

and it is hazarding little to say, that his volumes will take the rank of classics in the department of theology to which they belong.

*The Church and the Congregation. A Plea for their Unity.* By C. A. BARTOL. Boston: Ticknor & Fields. 16mo.

As church-membership is in some respects the aristocracy of Congregationalism, and as it is considered by many minds to be as necessary for the safety of theology as the old distinction of *esoteric* and *exoteric* was for the safety of philosophy, the publication by a clergyman of such a volume as this, with its purpose clearly indicated by its title, will excite some surprise, and certainly should excite discussion. Mr. Bartol contends for open communion, as most consonant with Scripture, with the spirit of Christianity, with the practice of the early Church, with the meaning and purpose of the rite. He denies that the ordinance of the Lord's Supper has any sacredness above prayer, or any of the other ordinances of religion; and while he appreciates and perhaps exaggerates its importance, he thinks that its most beneficent effects will be seen when it is the symbol of unity, and not of division. The usual distinction between Church and Congregation he considers invidious and mischievous, as not indicating a corresponding distinction in religious character, and as separating the body of Christian worshippers into two parts by a mechanical rather than spiritual process. Though he meets objections with abundant controversial ability, the strength of his position is due not so much to his negative arguments as to his affirmative statements; for his statements have in them the peculiar vitality of that mood of meditation in which spiritual things are

directly beheld rather than logically inferred, and, being thus the expression of spiritual perceptions, they feel their way at once to the spiritual perceptions of the reader, to be judged by the common sense of the soul instead of the common sense of the understanding. This is the highest quality of the book, and indicates not only that the author has religion, but religious genius; but there is also much homely sagacity evinced in viewing what may be called the practical aspects of the subject, and answering from experience the objections which experience may raise. The writer is so deeply in earnest, has meditated so intensely on the subject, and is so free from the repellant qualities which are apt to embitter theological controversies, that even when his ideas come into conflict with the most obstinate prejudices and rooted convictions, there is nothing in his mode of stating or enforcing them to give offence. The book will win its way by the natural force of what truth there is in it, and the most that an opponent can say is, that the author is in error; it cannot be said that he is arrogant, contemptuous, self-asserting, or that he needlessly shocks the opinions he aims to change.

Mr. Bartol's style is bold, fervid, and figurative, exhibiting a wide command of language and illustration, and at times rising into passages of singular beauty and eloquence. The fertility of his mind in analogies enables him to strengthen his leading conception with a large number of related thoughts, and the whole subject of vital Christianity is thus continually in view, and connected with the special theme he discusses. This characteristic will make his volume interesting and attractive to many readers who are either opposed to his views of the Lord's Supper, or are unable to agree with him in regard to the importance of the change he proposes.