

Original Essays.

MODERNIZED THEOLOGY.

BY WILLIAM MONTGOMERY.

By modernized theology is meant, here, theology trimmed and toned to suit the humor of the time. Anciently and during the middle ages, trimming and toning were not unknown, and were as common, perhaps, as they have been among Protestants. And indeed, it is probable that there never was a time either among Jews or Christians, or even among Egyptians, Greeks or Romans, when there was not more or less of trimming and toning theologically; and as to the Christian Church, in its first age, let Paul be understood for what he wrote to the Galatians: "When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation."

Theology, as the helmsman, substantially, of all the sciences, and as the point at which they begin to prophesy—theology at any time, when it is alive with the spirit, and is like what happened to the Jews, when "the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night"—theology, as the earnestness of man, at his best, long and looking for God—theology is what prepares the soul for the coming of the Spirit. But at this present time there is a jumble of notions, of which some are false, and others are more or less accurate, which commonly is called theology, and as to which men trim and tone, and think that they are modernizing. Modernized theology in the church! It is "the abomination of desolation" in the holy place.

A man of erudition and chemistry, the owner of a telescope and the master of a microscope, knows more things than an English peasant does as to quantity, though not necessarily as to quality. But a modern Calvinist is so full of scientific ideas, that his worship, that magnitude is the same for him as nature; and for him, the prediction of an eclipse is just as wonderful as Jesus on the Mount of Olives prophesying as to the destruction of Jerusalem; and because of his having been made to wonder so much by tales connected with science, often he is much inclined to think that the "signs and wonders" of the Bible would be as cheap as leaflet-matches or as the effects of the solar microscope, if only some trick were found out. But stranger still than any civilized Calvinist, is the man famous for philosophy, who can say and write, "Spirit! With the best of instruments, it has never yet been seen. Miracles!" Let them be shown at a meeting of the Royal Society, in London, specially convened. Such things as these have been said in all earnestness and simplicity, by men of great prominence; and as though it were expected that certainly God Almighty would appear in court by his angels, at least, if distinguished men should show themselves willing to pronounce as to some of his ways. But Royal Societies and Academies of Science, as regarded from high heaven, are not so very much superior to rookeries or anti-churches. Theology has been woefully trimmed and toned, and the materialism of both the ignorant and the learned. And this is plain enough from even most of the definitions of a miracle which have been made during the last century. As far as they are known of publicly, the theologians who draw a long breath at this present time, are very few indeed. Theologically men dread to believe in one direction, just as much as they are afraid to deny in another. Faith is the faculty by which man inhales, as it were, the atmosphere of the angels. But what breath of life or heaven can there be with believing in a theology, for which the best thing claimed is that it is rational in the extreme, and thoroughly modernized?

What in Latin was called a miracle, in our Saxon-English is a wonder. And it has been thought that the "wonders" and the "signs and wonders" of the Scriptures might be best secured for belief by an utter denial of the miracle itself. The Bible, it is said, is a book that things alone it is plain that of the Spirit, as a scriptural doctrine, modernized theology has no sense whatever. A compromise with science badly understood—that is what modern theology is on the subject of miracles. Oh, for honesty as to the Bible, downright honesty! And all the more knowledge men get, the more will honesty have to be wished for, even as to reading the Bible. What St. Paul wrote as to the Spirit was written as to its nature, and therefore as to the possibility of gifts from it, forever. And where there is neither faith, nor expectation, nor even hope as to the gifts of the Spirit, because of these modern times, there it is certain, that there is no right belief even as to the Spirit itself.

As to anything which might be taken for a sign, and as to even the possibility of a modern miracle, the policy of modern theologians has been that of unscrupulous denial and insolent contradiction. But Christian divines cannot indulge in such license without teaching in the end what they do not wish, nor without having seers retort on them, as to Peter and Paul, the folkies which they themselves have bawled and scratched as to writers and scholars, martyrs and confessors, so many and so illustrious, from the first century of the church down even to the last. There is no way for men of intellect, there is no way for a good lawyer with all the evidence before him, there is no way by which men can believe in Elijah and Elisha and in Isaiah and Malachi, as having been prophets, without believing also in the possibility of prophecy in every age, and to the end of time. Assent, non-contradiction, an idiotic ground—these things are not belief; and there is no way by which a good man and true can believe in the miracles of the New Testament, and yet repudiate the testimony of twelve good men and true, as to occurrences in the second, third and fourth centuries of the Christian era, or even as to things of the present day, on the ground merely of their seeming or their claiming to be of a nature which might be called miraculous.

But here is the place for it, and here comes the cry: "Oh, but if you cannot deny modern times, cannot you call them strange? cannot the word miracle be kept for the Bible, Scripture, or better still, for the New Testament? For if miracles may happen ever again, then what is the use of them in the Bible?" And for men who talk in that way it does not matter what the miracles of the Bible at all; for they have nothing to do with them morally. Because men of that style of talk are altogether, as to honesty, the same as those Pharisees, who could attribute wonders to Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, rather than believe that signs and wonders could argue a prophet in Jesus of Nazareth. As to the Scriptures—oh, for the spirit of times not quite so modern as these! Oh, for reverence without cant! And what mischief there is, and what folly for want of it!

Miracles, whether of the Old Testament or the New, and whether of one age or another, as being miracles merely, are as honest as thunder and lightning, or as the law of gravitation, and really it is of no right use to plead a miracle as a sign, in any connection, or to talk about it, apart absolutely from the Spiritual Philosophy of the universe. What would the miracles, as they are called, what would the miraculous occurrences connected with Elijah and Elisha, or with Christ Jesus and Paul, have been for Troglodytes, or for African druids? Modern theology notwithstanding, a miracle could not be a "sign and wonder" for everybody everywhere; any more than to-day the solution of an algebraical problem could be good sense for a Celt just arrived from his potato-plot in Ireland. Anybody can believe, as so many people do, while "having the understanding darkened." But that holds which is of the nature of faith is what a man holds because of some direction, as to which he feels strongly, or along which he sees, or thinks that he does. It may be, and it probably must be, that there is no right understanding of what Jesus was as the Christ, except through what may be called the philosophy of miracles. Accounts of apparitions, as they transpire, from time to time, as always they would seem to have been doing—the spirit-like phenomena of which often people make a religion in Asia—the assertions of good men as to occurrences extraordinary and more than natural in the Catholic church, and accounts of what would seem to

have been influences quite ultra-mundane, which have been published within the last twenty years, as to Iceland and New Zealand, and Sweden and Saxony, these things other theologians of the passing day may deprecate as no business of theirs; just as their grandfathers were glad of Dr. Conyers Middleton, as an excuse for ignoring the troublesome acquaintance of the Christian Fathers. But are they right when they do so? and are they, with their science as to God, acting as carefully and as honestly as a geologist must do, as to this earth, if he would be eminent?

Then the present state of theology, there is nothing, intellectually, as concerning the world at large, which is more disgraceful, and of this truth, it is an illustration, that an earnest, very honest party among theologians are what they are. For they look after mind and emblem, and the botany of Palestine; and they are anxious about the old stones of Jerusalem and the temple, and how they may, any of them, have been marked; and they are also laudably curious about ancient manuscripts of the New Testament, while yet they are blind as to the ghost-belt, which is involved in the Scriptures, and never think as to whether possibly there may be a science of spirit implied in the Bible—a pneumatology; and all that is "because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."

But, commonly with Protestants, it has been like an instinct to magnify the Bible against the papacy, in what may be called a worldly way. "The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants"—that was a good war-cry in the church militant for wise men; but that cry has been like confusion itself in the mouths of some myriads, who have fancied themselves, to be theologians, merely because of their ability to spell in the Bible, and to read it fast, as translated into the vulgar.

What strange aversion there was, no long while since, to Natural Religion, as though even a thought of it were disloyalty to revelation! And yet actually the Scriptures themselves involve it, and all the best part of it, probably. Ancient history has been often regarded as an impermissible while offering itself as a witness about some Pharaoh, or about the captivity of the Jews, or as to Roman rule in Palestine. But of this bibliography, directly and still more indirectly, there have been effects as to spiritual subjects which have been in their nature utterly anti-scriptural.

The Gospel, as it addresses itself to man, through the New Testament, presupposes that he is a believer, as to some things, which it does not itself teach, and the necessity of this presupposition, when it is made manifest, is akin to a renewal of revelation itself for some people.

Denominational possession is no doctrine of Christianity, but the reality of it was assumed by Jesus Christ. Southey says is not vouchered for by the Gospel, but in the Scriptures the reality of it, as a practice, is presupposed, when, as to the young woman possessed by a spirit of Python, Paul said to the spirit, I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her. Also, as to the demoniac and the Lord's supper, and the laying on of hands, and the importance of an assembling of themselves together by believers, Christianity presupposes as to knowledge and as to tendencies in belief, which only few persons know of, and which most people would not even care to know about.

Among Protestants, for the last hundred years generally, with men of intellect, the feeling has been, "How much is it absolutely necessary for a man to believe if he wants to be a Christian; and also how best can a clergyman preach, with the least possible restraint from the Scriptures?" What treachery, as to Christ, that is, and also, in itself, what insanity! What times some people have been living in without their knowledge! And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. For indeed everywhere and always, light is itself a command as to darkness.

There is an attitude toward God which, theologically, is common in these modern times, and it is that of a soul ready to say, "Myself, because of what I am, as being myself, even though it be with the surrounding universe, hard and black against me, why am I to be called upon to believe? Poor blighted thing of intellect! What is the grievousness of a call, as to a man in a desert, whether it be of sand or of folly? A poor bewildered mortal—how really is he aggrieved by a call on him from above, or by inspiration from the lips of a prophet? And indeed, with hearing God and answering him, is not the truest man at once contented? He, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money."

There is much to be said in excuse, but excuse does not diminish the reality of a fact. And it is the instinct of modernized theology to keep to itself, and to believe as little as possible, for fear of being challenged. But what an attitude that is toward the spiritual world, for a soul believing itself immortal! "Let it be understood that on looking about me, the less I am obliged to believe, the more certain I feel as to my position." And what an absurd position that is for anybody to be occupying, as to the universe or as to the soul of it! But yet there are people everywhere, and there are myriads, with whom the best hope is as to how little they may have to believe but only as to how little they may be forced to. As for modernized theology and its cold-blooded fanatics!

How precise has been the talk of those people, and also how lame! "The Bible is a book by itself. The miraculous is a thing by itself; and there is nothing like it outside of the Hebrew Scriptures. The purpose of the gospel was to prove the immortality of man, and therefore no Pagans ever really believed in it, nor Jews either before Christ." That is the manner after which theology has been made to talk, because of its having been modernized, and therefore also falsified. It is cruel kindness, it is hollow cunning, it is faithless reverence, which would isolate the scriptures in the mind of thought. For they do not do so, and are voluntarily not being treated as fearlessly as the literature of Greece, and by not being compared for analogies with the literatures and the experiences of all nations and all ages. Largely in the Bible there is inspiration of a higher origin than what was ever expressed elsewhere; and the action of Jewish history was more divinely influenced than was that of ancient Greece at any moment. But still the Jews were of like flesh and blood with the "men of Athens," and parchment for writing on, was much the same thing in the hands of Plato as in those of Isaiah.

A world to come was not proclaimed as a novelty by Jesus Christ, nor was it preached as such by Paul to the Gentiles. With this statement there are some texts which may be thought to be not consonant; but all the more that they are examined, the more widely will a student grow, and the more nearly will he agree with what has just now been written. By the tale which Jesus told as to Lazarus and the rich man's table, did he not presuppose a belief in another world, and that also of a very familiar nature? Felix, the governor, did not tremble at the resurrection of the dead as a new thing; and indeed, as compared with some other persons, he would seem to have had "more perfect knowledge of that way." But why he trembled, was because of the manner in which Paul "reasoned of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come." It was the reasoning that troubled Felix, the governor.

The history of all time, if a few people be allowed for, at two or three peculiar eras, like that of the Sadducees toward the last days of Jerusalem—all history, and the more minutely biographical and topographical it becomes, so much then the more certainly—all profane history is in analogy with the sacred scriptures as to the credibility of what popularly is called the supernatural or the miraculous. "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ"—that word presupposed, no doubt, a reasonable state of receptiveness on the part of the Jews; and that state might fairly have been anticipated for them, because of what their history had been as a nation, and because of what had been the experience of their fathers as to signs and oracles, and judges, seers and prophets; and because also of experience as to gods that were no gods, and as to false prophets. And the word of God's sending to the Jews, which also was meant to reach the Gentiles, found the Pagans in "the fullness of the time;" and when they were ready for it. The Greeks and Romans, of whom Plutarch was the biographer, were many of them, perhaps, in advance of their times, but yet none the less were they signs, most of them, of a condition spiritually for listening to the gospel, because of their belief as to another world. Faith in the preternatural, the miraculous, and faith as to the immortality of the soul—the two are

twain beliefs. And as to the history of human nature, it is a fact of great significance.

There are theologians of the day, a host of them, who think that they would do better service by denying or ignoring the possibility of there being demons in the Islands of Greece, or in Asia; and also by their ridiculing the notion of there being any where in the world, anything like "a familiar spirit" in connection with any body. Eminent theologians they may be, as to time and place; but, at the best, as before heaven, and for seeing, they are but the hapless fellow-creatures of the blind. Not to know of there being demons anywhere, is pardonable ignorance in most persons; but to be careless about the possibility of their existence, and scornful as to all evidence on the subject, shows in a man that he does not think as Jesus Christ did about human nature, or about what may be called the philosophy of it, spiritually—and shows, indeed, that his theology has been thoroughly modernized.

The word of God, on its coming, presupposes the possibility of receptiveness on the part of its hearers. Let this be noticed. The word of God by Jesus Christ presumed on a belief in God, and in prophets as being channels for his spirit—presumed also on there being existing already, some knowledge as to the spiritual world, and presumed on faith as a characteristic of human nature; and presumed, too, on the words, prophet, "signs and wonders," heaven, spirit and vision, as being well understood and in common use. That word of God, as it reaches a person to-day, reasonably presupposes a willing ear, and some kind of "spiritual understanding." And positively, it is not directly addressed to those men who are ready, in a moment, to reject any report of the supernatural, and who have intensely to number over anything which may seem like kinship between themselves and apes, and through apes with the lethysaunt; and through them again, ultimately, with the primitive man, whatever they may be. People do not all hear alike, and especially as to spiritual subjects; nor do they attend alike, any more than David Hume and William Ellery Channing may be supposed to have done; or than do the dirt-eating savages of South Africa, and the poor people who are the Pope's nearest neighbors at Rome; or than in their respective eras did Theodore Parker and Count Zinzendorf. Notwithstanding what modernized theology might seem to indicate, there really was spiritual difference among men, presupposed, when Jesus said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

And often there is great misunderstanding as to particular narratives and phrases in the Bible, because of helpless ignorance on the part of Western readers as to Eastern phraseology. Some hymns in use might astonish their authors by the sense in which often they are fervently sung. And just so prophets themselves might be astonished, if they could know how often they are understood, as meaning to the very letter what they could only express in worldly words, as to what they felt, expected and saw, because of their being inspired for awhile, and because of having their spiritual eyes and ears open for a moment to the lights and shadows, and mysteries, and agents and angels of that state which awaits us all, invisibly indeed, and yet more certainly than certainty itself, if it be only of the earth earthy.

The theologians of all kinds have, for a long while, been in a fog of uncertainty, and getting into collision with one another because of the fog. But Spiritualism, whatever any one may think of its color, is light, and a point of certainty, by which bewildered people may be helped to Orient themselves in their fog, and to look in the direction of the new heavens and the new earth.

Some mere spiritualists are as ignorant about the Bible in one way, as some mere scientists are in another way; and as between the two there is not much good to choose; except that the irreligious scientist is likely to be a more consistent man than an irreligious spiritualist.

The way in which some few Spiritualists have sometimes talked, is as though some silly traveler should boast himself of having been able to spit on the tombs of the prophets. But any Spiritualist ought to know better than that. For, if there be anything hopeful, reliable, prophetic, glorious in Spiritualism, it is because of its connection with past ages, and with the long continuous thread of marvelous narrative, which reaches on through centuries of fact and adaptations of truth, into the mystery of the Garden of Eden. And every Spiritualist of fair intelligence ought to account himself as being a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and of the tribe of Levi, for conserving and interpreting the vestiges of ancient life, and thought, and spirit-history in Bible lands. And Mr. Charles Beecher is much to be thanked for his recent book on "Spiritual Manifestations," and the fine manner in which he has written according to his lights. And it is to be hoped that he will soon be followed by other witnesses of like temper, who shall report about Spiritualism according to their personal experience, and their various standpoints in philosophy and learning.

If the man of science is to be trusted on his reports, for having properly availed himself of his opportunities for outlook as to insects or stars, or worlds in confusion, he ought, reasonably, to acknowledge that what some Spiritualists testify, as to phenomena, may be not incredible, even though the evidence offered be that only of persons eminent for common sense and for healthy, full possession of all their senses. For all purpose of observing and reasoning has not yet run to crucibles, telescopes or microscopes; nor is it ever likely to do so. There is a disputed region, old enough historically, as to which modern science professes to feel like an outsider, but that is because of its own self-imposed restrictiveness. And here comes in Spiritualism, in the broad sense of the word, with its own revelations, which are really resented as insane intrusions. But as it has happened many a time before, so it may prove again, and as to this very controversy, that "wisdom is justified of her children."

And, no doubt, very largely John Wesley and his brother Charles were such spiritually-minded men as they were, because of their certainty as to a spiritual world and its nearness to them; which they had got, as young men, through manifestations from it at the house of their father. It was a certainty about one haunting ghost, but that certainty was like a diamond-point of light in the materialistic darkness which was thickening over England. It was an experience which they were never likely to have forgotten; but it was kept fresh in their minds by a sister, who, probably, was what would now be called a medium, and who would seem to have been a lady of fine faculties and a very fine character; because, many years later than the manifestations at the Lincolnshire village, in a letter to Charles Wesley at Oxford, his sister wrote that she longed to see him, that she might talk with him about what had called itself Jeffrey, at their old home, during the disturbances, and which continued still to visit her in London.

Boston, Feb. 14th, 1879.

OUR LANDMARKS.

BY JANE M. JACKSON BUCK.

To the Editor of the Banner of Light:

Although it is their gain to quit this crude earth for spirit-land, yet we sorrow for the material demise of the pioneers in our faith, to whom the cause owes so much—such men as Prof. Hare, Robert Dale Owen, and Judge J. W. Edmonds, and a host of others who stood the shock which ministers and laymen hurled against them when to be a Spiritualist was deemed a disgrace.

Now last, but not least, we are called to mourn the loss in the physical of our friend, Dr. R. T. Hallock. Always in the field with words of cheer, never faltering in his duty, we feel how useless to drape surroundings in black, for he lives in our memory as a being of light, and in the spirit-world as an active agent for good. Oh! we miss all those who stood in the gap between us and persecution, ignorance and ridicule, in the early days of "spiritual rapping." The brave ones who hid not their light, but proclaimed their knowledge upon the house-tops, protected mediums, engaged lecturers, opened their own homes, so that all who wished could investigate for themselves. It was not alone to

the poor and ignorant that spirits demonstrated their presence, but to all, even in highest places, and the most intellectual became learners of the most ignorant mediums, for spirit-spoke through human lips in tones that could not be misunderstood—language so exalted, heavenly, and far beyond the knowledge of the medial instrument that conviction inevitably followed. Even ministers, who taught of the so-called miracles of the Bible, but did not realize their inner significance, received new light through the revelation of clairvoyance, and these statements became plain through practical illustrations. Inspired men and women were gifted with apostolic powers to heal the sick, give strength and hope to the mourner. They walked in the steps of the disciples who trod the same path, teaching, healing as they journeyed on, scorned or worshiped in turn, little heeding which, so long as they were fulfilling their appointed mission. Gifted with a peculiar magnetism, these chosen men and women of that ancient day healed by touch, words and looks, and the masses deemed such persons divine, while a few thought they must have Satanic power, and they therefore were blessed or cursed just as they dealt with these different individuals; and not only in our day did the olden "signs" follow the workings of the apostles of the new dispensation, but in special measure at its earliest period the defenders of Spiritualism were scorned and reviled.

Purity of life, charity, love reaching out to all—the lowest, most degraded—to lift up the fallen, show in our works that we see angels in cripples, in the worst of sinners: like Christ, to make no selections, have no fancies when called to assist, to comfort, teach and heal; these are the attributes the exercise of which will bring the angels nigh unto our hearts and lives. Our precious pioneers have fulfilled their missions in love; we are left; let us take up their mantle, raise their burdens; we shall not faint by the way. They hewed out rough rocks, and removed many thorns from the path which we can now walk upon in a wider measure of safety, though it is still marked by stains from bleeding feet, which have now overcome all obstacles, and have no regret at the sacrifice. It is all glorious brightness with them in the world of spirit realm; hands they loved were the first to clasp theirs in heavenly welcome; the family circle has opened to receive each one, and shall so continue to do till all shall reach the Everlasting Home.

GHOSTS.

BY ALEXANDER M'LAUCHLIN.

We're prisoners in a darkened cell,
I see thee not, my brother,
'T is the ghost in thee, and the ghost in me,
That talk to one another,
And whether we speak truth or lies,
Be gossiping or praying,
Ain't there hosts of list'n'ing ghosts
Hear every word we're saying.
They find us 'mid the city's din,
And on the desert plain,
And we can hear their voices in
The murmur of the main;
And often at the gloaming hour,
When care and sorrow wound us,
With healing spiritual power,
We feel them gather round us.
For they are always hovering by,
When we are pressed with care,
They know when evil things are nigh,
And warn us to beware.
And often, too, they stand and gaze,
To wonder and surprise,
At all man's little crooked ways—
His hidden schemes and lies.
And oft in visions of the night
They lead us by the hand,
Where living streams of pure delight,
Flow through the Morning Land;
Where those who upon earth were kin,
By sympathy have drawn
To home-like haunts all basking in
The everlasting dawn.

How sweet to know, in joy or woe,

The mother dear that bore us,

Her darling ones as still do know,

And always watching o'er us;

And always when we grieve,

Upon life's rugged road,
She comes to point the better way,
And lead us back to God.

Ananias Station, Ontario, Feb. 8th, 1879.

From "Spiritual Lyrics," an unpublished volume.

BUDDHISM.

AND SOME REMARKS ON A RECENT PUBLICATION.

To the Editor of the Banner of Light:

The wide-spread enthusiasm that has in recent times been awakened in the cause of Buddhism, may plead as an excuse for a renewed consideration of the subject in the *Banner of Light*. Everything bearing upon the life or teachings of the founder of this old faith invites attention. Regarding his birth an interesting evidence presents itself—interesting more especially to those who attribute any significance to numerals.

According to Max Müller, and the best Hindu authority says Dr. Peckles, "Buddha was born about the year 556 B. C." Chambers's Encyclopedia says, "He died at the age of eighty, in the year 483 B. C." Now if we add the eighty to the 556 we have 636; and as, in the midst of much uncertainty, we may here claim an error of one year, I will subtract 622 B. C., corresponding in more than one sense, to the Mahometan era, the Hegira A. D. 622; the latter word comes from the Arabic *hadjra*, (dye, flight). Fearing that this speculation may appear somewhat presumptuous I will quote from "Isis Unveiled," Vol. II, p. 580: "There he, who held this Buddha for a fugitive Syrian Jew," says Domville Valentin; "others who hold him for a disciple of the Apostle Thomas; but how in that case he could have been born 622 years before Christ I leave them to explain." Higgins and Swedenborg have some interesting statements concerning these figures. If we assume that Mahomet's mission began A. D. 612, it was just one year from the time Jesus first taught in the Temple, and going back one year more we may find Buddha just beginning the "wheel of the law" at Benares.

Of the birthplace of Buddha, let me quote a few words also from Higgins. After calculating that Plato was ignorant of his own mythology (referring to the word *Gala*) he says: "I find one of the most holy places of India called *Gaya* or *Gala*, famous as the birthplace of Buddha. . . . In this case the *Gala* must have been a mystical term for the generative power. . . . Synonymous to *Chaoia* or *Caonia*." Hence, "similar to that of *Konze* on *pas* of Eleusis; that is, it is an Indian word adopted by the Greeks. I suspect it has in some way come from the same source as the *Aj*, *Aja*, *Agh*, *Aje*. A city is often alluded to in the mystic histories called *Ain*—that is, *place of Aj*; the same meaning as the *Aje* and *Gala*." On the preceding page of the old edition he says: "I think the (Hebrew) *ay* or *Jah*, the Self-existent, was the foundation on which all was built; and what could be more likely? It was the *Aj* in India; *Jo* in Egypt; *El* in Delphi; and at *Gaza* in Palestine" (the common ending of words in the East, *stan* meaning place or country). "It was (Hebrew) *ay*, corrupted from *Aj*." This resolves itself into the place of the Goat, or the ram, *Aries*, the birthplace of the sun—agreeing thus with one of the adjuncts to Buddha's name, *Gautama*, of the solar race of which his family was a branch.

In the "Introduction" to Dr. Peckles's valuable publication respecting the late religious controversy in Ceylon, much important matter is contained re-

ferring to times, people, events, with illustrative quotations, such as we all need in comprehending the religion of Buddha, and the vast and good influence it has wielded over nearly one-third of the entire population of our globe. Dr. P. says—and it corresponds with what I have also seen in India—"The tone of morality is higher, and the practice of charitable deeds far more prevalent in Buddhist than in Christian countries." Indeed, there is little or none of that startling, foolish brutality committed in this country mostly by foreigners which so very often disfigures the columns of our newspapers; and there is an admirable abstinence, generally, from the use of animal food and intoxicating drinks. And I think it has been pretty well demonstrated that the more a nation is given to the consumption of meat, the more heavily and drunkenly it becomes. A report made some years since by an officer in the British service in India, investigations by a German scientist, and the opinions of the historian Michelet, so to confirm this statement.

Of the noble body of Dr. Peckles's latest work much might be said; but the value of the controversy between the Christian and the Buddhist can only be appreciated by a careful perusal. Over eighty pages of the *brochure* are devoted to the sturdy contest, and I think I can safely say, without being invidious, that the Oriental native scholar, Rev. M. Gnananda, obtained a signal victory. But how few Christians are there who can conceive of such a thing having ever been taught, that these Buddhists were good, learned, people, worshipping God, and standing in great need of our learned missionaries. Alas, for our folly! If those truly learned, good, abstemious, spiritual teachers should come among us, it would seem as though they would sweep everything before them; their example alone, in contrast to our best eating, wine-drinking, bishops and other dignitaries of the so-called Orthodox church, would make a powerful impression; and when they could show, as they doubtless can, that not a "divine truth" was promulgated by Jesus which is not to be found in the Buddhist scriptures, written six centuries before Christianity cried in swaddling clothes at Bethlehem, when they can demonstrate that as sincere faith, as exalted ethics, as comprehensive a view of a creator, as clear a perception of existence hereafter, is embodied in the collected sayings of the great *sonoma* of Kapilavastu, as in any other "sacred scriptures," converts by the thousands and tens of thousands would flock to their standard. I wish this to be understood as not deprecative of any record we possess of the doings and sayings of the One Nazarene; but as these have utterly failed to make men honest, we must assuredly require something else.

In the disputation, which seems to have been impartially reported, between Rev. David Silva on the Protestant side and Rev. M. Gnananda on the other, accompanied by two hundred priests, and a concourse of natives numbering five or six thousand, every degree of fairness was accorded, though I much doubt if such would have been the case in this *Christianized* land. This I am compelled to say from recent exhibitions here in Albany, where, during the instructive and entertaining lectures by Prof. Caldwell, young men and boys were led by their bigotry, or by the inspiration of the local Young Men's Christian Association, to hiss at the mention of Spiritualism. In Ceylon, and a vast crowd of Buddhists, country people especially, the most perfect order prevailed, and no lack of courtesy was displayed toward the foreigner or his sentiments. Let us by all means have Buddhism here in Albany.

Turning again to this masterly controversy in the "heart of heathendom," it was admitted by the seer and by many "Christians" that Mr. Silva was fortunate, to say the least, in his statements, assumptions, etc. "His renderings of Pali extracts may be correct," says the reviewer, "but who was to judge of this? Certainly not the peasantry, who hailed from the jungles of Ratnam and Pasham Corles." . . . The reverse: "The Rev. M. Gnananda adapts himself to the capabilities of his audience and uses the plainest language that the proper treatment of the subject will allow." See Mr. S. took for granted, also, that what was stated in Buddhist literature was to be interpreted by the letter; and this certainly was a great mistake. If upon heaps of dead and through rivers of blood Buddha was to reach Nirvana, he would have seemed as remorseless and cruel as the Jew's Jehovah; but when it is remembered that one of his commandments forbids the killing of *any creature*, the error is very apparent. Moreover, as Bishop Manders justifies, the Buddhists "naturally accept the theory that we are all brothers. Their hearts seem full of tenderness. They carefully care for the sick and aged. Reverence and love for parents is proverbial in the East."

The above has been elicited by a perusal of Dr. Peckles's "Buddhism and Christianity Face to Face." It is for sale by Messrs. Colly & Lich at the low price of 25 cents. A wide circulation of the pamphlet will do us all good.

G. L. DIXON.

The First Society of Spiritualists, New York.

To the Editor of the Banner of Light:

It is not uncommon to hear non-believers speak sneeringly of the philosophy of Spiritualism and its followers, and they seem to take particular delight in asserting that its believers are ethereal, not substantial. True, Spiritualists have not million-dollar churches, but nevertheless they have comfortable, respectable places for holding their meetings. As facts are always the best thing to silence such prejudiced people, and believing that the financial condition of the First Society of Spiritualists is of general interest, as in fact any thing should be which speaks of the material, substantial worth of all societies of this faith, we have gathered a few points to present to the readers of the *Banner of Light*.

Mr. Henry J. Newton, President of the Society, reported this Sunday evening his fiscal condition for the year ending the 1st of February. The expenses had been \$236.20. Paid Mrs. Nellie J. T. Bigham for forty-four Sundays, \$1100—\$25 a Sunday; rent of the hall for ten months, \$50; choir, \$75; advertising, \$112; flowers, which grace the desk on each Sunday, \$26.50; sundries, \$8.85; a new organ, \$50; for two ventilators, which cost \$50, the society paid one half—\$25; donated to Mr. Tyerman, arranged for a few Sundays since, \$2.25. The cash receipts for Feb. 1st, 1879, were \$180. There is now one month's rent due for the hall—\$25; also due the speaker, \$75. Balance in treasury \$78. Mr. Newton further said that as this was the beginning of the fiscal year, and it would at once be resolved from the report that the expenses had been reduced to the minimum, the members of the Society had now to determine what course to pursue for the ensuing year in the way of the subscriptions. The trustees would have to decide on a plan of action between the present time and the 1st of May, and all must see the necessity of subscribing such amounts as they felt able to contribute. The members should come forward with their material aid, in order to justify the trustees in hiring the speaker and the hall for another year. Those who had not yet placed their names on the book should do so at once, and show their faith by their works.

Probably there are five hundred people who attend every Sunday evening to hear Mrs. Bigham; but at the morning services there are not quite so many. The meetings are absolutely free, and any one is welcome to take any seat which may be found unoccupied. Of late not a few people, and ladies in some instances, have stood up during the entire evening service. The basket is passed around to give those an opportunity who are disposed to pay what they may choose to; a great many come who are not members, and the basket affords them the opportunity to assist a little in defraying the expenses; but let it be distinctly understood that it is a matter left entirely to each individual as to what they may contribute—nothing is demanded. Were all to do a little, among so many, the expenses would not bear so heavily on the few.

Mr. Alfred Weldon conducts the singing very satisfactorily. There is as much worship in song as in speaking; in a well written hymn effectively sung there is true worship; music inspires the speaker, and prepares the listener for the best exercise of the spiritual nature. We trust the Society will take the subject of granting more pecuniary aid to its musical department into careful consideration.

Mrs. Bigham is very well liked here, and the *Banner of Light*, and other journals, are doing a good work in publishing her discourses, for through these journals the good things she utters from week to week are given to an audience of hundreds of thousands of people.

New York, Feb. 9th, 1879.

HERBERTUS.

