

sins was a blasphemer. And the Jews did well to speak plainly, for they were right. The *Shorter Catechism* says that no mere man since the fall is able in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God. Dr. Abbott thinks the *Catechism* is wrong. But Dr. Abbott will not persuade one in a thousand of his readers that even the man who perfectly keeps the commandments of God, if

he is a mere man, is able to forgive men's sins. 'Who can forgive sins but God only?' said the Jews. And sin being sin, only because it is against God, the Jews were certainly right. Therefore, to give to any man the power to forgive sins is not to raise him up to God, it is to bring God down till He becomes 'a mere man.'

## John William Burgon.

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It appears to have been the aim of the editor of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, from the first, to render the periodical acceptable to a very widely extended circle of readers by presenting them, month by month, with a great variety of spiritual and intellectual food. The editor is to be congratulated on the success of his plan, and certainly he has been true to his principles in the liberality he has shown in granting admission to the current series of 'Leading Theologians.' The writers and preachers who have already been commemorated, are representatives of views which, to say the least, are widely divergent; this month we are permitted to give some account of the 'personality and influence' of a theologian whose teachings are absolutely antagonistic to the utterances of some of the leaders in the series. And the antagonism is not simply in form and expression, it is real and essential. If the principles of Old Testament exegesis which are adopted by certain writers be sound and good, then the view which Burgon used to present of the origin and purpose of the Old Testament was illusory. If the Greek Text of the New Testament is to be read as some would read it, then the labours of Burgon, which resulted in uncompromising opposition to that form of text, were fruitless toils. If the teachings from the pulpit of St. Mary's on the Divine origin of the Christian ministry, the validity of the creeds, the authority of the Church, were scriptural and true, then the 'broader' views of those who declare that these tenets are matters of opinion, and not of the essence of the Christian Faith, are false and

dangerous. Here there can be no compromise, because principles are involved.

It is not our present purpose to defend the Anglican theology. Perhaps we might say (as a certain pious king is reported to have said of an *Apology for the Bible*), we are not aware that Anglicanism needs any apology. Perhaps we might go farther, and declare that our estimate of Burgon's position in the 19th century would be unaffected, even if the more enlightened 20th century should prove that another system than his more faithfully exhibits the truth of God, be it Roman Ceremonialism, or English Congregationalism, or Scotch Presbyterianism, or German Rationalism. We affirm that whether Anglicanism be right or wrong, Burgon, as a teacher, was a most faithful exponent of it. We even add, that those are the true children of the Church of England who would, in the main, accept Burgon's theology. This is not, in the language of Pearson, 'a private collection, or particular ratiocination,' but the necessary conclusion from the evidence of the language of the Church of England Prayer-Book and Articles. She, like her Divine Master, would gather many under her wings; nay, it is essential to her position as the Church of the nation that the conditions of membership should be broad and easy; but no authority from her can be claimed by those who rationalise the Bible or coquette with the exponents of other systems on the right hand, or on the left. Burgon, for good or for ill, was an Anglican to the backbone.

Although the editor has admitted accounts of

living exponents of 'Schools of Thought,' we venture to deprecate contemporary biography. Seldom is the performance satisfactory. If written by an opponent, the biography will almost certainly cause pain, and may even result in litigation, for 'the greater the truth the greater the libel.' In avoiding this danger, the admirer is likely to present a false view of his hero; and certainly we do not envy the task of the writer who essays to give a fair and unvarnished and sufficient account of the words and deeds of the friend and companion whom he will meet to-morrow in the Common Room. We are thankful to be delivered from these difficulties; for Burgon has been dead nine years, and some estimate can be formed of his character, his teaching, and his position. We describe him as an *Anglican pastor and divine*. We were curates at St. Mary the Virgin's during Burgon's incumbency, and enjoyed his friendship to the day of his death. We present him to others as he appeared to ourselves, and give our own reminiscences, without making a conscious use of the materials which the biography by Dean Goulburn would supply. We address a circle of readers who are, perhaps, not familiar with the pages of that valuable and exhaustive work.

1. John William Burgon was heart and soul an *Anglican*. He loved the Church of England as she is. Many look admiringly at some new shrine of Our Lady and St. Joseph; Burgon was more than content with the devotions of his forefathers handed down in our Book of Common Prayer. Some go out of their way to congratulate the builders of the last new Little Bethel; these were, in Burgon's eyes, not messengers of peace, but promoters of schism. In a generation which evermore desiderates some change, he was well pleased to 'dwell amongst his own people.' The system of the Church's year, with its alternation of fast and festival, setting before the pious soul in annual procession the story of salvation, and the mystery of redeeming love, was his unfailing stay. He loved the daily services of the Church; he was Anglican enough to prefer the written sermon, 'because it is English'; it was said, not without reason, that he was never happy except when in his church, of which he was so faithful a pastor. It was his ambition to beautify St. Mary's and adapt the building for the purpose of presenting to all an example of what the Anglican service could be in its greatest perfection, a design which

was frustrated by his departure from Oxford to the deanery of Chichester. With recent developments in the direction of an imitation of the ceremonial of Rome, he had no sympathy whatever.

Burgon was a typical Anglican, also, in another respect. It has been a characteristic of our Church that her clergy have been men of culture and gentlemen; they have usually taken a position in society, which, as a rule, has not been attained by the seminary pastor or the foreign curé. Burgon, as a cultured gentleman, well maintained the traditions of the style of the Anglican clergyman. Yet we must add that he generously recognised the possibilities of usefulness in those who had not enjoyed the advantage of training and refinement in early life. Many young men who came under his influence were encouraged by him in a good use of their opportunities. Younger scholars always received from him help and direction. He never discouraged the honest attempt to learn and advance.

Burgon was one of those whose characters and actions are misunderstood and misjudged by their contemporaries. A brother incumbent in Oxford, and not an unfriendly critic, remarked, 'Burgon has the heart of a child.' Intense affection was combined in him with an almost thoughtless readiness to express his feelings, which often surprised, and sometimes offended, the hearer. He was beloved by his personal friends, by his curates, by the choir and the parishioners, by all, indeed, who really knew him; but quickness of temper, irritation at opposition, perhaps a little love of power, though not of place and fame,<sup>1</sup> made him many enemies. The love of his friends he valued in proportion to the intensity of his own deep affections. The opinion, good or ill, of his opponents he was absolutely indifferent to. He who bowed so submissively to the authority of the great teachers of antiquity feared the face of no man, however exalted, whom he considered it his duty to oppose. Controversy was with him no mere striving for the mastery, but the maintenance of what he conceived to be the truth. His was the stuff of which martyrs are made. He acted out what he wrote on paper. It has been said that he

<sup>1</sup> When he had recently been appointed Dean, the use of the new title in addressing him, so far from pleasing, seemed to irritate. It was some time before his friends could persuade him to assume the apron.

even refused to recognise in the street certain people whom he regarded as having betrayed the interests of religion in the university. Such intensity of conviction is not fashionable in these weak-kneed days, when, as has been aptly said, men are well pleased to be 'honorary members' of every sect and opinion. For our own part, we prefer the temper of a Burgon.

It is known to all who know Oxford that she has never had a more loving son than Burgon. But the root of his affection lay in his Anglicanism. He used to say, 'Men who enjoy the Libraries, the Common Room, and the social intercourse, forget that the Collegiate life of Oxford was created by the Church.' The efforts of recent years in the direction of secularising the University he regarded with horror as 'the betrayal of a sacred trust.'

2. Burgon was eminently a good *pastor* in his personal relations with the people committed to his charge. At Mixbury and Finmere it was his *personal* pastorate which causes him to be remembered even at this day. And his work was so distinctly on the lines of the Prayer-Book that it has been said that it was his teaching that induced his parishioners to take an intelligent interest in the services of the Church, and so to understand the structure and intention of that marvellous book as to perceive its hidden beauties. As a pastor he had food for all, learned and unlearned alike. He could adapt his manner and his language to the most acute intellect in the university or to the simplicity of a child; only provided that they were in each case anxious to be instructed. But he was most impatient with mere curiosity or self-assertion in any form. He realised that the power of teaching, 'of rightly dividing the Word of truth,' was one only to be acquired by experience, and he was naturally unwilling to waste that power on unpromising subjects. To a curate he said, 'I can teach you how to study divinity, write a sermon, and visit the sick; but I cannot teach you how to visit the whole, how to preserve the just means between the formality of seriousness and the freedom of ordinary intercourse which often destroys the distinctive character of a pastoral visit. You will have to learn this, as I had to do, by experience, and from the salutary teaching of mistake and failure.' It was, we think, owing in a great measure to this frankness, of which we have given this example, that he was so much beloved. It

brought him down to one's own level, so that henceforth one felt one could trust him to sympathise with one's difficulties and disappointments, because he had experienced the like himself. It was something much more than mere kindness or an affectionate disposition, though in both these respects he was specially gifted, that inspired trust and dependence on him. It was this frank acknowledgment of like experience which was the secret source of his power over those whom he attracted to himself. The result was seen in the manifest influence he exerted over so many of the undergraduates and the younger clergy, so that, in his late years, he became, though parted from personal intercourse with them, more than their 'guide, philosopher, and friend.'

And yet there were those who failed to be thus influenced, and to many he was far from being a *persona grata*. His very vehemence and persistency (but, be it remembered, that that vehemence and persistency were exhibited in defence of the Truth, hardly ever in personal controversy) offended many, so that it was no uncommon thing to hear it said that his advocacy of a cause foredoomed it to defeat, his opposition to a measure promoted its success. It is not wonderful, therefore, if some of his methods were characterised as eccentric, and some of his actions as ridiculous. But those methods and those actions, in so far as they were different from those of other men, are to be explained by the fact that they bore the impress of his own remarkable and unique individuality. He was a *faithful* pastor in doctrine as in practice, specially anxious for the lambs (whether as to age or simplicity) of the flock; working on the lines of his own *Treatise on the Pastoral Office*; ever ready with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away all erroneous and false doctrine contrary to God's Word. The strong love of a most affectionate nature was bestowed on his flock. When weary of controversy and hard study, he always found refreshment and even encouragement in a round of pastoral visits, in which, at anyrate, he was understood and eagerly welcomed by his people. He had that rare power of (using the word in its best sense) ingratiating himself with his parishioners, taking (yes, and feeling) a lively interest in the most trivial incidents of their lives, sorrowing and rejoicing with them, so that all his words were pregnant with meaning which appealed

to their inmost feelings. Nor would it be right not to set on record that with him deeds of kindness, benevolence, charity (of the pecuniary sort) accompanied his words, and that his generosity to those whom he befriended was, in many cases, without stint.

We, who had the privilege of being his curates, gratefully declare that we, with many others, acquired from his precepts and example a systematic knowledge of parish work, on the lines of the Book of Common Prayer, which has proved itself most useful in after life. It has sometimes been said that Burgon was unpractical. Those who so accuse him could hardly have made a greater mistake. The charge could only have arisen from an imperfect and superficial knowledge of the man. He was *intensely* practical, making daily use of his varied acquirements to accomplish some purpose, of which others perhaps had only dreamed. To take one example out of many—the methodical and practical way in which he worked his parish, and taught others to follow his example. He kept a diary in which every service, every sermon, every visit, was duly recorded day by day, and this series of 'log' books was carefully arranged for reference as might be required. His day was divided out into set portions, each with its own appointed task, and no one would easily forget his tone and look when he said how mistaken people were in supposing that the daily services were interruptions and hindrances to secular business. His argument was that the stated times of daily prayer were like milestones which regulated the daily course, so that their proper observance saved time, or, at anyrate, prevented it being wasted. It is unnecessary to add that he also highly prized the spiritual benefit of these exercises. But a glance at his sermons will effectually justify him from the charge of being unpractical. Even when their tone is most doctrinal, some unexpected practical turn is sure to be given to the most abstruse pronouncement. If by being unpractical is meant that he had a high ideal, then he was unpractical, but not otherwise. He had such a high ideal, that in the hope that he could in some sort realise it, he pressed into the service of God's Truth and of His Church, his whole energy, knowledge, time, and opportunities. Would that there were more of such 'unpractical' scholars and pastors!

3. The record of Burgon's faithful work as an

Anglican parish priest relates to the more private portion of his life, but all the world knows how intensely he was devoted to the study of divinity. In this, also, he maintained the best traditions of Anglicanism, sitting at the feet of the great teachers of the English Church, as they had themselves sat at the feet of Chrysostom and Augustine. He used to say he was sure that the great preachers and teachers of the early Church must have received into Paradise with open arms our great Anglican divines of former generations, recognising in them brothers in exegesis, as well as companions in the faith. His own theology was conservative, but also progressive. It moved within the limits long ago defined by creed and council. It was based on the written records of the inspired Word, which were venerated as the fountains of pure truth, unmixed with human error. But it was also progressive, for he evermore sought for new jewels in the ancient mine; and those who had the privilege of attending his Bible classes, and sitting under his pulpit, remember how bright were the gems of new and unexpected interpretations of Holy Scripture which his discourses contained. In the textual criticism of the New Testament, he was not, as some falsely supposed, retrograde. He was always ready to accept better readings or sufficient evidence. He opposed the text of Westcott and Hort, not because it was a departure from the *Textus Receptus*, but because he denied the validity of the evidence adduced for the changes.<sup>1</sup>

Burgon's personal friends know that his diligence in study was wonderful.<sup>2</sup> He has been found surrounded by his books when confined by sickness to the bed in the narrow bedroom of his college rooms. His door was never 'oaked,' for he was always ready to receive a parishioner or a friend, or one who sought his help in theological study. His stores of learning were vast and varied, but most abundant in matters of archæology and Church history.<sup>3</sup> The diligence he showed

<sup>1</sup> Burgon left materials for a revision, on his own principles, of the *Textus Receptus*. We hear that these will be printed in addition to the *Remains* which have already appeared.

<sup>2</sup> It is surprising that such Adamantian labours did not break down the frame at an earlier age. Perhaps its preservation was due to a remarkable power of sleep. Burgon used to say that he fell asleep as soon as his head was on the pillow, and slept till dawn.

<sup>3</sup> The writer remembers an occasion when, while the

himself, he expected in younger students, whom he would rally for lateness in the morning, and, calling himself an ἑργοδιωκτής, would constantly ask what progress had been made, and urge to new tasks. Many of us feel that we owe the best part of our ministerial knowledge to the teaching and example of this 'Leading Theologian.' In reviewing the record of his laborious life, one cannot but feel, what he himself once expressed about Pusey, it is a pity such talents were so largely expended in controversy. Yet controversy was inevitable to Burgon's unique personality; and though it hindered the production of some of the permanent works which he had designed, yet he accomplished enough to leave behind a monument of great talents consecrated to the glory of God. His theology and his criticism are not of the schools now fashionable; but they were based on sound principles, and will insure lasting fame to John William Burgon, a gentleman, a scholar, and an Anglican divine.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Dean Burgon handled a very facile pen, and the variety of his works shows the remarkable versatility of his genius. They range under the heads of DIVINITY, TEXTUAL CRITICISM, CONTROVERSIAL TRACTS, ANTIQUITIES AND BIOGRAPHY, ART, POETRY. His publications comprise upwards of fifty entries in the catalogue of the Bodleian Library. He was a frequent contributor of letters to newspapers in connexion with the controversies of the day, while many of those to his correspondents on theological and critical questions were weighty documents of permanent value. During many years he kept a diary, and he left behind in MS. a large number of valuable sermons and theological and critical papers. For the purpose of the present memoir, it will suffice to direct the attention of the reader to the most important of Burgon's works, and to some smaller, but characteristic publications during a long period of literary activity.

1. DIVINITY.—*A Plain Commentary on the Four Gospels*, 1855. The title describes the purpose of the work. It is characteristic as being written in accordance with the principles which always guided the author in handling the Word of God.

*Inspiration and Interpretation*, 1861, in opposition to the recently published *Essays and Reviews*, but of permanent value as a vindication of the true method of Catholic exegesis,

Oxford Architectural Society was inspecting St. Mary's, the vicar came in, and gave, *extempore*, a most interesting account of the church, with anecdotes of the manners of a bygone age.

in contrast to the rationalism which leads the fashion in the present generation.

*Plea for a Fifth Final School* [of Divinity], 1868, and *Plea for the Study of Divinity in Oxford*, 1875. Burgon warmly advocated the establishment of an examination, with class lists, in theological honours, in furtherance of the interests of clerical education.

*Treatise on the Pastoral Office*, 1864. It presents a very high standard of clerical learning and ministerial devotion, but is extremely practical, and a most useful guide for a young clergyman.

From the many Sermons which Burgon published may be selected, as characteristic of the preacher's power of dealing with widely different subjects, *Short Sermons for Family Reading*, Two Series, 1855-67; *Review of a Year*, 1871; *The Servants of Scripture*, 1878; *Home Missions and Sensational Religion*, 1876.

2. TEXTUAL CRITICISM.—*The Last Twelve Verses of St. Mark*, 1871. The main contention of this elaborate treatise has never been refuted. The reception which it met with from competent judges impelled the author to undertake that minute examination of the text of the Greek Testament, the chief results of which have been edited by the Rev. Ed. Miller in *The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels*, and *The Causes of the Corruption of the Traditional Text*, Burgon and Miller, 1896.

*MS. Evangelia in Foreign Libraries and Sacred Greek Codices*, in letters to the *Guardian* during the years 1873, 1874, 1882.

*The Revision Revised*, that monument of diligent study, which, through the fascination of the Dean's inimitable style, was a chief instrument in bringing the New Version into disrepute.

3. CONTROVERSIAL TRACTS.—From the pulpit and in pamphlets, Burgon opposed the progress of error and the introduction of mischievous changes in the Church and the university. Some of the most characteristic of his minor works are: *Disestablishment*, 1868; *Disestablishment of Religion in Oxford*, 1880; *The Athanasian Creed to be Retained*, 1872; *Oxford Diocesan Conference and Romanising within the Church of England*, 1873; *Woman's Place*, 1871; *To Educate Young Women with Young Men Inexpedient, etc.*, 1884.

4. ANTIQUITIES AND BIOGRAPHY.—*Life and Times of Sir Thomas Gresham*, 1839; *Memoir of P. F. Tytler*, 1859; *Twelve Good Men*, 1888; *The Colleges of Oxford*, 1855; *Letters from Rome*, 1862.

5. ART was an unfailing source of delight to Burgon, and he could handle a pencil with a readiness which would have won him fame had not graver studies demanded his attention. His first publication (1833) was a translation into French of Brödstedt's *Memoir on Panathenaic Vases*. In 1846 he wrote *Remarks on Art with regard to University Studies*.

6. POETRY.—Burgon's well-known prize poem 'Petra' (1845) was followed by many short pieces and hymns, which were collected in *Poems* (1840-78), published 1885.