learning is on his side, when nearly all the regular clergy, all the colleges except one, and all the theological institutions, are decidedly opposed to Unitarianism? and when he can number, as in favor of his scheme, only one college, and a few clergymen in Boston and the vicinity? Is it possible, that he can believe the crude speculations of such a man as Mr. Belsham to be evidences of great learning, while such men as Middleton, Magee, Buchanan, Wardlaw, Chalmers, and the Editors of the Christian Observer, are poor, ignorant, deluded, bigoted creatures?

Again; Mr. Wells says that "the violent party," (by which term he very meekly characterizes the friends of the religion of our fathers,) "have very unwisely preferred to insist upon a subscription to articles of faith." The simple fact is, that the founders of the Theological Institution at Andover have very wisely insisted, that the *professors supported by their funds* should subscribe articles of faith. Yet a stranger would suppose, from Mr. Wells's representation, that all our ministers and churches were required to subscribe to some authorized formula of religious doctrines, on penalty of being excluded from the communion of the orthodox churches. We need not say, that such a representation is entirely unsupported by fact.

It is indeed singular that men professing unbounded liberality, should raise and keep up a violent outcry, merely because a few charitable individuals have endowed *professorships with their own money*, and have provided that the professors should believe certain doctrines, which, as the founders are fully persuaded, are taught in the Scriptures.

Again; "We have to contend here," says Mr. Wells, "for the first principles of Protestantism."

"In short, we are now contending for the liberty of being Protestants." Were it not that similar assertions have been often made by many of the liberal party, we should not notice this subject. We must intreat Mr. Wells, and his brethren, to state precisely what those principles of Protestantism are, which are contended for by him and his friends, and denied by the orthodox. Till this is done, we shall take the liberty of asserting, and we do it without the least fear of contradiction or exposure, that *no one fundamental principle of Protestantism* is thus contended for and thus denied. Let us look a moment at a subject, which has given rise to so much groundless clamor. What are the first principles of Protestantism? We have always supposed, that *justification by faith alone*, was, by way of eminence, the first principle of the early reformers. Another important principle was this; that before regeneration men are totally destitute of holiness, and can do nothing which is acceptable in the sight of God. Other principles were the doctrines of predestination, election, conversion by the Spirit of God, new obedience, and perseverance. Which of these doctrines is contended for by the liberal party in this country, or denied by the orthodox? But let us look at another class of principles. Protestants have uniformly held, that the Scriptures are the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice; that Popish traditions are of no authority; and that the decisions of councils are not infallible. Have the orthodox in this country ever denied either of these principles? If they have, it is new to us. Perhaps the orthodox have been unwilling to put the Scriptures into the hands of the common people in their mother tongue? If so, let the offence be proved. Let the guilty individuals be named; and we will heartily join in their condemnation. But it will be said, perhaps, that the orthodox have a creed, or creeds; in other words, they ex-

press, by a short summary, the principal doctrines, which they believe the Scriptures to contain. This is true; and it is precisely what *all the Protestant churches have uniformly done*, in perfect consistency with every principle of the Reformation. Let us hear no more of this miserable cant about Protestantism. The complaint is absolutely without foundation. As well might it be said, that the Inquisition of Goa, having travelled across the Indian and Atlantic oceans, (palaces, caverns and all,) has seated himself on Beacon hill; and that father *Josephus a Doloribus* sits there, on his black marble throne, daily sentencing the "worthy confessors" of Unitarianism to his subterranean dungeons. The liberal party are not contending for the privilege of thinking for themselves. This has never been denied them in this country. But they *are* contending for the privilege of thinking for themselves and the orthodox too; at least so far as to prescribe the manner, in which the orthodox shall regard them. While they mutilate the New Testament, and reject nearly all the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel; while they degrade the Savior to the condition of a fallible, peccable, and ignorant man;—they clamorously insist, that the orthodox should have just as good an opinion of them as they have of themselves, and should acknowledge them to be candid, impartial, enlightened, pious Christians. This is requiring too much. While they demand the privilege of thinking and acting for themselves, let them accord the same privilege to others.

Mr. Belsham predicts, that the time will come when the truth, by

which he means Unitarianism, will burst forth, in this country, "in all her glory." Fired at the thought, he indulges in the following figurative language, with which the history concludes.

"The dull hollow rumbling at the bottom of the sea, which is scarcely noticed by the inattentive traveller who is gliding carelessly over the solid plate of ice which encrusts the surface, is, to the wary and experienced observer, a sure presage of the speedy and sudden explosion of the immense superincumbent mass, and of the restoration of the imprisoned waves to their native freedom, to the consternation and often to the utter destruction of those who refuse to listen to the friendly premonition."

This is a fair and generous warning. We have heard "the dull hollow rumbling at the bottom of the sea." We exhort the churches "to listen to the friendly premonition;" lest, when *the fountains of the great deep shall be broken up*, those who are careless and inattentive should be overwhelmed by "the imprisoned waves" to "their consternation and utter destruction!"

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[P. S. TO THE SECOND EDITION.]

We find that the assertion, contained in the foregoing review, that "the predominant religion of the liberal party is decidedly Unitarian, in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word," has been misunderstood by some readers. It is sufficient to say here, that we are prepared to defend the assertion, in what appears to us the natural meaning of the words. The Rev. Mr. Channing's letter on this subject will probably be considered in a future number of the Panoplist.

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### NOTICE.

THE PANOPLIST, from which the foregoing Review has been taken, is published every month by SAMUEL T. ARMSTRONG, Boston, price \$2 40 a year; the *eleventh* volume is now printing; *thirty-seven hundred and fifty copies* are printed and sold every month, and many more could be disposed of. Subscriptions for the ensuing volume, or *sets of the whole work*, will be attended to promptly; at \$2 75 per volume. The profits arising from the work are employed in diffusing the light of the Gospel in our own and in foreign countries.











