

# “FREETHOUGHT.”

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“FREETHOUGHT.”



**CHARLES BRIGHT.**

# Free Thought.

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF  
**FREE AND ADVANCED THOUGHT,**  
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## PRIZE ESSAY AGAINST SPIRITUALISM.

MANY as have been the enthusiasts who have applied Archimedes' saying—"Give me but a spot whereon to fix my lever, and I will move the earth," to the moral as he to the physical world, ignoring with him that in truth motion was superfluous, and the marvel were not to move but to arrest, the list is apparently far from exhausted. Brahma, Buddha, Jahveh, Jesus, Mahomet, with their aides-de-camp, the Joshuas, Pauls, Hildebrands, *et id genus omne*, have all in turn, by the isms of which such names stand as embodiments or promulgators, paradoxically essayed, and at each failure in what was in reality to "arrest the rolling world," the Galileo spirit of the time has provokingly commented the "*e pur si muove*," and still it moves.

And now, in an age when the weak enthusiasm, which engendered and sustained all such attempts, is singularly absent—in an age of most critical enquiry—an age wherein the scalpel is as mercilessly applied to abnormal mental operations or characteristics as to the apparent paradoxes of physical nature—a fresh movement—Spiritualism—advances its claims as against the older ism, rejects its evidences, and dares our judgment with the allegation that its own aims are loftier and purer; its motive power more intense; its solution of vital questions, left unsatisfied by Christianity, more assured and unchallengeable; and as being the only faith form which can link society in one harmonious whole, and thoroughly satisfy those vague aspirations, that intense yearning for assured knowledge of a future state which has haunted man ever since man's brain first conceived the idea.

At an era of philosophic disbelief in the old theological standards—era similar to that which existed at advent of Christianity—one of such

energising in and by science—when every, no matter how stupid, faith expression is treated with magnificent, if semi-contemptuous, generosity of tolerance, and, in its thirst after factual knowledge, grateful for even smallest mercies—we ought not perhaps to repine if the experience of forty to fifty centuries simply teaches uncompromising denial of reality of all miraculous phenomena, and that the sum of our mental gain lies in an extended knowledge of the power of one mind over another. But while no bitterness may attach to our parting with the venerable delusions cherished by our grandsires, we have ever to be on our guard against the rise of similar, and imperatively bound therefore to challenge any such upon its appearance for its *raison d'être*. Equally are we bound by that fact, and the necessity of the case, to carefully examine these. But herein we have to discriminate as against a common misconception; we have to examine carefully, candidly, in truth and honour, but still by the methods established by experience, reason, and the laws of mental conditions—the methods of logician and jurist. Examination must be from the examiner's point, as defined by legal procedure, and checked by legal restrictions, and not from that of the advancer. To require us to proceed otherwise were as insane as to demand that in our commodity dealings we should go back by some centuries and decide a contested case of measurement by the yard as fixed *temp* Henry II. as the length of the sovereign's arm, and one of value by weight of coin, bar, or ingot, as *temp* Abraham, or constant assay, as *temp* Richard I. He who advances theory must produce proofs, cannot prescribe conditions; and if he accept not test by conditions of the time, such as he would himself consider just, and apply in other cases, must expect to be ruled out of Court, with judgment against him by default.

Now in some cases, and we find on investigation that Spiritualism urges this very point against Christianity's miracles, there is so great an antecedent improbability as to amount to impossibility in regard to phenomena; in others they prove themselves impossible by the nature of the case, or by the form of expression in which they are stated. But here we would prefer to quote from others, and in the matter of snail telegraphy (prior to electric telegraphy, and a proposal which even Mr. Robert Chambers deemed worth considering) Dr. Carpenter observes—“Did they (his audience) not judge in that case by the inherent impossibility? And if any number of people should tell them that they had seen it, would they believe it? He should not. In the case before them of Spiritualism there was so strong an improbability, he would not say impossibility, for a mind trained in scientific habits of thought as to what are called the higher phenomena, which are not only beyond

ordinary expression but opposed to it, that nothing but an accumulation of the most cogent testimony could fairly justify our reception of them ; and that cogent testimony required to be given, not by persons who have already committed themselves to a system, but by persons who are altogether independent. It would be all the better of course if they had been previously hostile, and they ought to be persons experienced in these enquiries." Again, "One must begin by a knowledge of the common tendencies to self deception and intentional deception, and it was only when these two factors were completely eliminated that we need begin to investigate in a scientific mode."

It was the wont of Gibbon, Strafford, and Webster, in examining the title, design, and subject of any new work, to set down the questions which they expected to be answered in it, the difficulties to be solved, and the information imparted by it, and in similar mode must be our approach to Spiritualism. What it says, does, and is, must be our enquiry ; in other words, we have to seek its origin, to ask its definition, to ascertain its mission, demand its evidences, note its paradoxes, criticise its defence, point out its inconsistencies and dangers, its pains and penalties, and indicate its goal. To do this with that fulness and thoroughness demanded by the importance of the subject, and the pretensions of its advocates, would require an exhaustive treatise, while all that can be attempted here is to outline the principle arguments, leaving the filling in and amplification to the research and reflection of the reader. Nor need our first step—Origin—detain us long ; for though claimed by some of its upholders as a new "credal development," it is in reality one of the oldest of phases, as indeed has well seen, and claims Howitt. Though stretching over many centuries of time, the actual list needs no lengthened exposition ; and running over the inspired lawgivers, seers, and prophets, from Moses to Malachi ; glancing at the Indian Fakirs of the Mahometan Dervish ; the African's Obi and medicine men ; recalling the Possession cases in the New Testament, and accounts of the Visionaries of the beginning of the Christian era ; recalling the Ecstatics of the Middle Ages, the Stigmata marvels, and the rivalling Levitation of holy recluses ; shuddering at the Witches' era barbarities, and smiling at the Astrologers with their attendant spirit in glass bottle ; and at the Jansenist and Jesuit miracle-mongers, with the profanely witty commentary on the royal decree, "*De par le roi, défense a Dieu ; de faire miracle en ce lieu ;*" with passing thought of the constant belief in workings of fairies and ghosts, and in the faculty of second sight ;—we come nearer to our own time in encountering the St. Simonians, Southcottians, Brothers', Swedenborgians, Shakers, and Animal Mag-

netism with its attendant Mesmerism and Clairvoyance, all claiming to be results of superhuman action, and in deed and word to be the outward visible sign of an inward spiritual working. Grim and ludicrous as is this chapter of human life, it has the one balancing quality of having extended our knowledge of the power of one mind over another: whether that be deemed compensation sufficient for the atrocities perpetrated and the sufferings undergone during the inward spirit era, must be left to the individual reflection.

But although Howitt would appear to esteem the antiquity and universality of this belief as proof of its truth, it is evident, if only by Spiritualist argument against Christianity, that these are no proofs. No one now offers the universality of the belief in the immobility of the earth in proof, nor the universality of belief in the deluge; in fact, universality and antiquity are to be rather cited in proof of errors, as would appear to have made itself apparent to Fontenelle. He, who perhaps showed the strength of his Church's ordinary mode of instruction in telling us that, had he his hands full of truths, he would open but one finger at a time to permit one to escape, displayed no less its weakness and illogicality in assuring us that, given half-a-dozen agents, and sufficient time, he would not despair of making the world receive any faith, however intrinsically absurd, "since, once old, it is already sufficiently proved."

Thus far, then, might Spiritualism rest content if it will be satisfied with being old and derived; its ancestral line is lengthy, and it may even claim, not without reason, to be maintaining a standard held for long by Christianity, and abandoned only under that keen criticism from which Spiritualism itself appears to shrink. It should surely be comfort sufficient, that, if it cannot lay claim to consideration on score of its youth, it carries, according to Fontenelle, its proofs in its age, and might therefore well be a little less acutely sensitive to comment, and still more to, as thought, neglect. Its exceeding complaint is now absence of or want of full investigation of its claims and evidences, and we are ever taunted with the "*avant de juger il faut essayer de voir.*" But it is not our fault if either our eyes are not strong enough to pierce the obscurity, or if the science of optics assures us of the absolute necessity of a microscope under the conditions for our test. And for the various modes of argument which we may employ, but to which Spiritualism objects, it is really hard to see how to approach such a subject, or why so keen objection should be made by Spiritualists to the employment in their case of the arguments which they so keenly urge against Christianity. As against this, these proceed

to discuss the antecedent probability and credibility of the alleged miracles, the competency and character of the witnesses, and the consistency of the records; and, as these are the points which must be investigated in every case of this kind presented to our notice, it is extremely difficult to understand that excessive susceptibility, that touchiness and testiness manifested so often by Spiritualists when we proceed to our investigation, if they are in reality firmly convinced of the truth of their ism. Such feeling manifestation on their side is useless as it is injurious to them; as we have to try by certain acknowledged standards in reasoning, Spiritualists must show the falsity of such standards if the conclusions arrived at be not acceptable to them. If, for example, we try a case by the laws of physics, they are bound to show the general falsity of physical laws, or the peculiar falsity in each particular case; till that is done it is simply idle to demand our attention and good faith, and to challenge our methods.

As we all know, definition is in every branch of man's knowledge the true difficulty, and there is almost a quiet sarcasm in the fact that, even when we know something thoroughly, we are unable to accurately define it. Spiritualism is of course not exempt from the common weakness, and probably in her case too the coming struggle will be less upon the essential points of the belief than upon its definition. It is already a question whether the term should be "Spiritualism" or "Spiritism," and the greater clearness of the French tongue has settled it as the latter, notwithstanding the pathetic assurance of Mr. Peebles that the "al" implies "moral quality, purity of thought, and holiness of life." The general definition given by this lecturer is "the possibility and certainty of a present conscious communion with the inhabitants of the spirit world," and he broadly demands for this belief the startling number of eleven millions of adherents, and the most celebrated men and women in every age of the world down to the present. To this, without spending or wasting time in questioning or refutation, there is but to point out the significant reticence on his part as to these persons (referring here to living celebrities quoted) believing in this *in the sense understood and implied by him*. Again, in a meeting of the National Association of Spiritualists of Great Britain, the President (Dr. Gully, since so celebrated in connection with the Bravo case) remarked, "Their belief should be founded on facts only, and the recognised facts of Spiritualism were, he thought, reducible to two—first, the existence of the spiritual body after death, and second, the possibility of communication between spirits and the material world. What religion should be based on these facts was a question which every man had to settle for himself." Mr.

Tyerman, again, has told us that upon death the spirit is received and welcomed by a kindred spirit, the good and the bad alike, but the bad had to pay the penalty for his offences in a spiritual house of correction ; while Mr. Thomas Walker, descending to yet more minute particulars, has told us that there is no difference in the principle of immortality "between man and mosquitos, rats, mice, or the stinking snake. Mosquitos, like men, are immortal ; and if you extinguish them here, you but send them to the spirit world to torment our brothers and sisters there," to which we may echo the former lecturer, "what a pleasing thing is that," and from which it legitimately follows that rats, mice, and mosquitos alike may enjoy conscious communion with their fellow inhabitants of the spirit world.

Perhaps the greatest point, at any rate the prior one, is as to the characters and capacities of the witnesses and recorders of the phenomena of a new belief system ; and herein it is certainly peculiar to find the Spiritualist following in a well-known Christian argument, a proof which founds itself upon the lowness of origin, ignorance, and poverty of those witnesses. But, in the latter creed, the argument has no footing, and is based upon an assumption, for the founder, however humble his calling might appear, claimed to be of royal descent, and the practice of the Hebrews, of even the highest rank, in having their sons instructed in some trade deprives it of any value. Whatever their callings, the promulgators of the creed showed themselves far from ignorant, unlettered men. They appear to have been well versed in the current topics and disputations of the day, the past literature of their race. They did not promulgate their faith as something wholly original, but on the contrary argued it against a prevalent, and, in their opinion, erroneous mode of belief ; as a sequence and a fulfilment. And since the claim of Spiritualism is that the first substantial good connected with it is a clear and positive demonstration of a future existence, thereby inferring the insufficiency of the Christian affirmation on that point, it will be necessary for the supporters of this last to revise their old procedure and abandon the ignorance ground. And this the more since incapacity may suppose want of veracity. We are then at times plunged into the dilemma as stated by Arnold—"The question is, does either the belief of these things by a man of signal truthfulness, judgment, and mental power, in St. Paul's circumstances, prove them to have really happened—(writer should add, as he describes them)—or does his belief in them, in spite of their not having happened, prove that he could not have been a man of great truthfulness, judgment, and mental power?" Dr. Middleton would, like ourselves, have made short work, however, with this query ;

for he observes in his "Free Enquiry"—"With regard to which we must call to mind that the want of judgment alone may in some cases disqualify a man as effectually from being a good witness as if he wanted veracity too. For instance, Justin expressly affirms that he had seen the cells in which the seventy were shut up to the task of translating the Bible. Now it is certain there never were any such cells." This passage is surely of greatest force in applicability to many of the statements of Spiritualistic testimonies to phenomena. Finally, observes the *Saturday Review*, "When a traveller pretends to have received information about a strange distant country, our first step is to enquire whether he be sane and trustworthy. If we find him to be otherwise, it is quite unnecessary for us to discuss either the information he brings or objections to that information." There is but to add, to point this, that Spiritualism had obtained in many instances a better consideration had its upholders realised the necessity of scrupulous unchallengeable purity of character in the professing phenomena exponents. The contrary has been the case in the majority of prominent mediums, of which abundant legal evidence exists without necessity of specifying cases here; and when at each fresh case of exposure Spiritists urge that we ought not to condemn all for the fault of some, and that at times the offence has arisen from excess of zeal, it is impossible not to think them fully conscious, as men of the world, of the utter untenability of the pleas advanced.

Passing over consideration of the rather singular tendency of Spiritualism towards Roman Catholicism in relying upon authority—most striking contrast with the assertion of Messrs. Bright and Peebles of claiming "nothing by authority," and "acknowledging no infallible oracle," a few words may suffice upon the main definition of a clear demonstration of a future existence. It is not improbable that Spiritualism has been indirectly a result of the era of the Reformation. Former manifestations of it, with its eccentricities and excesses, had been, prior to that era, repeatedly condemned by the Popes, and it had perchance never have arisen but for the opening afforded by the destination of the soul question being left indeterminate at that period. The leaders of that movement had no wish to add to the already great complication by laying down too many rigid rules and calling upon the public faith, then in a state of transition, for adhesion to too much novelty at once. Roman Catholicism held by the old Egyptian dogma of an intermediate abode for the soul—purgatory—and Spiritualism, *teste* Mr. Tyerman, approaches to it in this respect. But between the Christian view and the Spiritualist there is the essential difference which may often be pushed to a *reductio ad absurdum* for the latter. Both

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believe in spirits—the one passive, the other active. Christianity formerly, too, believed in active spirits, ghosts, fairies, &c., but gradually abandoned the belief as science advanced; and even so analogy would lead us to think that Spiritual phenomena must pass away, nor survive test by physical science more than table-turning has that by Faraday.

With the commonly-urged objections to, and criticism upon, the phenomenalistic evidences of Spiritualism we cannot now occupy ourselves at any length; they have their weight, however, and have been very insufficiently met by the Spiritualist side. It were certainly to be expected that, in cases where the issues involved are momentous to many persons—indeed, awful—replies from spirit world should be befitting the occasion, in lieu of the triviality and levity which have generally characterised them. But the main observation hereon must be that the proof, if proof, and so far as it goes, is simply of the interest of the spirits in this world, and not of any of the conditions in the other. There is no real intercourse with this shown, no real information transmitted from it, and, not impossibly, the mediums might differ from each other so categorically in the descriptions, that the silence is the best course under the conditions. Then almost all manifestations occur under circumstances of great mental excitement, sufficient to lead the sceptic examiner to forego his analysis and inevitable conclusion from pure charity. It must be acknowledged as impossible to try certain occurrences under such abnormal conditions of mind as it would be to treat the insane as responsible agents on those very points whereon they were acknowledgedly not so. Even Mr. Crookes, while telling us that phenomena cannot be produced at will, has also distinctly stated that Home, having introduced certain marvels, he (Mr. C.) devised scientific tests, and the next time, when those tests were applied, the phenomena were not reproduced. This, too, was the experience of Dr. Carpenter. And it is to be remarked that in 1874 Mr. Crookes denied that the occurrences were by or from spirits at all, but by or from occult powers in the medium—a thing which, if granted and true, is sufficient to at once dispose of mediumistic proofs so called. In such case, and in most of the evidences, this is the fact—some peculiar doings and conditions of mortals are held as evidence of another life; a future is evidenced by the present.

As before seen, the argument for Spiritualism in immortality—since spirituality, immateriality, immortality, are in this case convertible terms—has been allowed to extend even beyond the brute down to the insect world. Some similar belief and sentiment akin to that before mentioned of Mr. Walker, may have given rise to the Arab's dislike to the summary extinction of the vermin haunting his person—truest

charity for his brothers in the spirit-land. But the force of reason will not allow us to stop at extension of this principle to insect life, and we must concede it to the clothes we wear, to our utensils, furniture, and to every conceivable thing, in short, which serves for our use or conduces to our pleasure. In every statement of phenomena, every appearance of vision, this is indeed unwittingly assumed and granted; and needs there more than allusion to it to recall the *ad absurdum* point? We have next the cases of materialisation, simple visions, either of whole bodies or parts, &c., and these supported by testimony of all ages, according to Mr. Peebles. But there is a wide distinction to be drawn between the older and the modern cases of visions or appearances. In the ancient ones it was invariably the body which was resuscitated, and the argument was held for bodily resurrection; in the modern ones it is a spiritual resurrection. It is perhaps ignored that the majority of the Fathers were opposed to this idea of visions or ghosts, and to that of any spirit communication with earth. The materialisation process, with its explanatory statement that, besides the body, the spirit possesses a covering semi-material (fluid) in use when the bodily garment is laid aside, is utterly incomprehensible under our present knowledge and reason conditions. But when we look further, and push on this argument to its legitimate conclusion—when we perceive that it includes again materialisation (possible) of all that we have employed and destroyed, used and abused—that it entails the supposition of a complete state of spiritual-material society in the other world, with its tools, weapons, manufactories, and the whole physical paraphernalia of man—would it not be an insult to human intelligence to dwell an instant longer upon it.

One of the gentlemen lecturers before quoted has told us that, “on enquiry, we should find there were phenomena, that these phenomena were guided by an intelligence, and that the intelligence was human;” and in expressing our for once cordial concurrence of opinion with the speaker, we wish neither to accuse him of *naïvete*; nor that ourselves be accused of irony. In sober earnest, the question—Spiritualism—depends upon phenomena for evidence, and those phenomena have assuredly up to the present evidenced a guiding intelligence that has been human, and only human. Now, the first question in regard to phenomena is whether they are dignified and worthy of their end as assurances of immortality, and the answer can but be emphatically in the negative. Passing by the numerous contradictions of statements by mediums as either not fact or gross exaggeration—as, *e.g.*, by Lord Brougham and Sir David Brewster—to Home’s assertions, let us ask, what is there possibly of the dignity of the subject, or of human or spirit nature, in tricks which

Indian jugglers can far outshine? or in such alleged feat as Home's elongation to six feet nine, and following contraction till his waistcoat came quite down to his hips? What proof of spiritdom or immortality in display of a foot or two of a man's linen? And we are entitled to ask—since Spiritualists are so susceptible as to belief being rendered to their *bona fides* in intent, their capacity, &c., in investigation and statement—why they never yield the same credence, as they themselves ask, to those who perform precisely similar phenomena, yet distinctly assert themselves not to be believers nor mediums? If, again, the phenomena be real, they are then miracles, and the Spiritualist is called upon to demonstrate possession by matter of some properties not hitherto deemed to belong to it, and opposed to its general condition. If they reply that they do not suppose these opposing properties displayed by matter through any power of its own, but by the operation (will power) of an external superior force, then they must meet the case of the Christian alleged miracles. It is for the Spiritualists to say why they ascribe effects to insufficient causes (as to spirits so-called, and not to God), and if they hold the alleged causes sufficient and co-efficient, to show why they should not be termed Polytheists. We must bear in mind that by explaining and palliating gross contradictions so oft-occurring in phenomena, they acknowledge human judgment as the standard or arbiter, and the right of a majority, and this is immeasurably against them. Hume's argument tells equally against their procedure, in that no human testimony can establish that which is, as stated, above all human testimony; the testimony *must be divine*, and thus Spiritualism must run the same career as Christianity to extricate itself from its difficulties, and make its founder a god-man, an incarnation of the Deity. Everything that has yet taken place as phenomena has been explainable on material grounds, and accepted on unsatisfactory evidence or rather testimony. It can be safely judged from a distance; and to ask us to suspend judgment until we have experienced the said phenomena, is an old device—it is, *de facto*, asking the concession from us that the phenomena occurred *in the sense claimed*, and requiring us to reason as to the causes. It is another device to excuse one's own want of knowledge by accusing that of adversaries, and hence the stereotyped reply, "we do not know what matter is in its properties;" but we do on the contrary know what that is which we call matter, and the properties which distinguish it. The whole question turns, in fact, upon what we understand by "matter" and "spirit." Are there two such things? are they essences, substances, or conditions? are they identical in kind, but differing in degree? So far as Spiritualism attempts proof, it proves the last alone—that all we know is what

we term matter, and that so-called spirit is this matter. Universal ancient thought knew nothing of this arbitrary distinction between spirit and matter; it believed but in one universal substance, typified at a later day in its million changes by the name Proteus; but, at any rate, whatever we deem it, however we may describe the vital principle of the visible universe, we shall one day thank Spinoza for recalling the thinking world to the ancient position, and to the daily more perceptible rational idea, as refuge against faith-superstitions of every class—“*Quod supra nos nihil ad nos.*”

ALFRED MALLALIEU.

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### MORALITY WITHOUT THE BIBLE.

WHAT is morality? If, as orthodox Christians assert, morality is impossible without the Bible, and if it be a fact that if the Bible were “taken away from the people,” or, in plainer and more ingenuous language, deprived of its infallible and God-created character, then morality would lapse altogether and have its place taken by its opposite, immorality; it follows that this “morality” is a something foreign to nature, and not inherent to it, and was imported into the world specifically by the Bible, and thus dates its origin definitely from the day on which certain writings were first bound together in one book and called by that name. This, no doubt, seems a very hard and forced provision to be constrained to accept, but it cannot possibly be denied that it is the natural and legitimate corollary to the assertion that morality is impossible without the Bible; and by no amount of specious word-twisting, or point-disguising sermonising and book-writing, can the predicament be evaded. Thus, if these orthodox Christians desire to ground their position on a basis of certitude, it is incumbent upon them to show that, previous to the time when the Bible was first given forth to the world, morality was the  $x$  of the social problem—the unknown quantity; or, at all events, did not exist as a general element, more or less developed in different subjects. Now, to me, to be called upon to deny this seems an insult both to the understanding and the acquired knowledge; and the impossibility of proving it, or, I should rather say, the manifest falsity of it, ought, to any rational mind, to be sufficient conviction that morality without the Bible is not impossible in these latter days. This consideration should be brought to the minds of that large section of the people of liberal tendencies who, while admitting that there is much in the Bible which could, and should, be dispensed with, yet, on the score

of what they call "expediency"—like Protagoras of old—deem that, for the sake of society, certain doctrines should be upheld, and thus deprecate "depriving the people of their Bible." If any connected scheme of morality could be gathered from the Bible as a whole—which is not easy, for, to quote the words of Theodore Parker, it teaches "two forms of religion which widely differ, set forth and enforced by miracles; the one ritual and formal, the other actual and spiritual; the one the religion of fear, the other of love; one final, and resting entirely on the special revelation made to Moses, the other progressive, based on the universal revelation of God, who enlightens all that come into the world; one offers only earthly recompense, the other makes immortality a motive to divine life; one compels men, the other invites them; one half of the Bible repeals the other"—it would be found that it differs little from what had passed current for morality throughout the world, among those who made the subject a study, from the earliest times of which history takes cognizance. Buckle, in his "History of Civilization," says—I am not quite sure that I quote the exact words—"If any one says that Christianity gave to the world any new element of morality to which it was before a stranger, he either makes the assertion in entire ignorance of the whole matter, or else he knowingly mistakes the facts to further his own ends;" and although I do not entirely agree with this, it is undoubtedly true of those great essentials, or first principles, as Truth, Justice, Temperance, &c., from which all that is included in the term "morality" springs, and of which Miss Cobbe, in her essay, "Darwinianism in Morals," wrote—"The axioms of ethics, like those of geometry, are necessary truths known to us as facts of consciousness." The morality of Socrates, Plato, Zeno the Stoic, and many other of the Grecian philosophers, is far superior to that of Moses or David, equal to that of Isaiah, and falls little, if any, short of that of Christ.

The same may be said of the sacred writings of the Eastern nations, the Rig-Veda of the Brahmans, the Zend-Avesta of the Zoroastrians, and the Tripitaka of the Buddhists—all of them infinitely older than the Bible, and the first and oldest preserved writing that humanity has produced. Listen to a quotation from the last-named, which was written six hundred years before Christ:—"Conquer anger by mildness; evil by good; falsehood by truth. . . . Be not desirous of discovering the faults of others, but zealously guard against your own. . . . Abstain from foolish conversation, and from betraying the secrets of others. Abstain from coveting, from all evil wishes to others, from all unjust suspicion. To be free from sin, be contented, be grateful, subject to reproof, having a mind unshaken by prosperity and adversity. He is a more

noble warrior who subdues himself than he who in battle conquers thousands. . . . All the religion of Buddha is contained in these three precepts : purify thy mind, abstain from vice, practice virtue." I fancy there is more true morality in these few sentences than is to be found in the ten commandments of Moses ; or, for the matter of that, as much as in the whole of the Old Testament ; and if such sentiments could exist, and be given expression to, antecedent to the existence of the Bible, it is surely absurd to deny that they are independent of that work.

But to return to the fundamental question : What is morality ? To this question innumerable answers have been given at different epochs of the world's history, according to the development and bent of the individual intellect. Plato asserted that the faculty of distinguishing right from wrong came direct from the soul, and was simply the recollection of what it—the soul—had seen when it abode with the gods, before it was incarnated in the body. The Sophists, led by Protagoras, said that there were no such things as right and wrong by nature, but only by convention. Zeno the Stoic derived his impressions directly from Nature, saying that the only true formula for morals was to live harmoniously with her. Of the two great rival schools of philosophy which have agitated the modern world, the Intuitionists—as Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, and Schelling—assign a knowledge of right and wrong to certain innate ideas imprinted on the mind, they do not pretend to say how ; while their opponents, the Sensationalists—as Locke, Hume, Bentham, and Condillac—declare it to be derived only from experience. Among the explanations given by those of to-day, the Utilitarians—as Darwin, Mill, and Spencer—say, in the words of the latter, that the moral sense is nothing but the "experience of utility organized and consolidated through all past generations ;" that is to say, the earlier types of man had no incentive to action other than self-interest, and that this self-interest gradually led them to see that good and moral actions always paid best in the end ; in fact, that "honesty is the best policy ;" and thus a moral sense, or a knowledge of right and wrong, became eventually permanently established, and the social instincts which were the original springs of action, have been slowly converted into elements of our nature. Another section, the orthodox Protestants, assert that such a knowledge can come only from God through the Bible ; a third that an infallible Pope is the only true interpreter ; a fourth, the Theists—as the late Theodore Parker and Miss Cobbe—that, in the words of the former, if "we set aside the body with its senses as the man's house, having doors and windows—if we examine the understanding, which is his handmaid—if we separate the affections which unite man with man—we

discover the moral sense by which we can discern between right and wrong, as by the body's eye between black and white, or night and day ; and behind all these, and deeper down, beneath all the shifting phenomena of life, we discover the Religious Element of man ;" and this Religious Element it is which decides everything ; while a fifth, the Spiritualists, mostly ascribe all such knowledge directly to the promptings of the spiritual individualization—a doctrine that differs but little in effect, though much in fact, from the Innate Ideas of the Intuitionists.

Now, to me, it appears that if we leave out the theories of the Protestants and the Catholics as altogether too absurd and too illogical to admit of any ratiocination, there is an element of truth in all these conceptions. That there is truth in that of the Utilitarians cannot possibly, to my mind, be doubted ; the evidence in its favour is altogether too overwhelming to allow of its being scouted on the score, as Miss Cobbe puts it, "that these doctrines (those enunciated by Darwin in his 'Descent of Man') appear to me simply the most dangerous which have ever been set forth since the days of Mandeville." The question I apprehend is, not whether they are dangerous, but whether they are true. That they were true of the earlier types of man cannot, I think, be called into question, but that at some period of development in that vast "class of intelligences which lies between baboons and philosophers," they have been superseded by something higher, is, to say the least of it, highly probable—or, perhaps, to put it more correctly, that the moral sense originated from utilitarianism has coalesced with that proceeding from a higher and more refined source, and the two, acting together, seem as one. The proof of the truth that is in them may be found at this present day among different races of men with whom customs originally of a utilitarian character—though they have now long lost even this quality—have become engrafted in and interwoven with the very nature of the race, and are deemed to be highly moral, although in effect the very opposite. In a paper of this sort it is impossible to give lengthy instances, but it must be generally admitted that among different races the moral sense admits of different interpretations being placed upon the same action ; and it is therefore obvious that if they all had the same origin, that origin could not have been derived from anything external to the experience ; that it could not have been intuition, or any higher faculty, that would only inculcate an immutable standard of right and wrong ; and that therefore it must have been utilitarianism by which, in different countries, and under different circumstances and conditions, the promptings of self-interest gave different complexions to the same action, and thus it became to be estimated as both moral and immoral by different peoples.

To ascribe what passes for morality among the Dahomeans, with whom murder is a virtue; among the Andamanese, the Fuegians, and others, with whom promiscuous intercourse is perfectly moral; among the Maoris, with whom to steal is, under some circumstances, a virtuous action—to any higher source than to utilitarianism grown into a custom, appears to me the height of absurdity. On the other hand, savage and uncivilized races may be found whose domestic life is in the highest degree moral, as the Zulus, among whom, with the exception of polygamy and the right of the king over life; crimes, such as we regard them, do not exist, and a more honest, truthful, and chaste race is not to be found, as I can affirm from years residence among them. But that this morality does not arise from intuition is proved by the fact that, when they are educated and taught “Bible truths,” they immediately become immoral; and, like the English mistress, who puts into her advertisement, “No Irish need apply,” the Natal mistress says, “No Christian Kaffir need apply,” for when Christianised the men are thieves and the women unchaste.

Good and evil, therefore, as the conceptions of them are formed at various stages of man’s evolution, must evidently have been derived from utilitarianism. “Good,” said a barbarian to a French missionary, “is when I take my enemies’ wives. Evil is when he takes mine.” As Miss Cobbe says, “The man who has no higher sense of goodness than this is as incapable of feeling Divine goodness as a table or a door is incapable of feeling the benevolence of its owner.”

To venture upon a surmise as to the exact period of human development at which the utilitarian conceptions of right and wrong became commingled with, or subsidiary to, those derived from a higher or spiritual source, is, of course, not my purpose here, were it even practicable. The fact of the matter probably is, that the process was a gradational one, and that as the intellectual activity demanded by the increasing spread of what we call civilization enlarged and strengthened the cerebral organs, in an exactly equal degree were the spiritual essences individualised, or, at all events, were enabled to influence the workings of the mind—a supposition which would at the same time account for the growth of the “Religious Element in man” of the Theists. Indeed, so far do I believe this to have been the case, that I do not hesitate to avouch my settled conviction, however much it may startle most, that even at this present day, and among civilized nations, [the spiritual essences in many people are not yet individualised—or, in other words, that many members of both savage and civilized communities are nothing more than animals in human shape.

I have left out of these considerations the theories of the Protestants and the Catholics as too absurd and illogical to admit of ratiocination; because I believe that every rational man who gives his mind fully to the subject, with an earnest desire to arrive at the truth, must come to similar conclusions, although he may not deem it expedient to acknowledge it, believing perhaps that that "depravity" which he has been taught to look upon as inherent in human nature would lead people, if "deprived of the Bible," into all sorts of excesses and immoralities. To such an one I can only say, "Try it;" try to believe in the sublimity of humanity, and that man, even in the lowest phase, and even in that class mentioned in the last paragraph, is, in the words of Andrew Jackson Davis, "a creature of infinite possibilities." Even an animal is easier taught by kindness than severity; even a child is more readily put upon good behaviour through love than through fear. Is it, then, only full-grown men and women, in full possession of their faculties—and aided by the promptings of the etherealised part of their nature—that require to be kept in check by threats of punishment and hopes of reward lest they should break out into the wildest orgies of immorality and wickedness? Away with such a soul-debasing belief!—away, I say, with such a degrading, humiliating conception of the handiwork of the Great Author of the Universe! Go forth into the summer air, and, with the sweet-smelling breeze playing softly on your cheeks, look around at the graceful waving trees, the beautiful multi-coloured flowers, the rippling spray-tossing streams, and the eye-soothing slopes of velvety grass, and then dare to say that they have no purpose, or that that purpose is not good. Look down at the busy ants rushing hither and thither in orderly system, working each for the good of his fellow, without tumult or riotous behaviour, and then remember that they, at all events, require no Bible to keep them from wrong-doing. Place your hand upon your heart and note its beatings, and then try and convince yourself that the Power that set that going and keeps it going did so, and does so, for a purpose, and that that purpose is good. And, finally, look forth upon a throng of your fellow-creatures assembled on a public holiday to enjoy the wonders of the Exhibition, and then dare to say that they are all totally depraved, and without threats would take to smashing everything they saw, and rioting in the profundity of immorality—dare to say that in thus sending them forth into the world God has not a purpose, and that purpose is not good.

After thus endeavouring to show that morality is not of the Bible, and is therefore possible without it, let me ask if the morality of the day

ever was the morality of the Bible? It is frequently asserted that the Bible has "stood the shock of ages," and without endorsing this, I would only point out that, if it be true, it is proof positive that the morality of the time being is not the morality of the Bible; for I opine that no one would venture to assert that what passed for morality five hundred years ago would do so to-day, or that what did duty for it even one hundred years ago would do so now; nay, I even question if any one would aver that the morality of twenty-five years ago would pass muster to-day. If this be so—it will, of course, be understood that I refer to the morality of the masses, and not to the conceptions of genius, which are never accepted by the masses until long after their emanation—it is manifest that the morality of the day is not derived from the Bible, but is altogether independent of it, being in fact the outgrowth of the general volume of knowledge and intellectual development which has been acquired at the period referred to. I will go further than this, and say that if any one, in this our day, in Sydney or London, were to practice the morality of some parts of the Old Testament, he would find himself at issue with the laws of the country; and the conflict between the laws of the country and the laws of God, as illustrated in the Bible, would result in the offender against the former, and the believer in the latter, being relegated to the lock-up to reflect at his leisure on the startling anomaly.

GEORGE LACY.

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FRANCIS W. NEWMAN.

AMONG the glorious band termed infidels by the believers in a religion of magical metamorphosis and incantation, no name stands higher at the present day than that which heads this page. Thomas Carlyle has a wider reputation and a more authoritative position in the literary world; Darwin, Tyndall, Huxley, and Wallace are better known to scientific investigators; Emerson has a grander following of discipleship, and Spencer leads with more decisive sway in the realms of philosophy; but for a pure and unassuming life of fidelity to conscience, and lofty moral and religious teaching, the author of "Phases of Faith," "The Hebrew Monarchy," "The Soul: its Sorrows and Aspirations," and "Theism," has no superior. Many who, like myself, became acquainted with his works more than a quarter of a century ago, would fail in attempting to express the grateful reverence with which he is regarded. With the exception, perhaps, of Theodore Parker's "Discourse of Matters pertaining

to Religion," and Greg's "Creed of Christendom," I know of no treatise in the English language which can so satisfactorily be placed in the hands of a youth struggling to escape from the coils of superstition as "Phases of Faith, or Passages from the History of my Creed," by Francis William Newman.

The name of John Newman, of the London banking firm of Ramsbottom, Newman, and Co., will remain known to English history as that of the father of two men so widely different, yet so distinguished, as John Henry and Francis William. The marked way in which the careers of these two have been concurrent with, and typical of, the religious conflict of the nineteenth century, has frequently been pointed out. Both were too great to find rest in the Established Church groove in which they were placed. Both had spiritual promptings transcending the Rubric and overtopping the Thirty-nine Articles. Both sought ardently, with the whole strength of fervent natures, for truth; but the elder was impelled to look for it in authority born of human organization, the younger in the study of universal law. One brought his doubts to the test of Church dogma: the other to that of Nature. Both felt Protestantism sliding away from them like ice, melted by the heat of their own fervid aspirations; the one was left hanging by the venerable but tattered skirts of the Papacy; the other clinging to science and living present-day inspiration. John Henry has reaped his reward, by being elevated to the rank of a prince of the organization to which he surrendered his soul; the other stands untitled, but approaching that higher life where a Crown of Light and an opening for fresh service, transcending any mundane possibilities, await him.

The Newman of Freedom, born on June 27th, 1805, was educated at a private school at Ealing, and at the age of seventeen was admitted a commoner of Worcester College, Oxford. He passed as a "double first" on taking his B.A. degree four years afterwards, and was made a Fellow of Balliol College. He held this fellowship until 1830, when the time came for him to accept his M.A. degree. But in these years he had been acquiring spiritual progression in such a fashion as to preclude the possibility of further University honours, or the Church preferment which was marked out for him. From the moment he entered Oxford, his mind had been working in the direction of greater spirituality and less slavery to the letter of Scripture and to Church tradition, in religion, than he found manifested by those whom he had been taught to hold in esteem. One of the dogmas which claimed his early attention was that relating to infant baptism. After describing the growth of his opinions on this question in his "Phases of Faith," he has the following remarks, which

are most interesting, as showing the early beginning of that divergence between his views and those of his brother, which has now extended to antipodean dimensions:—

“ Here also, as before, the Evangelical clergy whom I consulted were found by me a broken reed. The clerical friend whom I had known at school wrote kindly to me, but quite declined to solve my doubts; and in other quarters I soon saw that no fresh light was to be got. One person there was at Oxford who might have seemed my natural adviser: his name, character, and religious peculiarities have so been made public property, that I need not shrink to name him—I mean my elder brother, the Rev. John Henry Newman. As a warm-hearted and generous brother, who exercised towards me paternal cares, I esteemed him, and felt a deep gratitude; as a man of various culture and peculiar genius, I admired and was proud of him; but my doctrinal religion prevented my loving him as much as he deserved, and even justified my feeling some distrust of him. He never showed any strong attraction to those whom I regarded as spiritual persons; on the contrary, I thought him stiff and cold towards them. Moreover, soon after his ordination, he had startled and distressed me by adopting the doctrine of baptismal regeneration; and in rapid succession worked out the views which I regarded as full blown “Popery.” I speak of the years 1823-6. It is strange to think that twenty years more had to pass before he learnt the place to which his doctrine belonged.

In the earliest period of my Oxford residence I fell into uneasy collision with him concerning Episcopal powers. I had on one occasion dropt something disrespectful against bishops or a bishop—something which, if it had been said about a clergyman would have passed unnoticed; but my brother checked and reproved me—as I thought very unconstructively—for “wanting reverence towards bishops.” I knew not then, and I know not now, why bishops, *as such*, should be more revered than common clergymen; or clergymen, *as such*, more than common men. In the world I expected pomp, and vain show, and formality, and counterfeits; but of the Church, as Christ’s own kingdom, I demanded reality, and could not digest legal fictions. I saw round me what sort of young men were preparing to be clergymen; I knew the attractions of family “livings” and fellowships, and of a respectable position and undefinable hopes of preferment. I farther knew, that when youths had become clergymen through a great variety of mixed motives, bishops were selected out of these clergy on avowedly political grounds; it therefore amazed me how a man of good sense should be able to set up a duty of religious veneration towards bishops. I was willing to honour a Lord-Bishop as a peer of Parliament; but his office was to me no guarantee of spiritual eminence. To find my brother thus stop my mouth was a puzzle, and impeded all free speech towards him. In fact I very soon left off the attempt at intimate religious intercourse with him, or of asking counsel as of one who could sympathise. We talked, indeed, a great deal on the surface of religious matters, and on some questions I was overpowered, and received a temporary bias from his superior knowledge; but as time went on, and my own intellect ripened, I distinctly felt that his arguments were too fine-drawn and subtle, often elaborately missing the moral points and the main points, to rest on some ecclesiastical fiction; and his conclusion to me was so marvellous and painful, that I constantly thought I had mistaken him. In short he was my senior by a very

few years; nor was there any elder resident at Oxford accessible to me who united all the qualities which I wanted in an adviser. Nothing was left for me but to cast myself on Him who is named Father of Lights, and resolve to follow the lights which He might give, however opposed to my own prejudices, and however I might be condemned by men. This solemn engagement I made in early youth, and neither the frowns nor the grief of my brethren can make me ashamed of it in my manhood." \*

It was in the spirit manifested in these concluding sentences that Francis William set out in his search for truth; it is in this spirit he has abided to the present day. Authority, merely as such, he quietly set at nought. Upon every doctrine presented to his notice, the question with him has been, not "Who formulated it?" but, "Is it true?" tested by comparison with the admitted facts of God's universe. "Is it not," he asks, "historically manifest that *Authority* has been the bane of Christendom?—authority, which, when established as a Church rule, means that we are to prefer sense to conscience—ostensible presumptions to spiritual insight; that we are to subject our mature to our immature convictions—progressive knowledge to some fixed standard in the past. To set up other men's inspiration as our law is to disown that teaching of God to which alone they owed their eminence. Christians were certain to degenerate the moment they began to worship apostles, and books, and church-rules, and precedent, and tradition, and thus to sip at other men's buckets instead of drawing living water from the true fountain—God himself." †

Having travelled far along the road towards spiritual freedom, he found himself, then, in the year 1830, brought face to face with the important question: "Can I subscribe to the bondage of the Church for the sake of worldly advancement?" In some shape or other, and at some portion of his career, this is the question which is presented for decision to every Freethinker, and ever has been, throughout the ages. The World or Conscience? Mammon or God? Woe to those who violate conscience at this stage of growth, but happiness and ever-increasing capacity for usefulness to all who at this supreme moment decide aright, and abide by the dictates of their higher nature.

" 'Tis an assured good  
To seek the noblest; 'tis your only good,  
Now you have seen it; for that higher vision  
Poisons all meaner choice for evermore." ‡

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\* "Phases of Faith," 5th Edition, p. 7.

† "The Soul: its Sorrows and its Aspirations."—8th Edition, p. 161.

‡ George Eliot.

Newman did not hesitate long. He declined to take another degree, resigned his fellowship, and once for all turned his back on the "primrose path," which for him would have led, almost indubitably, to the highest ranks of the Episcopal Bench. It was some time after this before he could rid himself of all the mental fetters which had been heaped upon him in his youth, and he travelled for a while as a sort of "Christian unattached" in connection with a missionary enterprise which had been entered on among the followers of Mahomet. Here is one of his instructive experiences :—

"While we were at Aleppo, I one day got into a religious discourse with a Mahomedan carpenter, which left on me a lasting impression. Among other matters, I was particularly desirous of disabusing him of the current notion of his people, that our gospels are spurious narratives of late date. I found great difficulty of expression, but the man listened to me with much attention, and I was encouraged to exert myself. He waited patiently till I had done, and then spoke to the following effect: 'I will tell you, sir, how the case stands. God has given to you English a great many good gifts. You make fine ships, and sharp penknives, and good cloth and cottons; and you have rich nobles and brave soldiers; and you write and print many learned books (dictionaries and grammars); all this is of God. But there is one thing that God has withheld from you, and has revealed to us, and that is the knowledge of the true religion, by which one may be saved.' When he thus ignored my argument (which was probably quite unintelligible to him), and delivered his simple protest, I was silenced, and at the same time amused. But the more I thought it over, the more instruction I saw in the case. His position towards me was exactly that of an humble [Christian] towards an unbelieving philosopher; nay, that of the early Apostles or Jewish prophets towards the proud, cultivated, worldly-wise, and powerful heathen. This not only showed the vanity of any argument to him, except one purely addressed to his moral and spiritual faculties, but it also indicated to me that Ignorance has its spiritual self-sufficiency as well as Erudition; and that if there is a Pride of Reason, so there is a Pride of Unreason. But though this rested on my memory, it was long before I worked out all the results of that thought."—"Phases of Faith," 5th Edition, p. 32.

Shortly after his return to England came the saddest portion of his career, that dire estrangement from those near and dear to him which Jesus and other religious reformers tell us awaits all who follow the highest promptings of their spiritual nature:—

"The Tractarian movement was just commencing in 1833. My brother was taking a position in which he was bound to show that he could sacrifice private love to ecclesiastical dogma; and, upon learning that I had spoken at some small meetings of religious people (which he interpreted, I believe, to be an assuming of the priest's office), he separated himself entirely from my private friendship and acquaintance. To the public this may have some interest, as indicating the disturbing excitement which animated that cause; but my reason for naming the fact here is solely to exhibit the practical positions into which I myself was thrown. In my brother's conduct there was not a shade of unkindness, and I have not

thought of complaining of it. My distress was naturally great, until I had fully ascertained from him that I had given no personal offence. But the mischief of it went deeper. It practically cut me off from other members of my family, who were living in his house, and whose state of feeling towards me, through separation and my own agitations of mind, I totally mistook."—"Phases of Faith," 5th Ed., p. 34.

This estrangement from his relations and dearest friends went on *pari passu* with his spiritual growth. The disagreement which caused him the greatest pain was with a clergyman to whom he was devotedly attached. "I adored him, and could have given him my right hand or my right eye—anything but my conscience." To be rejected in consequence of his "heresy" by a man of whom he could write in these terms was a sore trial. How it affected him we learn from the following passage in his truthful history :—

"I was in despair, and like a man thunderstruck. I had nothing more to say. Two more letters from the same hand I saw, the latter of which was to threaten some new acquaintances who were kind to me—(persons wholly unknown to him)—that if they did not desist from sheltering me, and break off intercourse, they should, as far as his influence went, themselves everywhere be cut off from Christian communion and recognition. This will suffice to indicate the sort of social persecution through which, after a succession of struggles, I found myself separated from persons whom I had trustingly admired, and on whom I had most counted for union—with whom I had fondly believed myself bound for eternity—of whom some were my previously-intimate friends, while for others, even on slight acquaintance, I would have performed menial offices and thought myself honoured—whom I still looked upon as the blessed and excellent of the earth, and the special favourites of heaven—whose company (though oftentimes they were considerably my inferiors, either in rank or in knowledge and cultivation) I would have chosen in preference to that of nobles—whom I loved solely because I thought them to love God, and of whom I asked nothing but that they would admit me as the meanest and most frail of disciples. My heart was ready to break : I wished for a woman's soul, that I might weep in floods. Oh, Dogma! Dogma! how dost thou trample under foot love, truth, conscience, justice! Was ever a Moloch worse than thou? Burn me at the stake; then Christ will receive me, and saints beyond the grave will love me, though the saints here know me not. But now I am alone in the world; I can trust no one. The new acquaintances who barely tolerate me, and old friends whom reports have not reached—if such there be—may turn against me with animosity to-morrow, as those have done from whom I could least have imagined it. Where is union? Where is the Church which was to convert the heathen?—"Phases of Faith," 5th Ed., p. 36.

It took Newman many years to work himself clear of the "faith at second hand" with which he had been inoculated in youth, and out into the open presence of God in the grand domain of Nature. But at last he was free, and in the year 1850 gave to the world, for the benefit of his race, that history of his experiences to which I have made frequent reference. It was followed by other publications of similar tendency,

and by a vast array of scientific, historical, and reformatory treatises, sufficient of themselves to make a brilliant reputation. In the year 1846 he was appointed Latin Professor in University College, London, a position he resigned in 1863. He is still a voluminous contributor to the best periodical literature of the day, and takes an active interest in all movements for the amelioration of the conditions surrounding his less fortunate fellow-creatures. That he has been hugely misrepresented, abused, and vilified by Christian antagonists, is but to say, in other words, that he is a faithful reformer, and an outspoken worshipper of his highest ideal of Truth, Wisdom, and Love. Few have attempted to answer his arguments; multitudes have condemned the fashion of their presentation, and assailed their presenter. The correctness of the following observations, which he advances in the preface to the second edition of his "History of the Hebrew Monarchy," will be recognised by all who attempt, at however great a distance, to follow in his footsteps:—

"In opposing and exposing notions which other people hold sacred, it is perfectly impossible to please them as to *the mode*. They always persuade themselves that it is the mode which they dislike, but it is really the substance of the thing. Speak in plain, simple, true words, and it is called coarse, rude, unfeeling, irreverent; speak by gentle allusion, or say only half of what you might say, and it is called a sarcasm or a sneer, and is probably derided also as tame and weak. Deal with the argument gravely and strongly, and you are thought overbearing and hard; treat it lightly (if it seem to be light in itself), and you are called flippant, contemptuous, superficial. I very much regret this universal tendency of idolators to defend themselves by arbitrary querulousness; for they hereby tend to produce total want of sympathy with their weakness. There is such an offence as unfeeling flippancy, which sees only evil, and is blind to good. I desire to avoid it. I would not wilfully give needless pain in refuting error, any more than would a humane surgeon in cutting off a limb. But the work of refuting error is strictly necessary if truth is to be advanced. The negative side of every question is as essential to truth as the shadows in a picture; and whatever outcry people make against 'negative teaching,' it is certain that the apostles and prophets, whom they admire, were emphatically idol-breakers in their own day, and often very harsh ones. I cannot submit to treat as sacred that which I discern to be a hurtful superstition; nor do I choose to reason elaborately against it, if it rests on no reasons at all, or utterly absurd ones. If anybody is wounded by plain and true statements, I am sorry for his pain, but I cannot help it. Let him learn to love Truth, as such, better than his own opinions; and his soreness will rapidly disappear."

Newman belongs essentially to that class of great men to which posterity, and not contemporaries, are destined to do justice. In honouring him, therefore, however poorly and inadequately, the Freethinkers of Sydney are anticipating the verdict of the future, and rising above the fashionable party-cries of their epoch. While the multitude around

them are flinging up their caps for Caiaphas, they raise a feeble but penetrating voice on behalf of one whom the crowd despise. While the million huzzahs are being roared in wonder at the sky-rocket, they point with quivering finger and a faint hosanna to the steadfast splendour of the star beyond.

CHARLES BRIGHT.

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### THE ANTIQUITY OF MESMERISM.

MISAPPLIED and very thoughtlessly used are many of the adages with which our language is embellished ; but we do not think we shall have to plead guilty to such a charge if, in selecting the maxim, "As old as the hills," we state that it would be a very appropriate one in connection with much we see around us in science, and perhaps not more so than to mesmerism. For, although Mesmer is often accredited with being the discoverer of animal magnetism, yet he was nothing more nor less than a reviver of its laws and practice, which, to a very great extent, had by his time been lost and fallen into disuse. Doubtless he did much to renovate and reintroduce this noble science for the benefit of mankind ; but that in so doing he sadly intermixed many absurd formulas, invocations, and a great deal of superstitious nonsense, cannot be denied. It is true that in 1778 Mesmer made a great noise and attracted much attention by his experiments in Paris ; but it must not be forgotten that long before his time others had done as much, if not a vast deal more. About the year 1658, one named Greatrakes, a magistrate for the county of Cork, in Ireland, proved that he had remarkable power as a magnetizer. He cured thousands of sick people with his own hands, and never received any reward, but worked only in the purest spirit of benevolence ; and in his zeal for doing good and the alleviation of human suffering he travelled all over the country seeking the most troublesome and obstinate cases of disease. The Bishop of Derry declared that he himself had witnessed cases of the blind and the deaf both being cured, and that oftentimes he had seen "pain drawn out at some distant part, grievous sores of many months' date in a few days healed, obstructions disappear, and stoppages removed and cancerous knots in the breast dissolved," and all by the magnetic manipulations of this extraordinary man. Such, indeed, was the stir created throughout the country, that even the Royal Society took the matter up, and after fully investigating it, published some of his cures, accounting for them "by a sanitive contagion in Mr.

Greatrakes' body, which had an antipathy to some particular diseases, and not to others." In following the trail of the antiquity of mesmerism we can go still further; for the practice of animal magnetism is of such ancient existence that we might almost trace back its footsteps to the margin of the flood, and in so doing we should discover that mesmeric phenomena have played, in most parts of the world, a very important part in all ceremonial rites of pagan religion. Turning to ancient Greece, we have only to search her classics, and there we have frequent allusion made to the sanitive and mystic power of the human hand. Solon, who lived 594 years before Christ, tells us:—" Oftentimes great suffering arises from trifling pain, which cannot be allayed by the administration of soothing medicines, but touching with the hands the sufferer from malignant and obstinate diseases, you immediately restore him to health." Again, there is a passage of Æschylus, who flourished 500 B.C., where Io is told by Prometheus that notwithstanding all her sufferings, and the many fruitless journeys she has made to physicians living far and wide apart, she will at last find relief by applying to one Zeus, at the mouth of the Nile: "There Zeus will restore you, stroking you with his gentle hand, and simply touching you." The old Greek father of physic, Asclepiades, practised to a great extent *frictions* with the hand for the purpose of inducing sleep in curing *frenzy* and *insanity*. This we have on the good authority of Celsus, the Roman physician, who shows clearly that animal magnetism was the means employed as the curative agent, for he adds, "by too much friction there was danger of inducing sleep." Perhaps we could advance no better proof that the priests of pagan Rome practised magnetism, than that the poets and philosophers constantly speak of *passes*, and stroking the body to induce sleep and allay pain. In Plautus we find a passage in his *Amphytrion*, Act 1, where Mercury and Sosia are introduced. Mercury appears to be troubled greatly as to how to get rid of Sosia, whether by giving him a good thrashing or putting him to sleep. "What if I should put him to sleep by *long passes*?" "You will save my life," replies Sosia, "for I have not slept these last three nights." In a future paper, which we intend to devote to the practical part of mesmerism, we shall show that it is the *long pass*, as it is still technically called, that is used to produce sleep—that the short, horizontal, oblique, and various other passes are used for very different purposes.

Virgil speaks of a priest who had very great power in soothing serpents to sleep, and who afterwards healed those who had been bitten by them: "Moreover the brave Umbro, a priest who was wont, both by in-

cantation and *by the hand*, to spread sleep on the race of vipers, making them breathe heavily, and soothed their rage ; also by his skill he healed their bites."

In every land mesmerism has, without doubt, been practised in some form or other, and that for many ages. In pushing forward our research, if we even penetrate into the history of Egypt and examine that wonderful race, and perhaps most ancient of all nations—the Egyptians—there we shall discover hieroglyphical paintings of human figures in mesmeric positions, and, what is very remarkable, holding the first three fingers extended, and the others bent under the hand—a powerful method of magnetising, by the way, to which we shall have to allude hereafter when treating of the practice of magnetism. Warburton, in the *Crescent and the Cross*, says, "Magnetism appears to have been well understood by the Egyptian hierarchy, not only from some of the effects we find recorded, but in one of the chambers, whose hieroglyphics are devoted to medical subjects, we find a priest in the act of mesmerizing. . . . The patient is seated in a chair, while the operator describes the mesmeric passes, and an attendant waits behind to support the head, when it has bowed in the mysterious sleep." There can be no doubt but that the temple of Isis was consecrated by the Egyptians principally for the cure of diseases by magnetism. History, hieroglyphics, and monuments all agree in testifying to this. Diodorus tells us how they claimed for the goddess numerous cures through sleep, and that standing by the sick *in sleep* she relieved their disorders, and "those who attended to her were cured beyond all expectation. Multitudes despaired of by physicians were saved by her ; and many who had entirely lost the use of their organs of sight, or other parts of the body, having recourse to the goddess, were perfectly restored." Search where we may, this force—magnetism—has been universally acknowledged and practised by all tribes and nations. Even the gods of India have been carved in mesmeric postures. Of the four arms and eight hands given to the god Vishnu, two arms and their hands are raised, the *thumb and two adjoining fingers* of which are *extended*, the two other fingers being bent, and each of the hands is surrounded by a *flame* representing the odylie light which emanates and surrounds the hands of a good operator when he is energetically engaged at work, and is frequently seen by those near who may be watching the mesmeric sitting. History relates that Pythagoras, who flourished five centuries before Christ, would often, for the instruction of those around him, exhibit his magnetic influence, which was very great over the lower animals. On one occasion he is said to

have tamed a furious bear in a very short space of time ; on another, some fresh beans having been placed before a hungry ox, he prevented him from eating them ; and on another, perceiving an eagle soaring forth, he stopped it in its flight by the magnetic power of his hand and eye. We have endeavoured to show that, so far from mesmerism being but a science of yesterday, it enjoys the double reputation of being very old and having stood the test of ages ; indeed we insist that it is the oldest science extant, and that nothing was practised as a science prior to it. Magnetism, as such, then, was the keystone of medicine or the success of the physician, and it was the pillar of religion, or the power of the priest ; and surely we must one and all admit that these only can lay any claim to the greatest antiquity of having practised the science which is intimately connected with the profession they follow. Now, mark well what such an authority as Father Rebold says :—“ The occult science, designated by the ancient priests under the name of regenerating fire, is that which, at the present day, is known as *animal magnetism*—a science that for more than three thousand years was the peculiar possession of the Indian and Egyptian priesthood, into the knowledge of which Moses was initiated at Heliopolis when he was educated, and Jesus, among the Essenian priests of Egypt or Judea, and by which these two great reformers, particularly the latter, wrought many of the miracles mentioned in Scripture.

Whilst reflecting upon this, it is necessary we should bear in mind that it was not only the curative or medical application of magnetism which engaged the attention of the ancients, and which was so well known and successfully used ; but all its phenomena were equally well studied, including *clairvoyance*, and even the still higher psychological degree—*extasis*. Furthermore, as might have been expected, the study of magnetism with such a people necessarily introduced a knowledge of its sister-science—*magic*, and, of course, as a consequence, they then discovered the use of the magnetic magic mirror—the *Urim and Thummim* of Scripture. Of this occult power—*magic*, we shall have to say something hereafter ; meanwhile, suffice it to know that a knowledge of it can only be attained by studying the higher phenomena of mesmerism. Armed with such powers as these, the ancients were equal to much that has been ascribed to them, and the student of occult science will not, therefore, be surprised to find that in all history, nine-tenths of that which has generally been put down to the impossible and fabulous can be easily and readily accounted for on these premises.

Claiming, then, that magnetism is at the least over three thousand

years old, or, as we started by asserting, nearly "as old as the hills," we shall now retrace our steps, and coming back to the time of biblical history, we shall find very many passages in the Bible illustrative of mesmeric phenomena; but the brief review of a few must here suffice, although, if time and space permitted, many more might be adduced. Let us analyze the following:—"But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, 'Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand' (or, as in the margin, *move it up and down*) 'over the place, and recover the leper.'" Here, Naaman evidently expected that the prophet would move his hand up and down over the place, and as a necessary adjunct, call upon his God before making the passes. This gives us some insight into pagan ceremonial. Doubtless he had been accustomed to see his own priests call upon their gods, and oftentimes make passes in vain. He was naturally "wroth" when told by the prophet to wash in a river, for he thought all rivers were alike as regards their curative effect, but he *knew* all hands were not, and thus it was he was led to try the prophet solely for the purpose of seeing whether he possessed more magnetic power than the priests of his own neighbourhood. A powerful mesmeric operation is recorded of Elisha in restoring to life the Shunammite's son, who had probably received a sunstroke whilst in the field with the reapers. He lay upon the child, putting "his mouth upon his mouth," and the result was the child "waxed warm," or regained magnetic electricity. But "then he returned and walked in the house to and fro," after which he repeated the same process of magnetizing, and the child opened its eyes."

The mesmerist will here observe, that in "walking in the house to and fro," he was simply doing what all operators are obliged to do in cases calling for immediate and powerful application of magnetism—that, is recharging his brain and body with magnetism or odyllic fluid. Indeed, in the 4th chap. of Second of Kings, 34th and 35th verses, we have a splendid illustration of a mesmeric operation; and *apropos* to this we would refer the thoughtful student to the first four verses of the 1st chap. 1st Book of Kings, wherein it will be seen that the ancients were not ignorant of the laws of polarity, or positive and negative forces, even in their application to lengthening life. Turning to the New Testament, we find that they brought unto Christ "those that were sick with divers diseases, and he *laid his hands* on every one of them and healed them." In the case of the woman who touched the hem of his garment, and so became whole, he "perceived that *virtue* had gone out of him." The magnetizer

frequently feels the force leave him, more particularly as the patient gains strength by it. The leper said, "Lord, if thou WILT, thou canst make me clean." Jesus stretched forth his *hand* and *touched* him, and said I WILL, be thou clean, and his leprosy was cleansed." Enough for the antiquity of mesmerism; in a future paper we hope to show its utility.

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## SCIENCE THE SAFEGUARD OF RELIGION.

### PART I.

A WRITER in the first number of this magazine quotes the following observation from Professor Huxley: whether it was uttered *apropos* to the Christian's belief or not I cannot say, but I think it is very unlikely: "Scientific men have an awkward habit of believing nothing unless there is evidence for it, and they have a way of looking upon belief which is not based upon evidence, not only as illogical, but as immoral."

This, as I take it, as applied to religion, is what is termed free-thought. Freethinkers are, to use the words of one of their supporters, "those who think for themselves, undeterred by denunciations of Church or State, priest or legislator, Bible or statute," and those who, having no convictions on the subject of religion, blindly follow first this leader and then that. They have thus no particular creed and no fixed belief. To-day they pin their faith to one hypothesis which pleases them by its plausibility, to-morrow they reject it for what they consider a more reasonable theory. As the passion for travel impels a man to roam from shore to shore without any fixed aim in view, so the enthusiasm of speculation urges the Freethinker to traverse the entire circuit of opinions, and still leaves him insatiate of novelty. Like the men of Athens, he spends his time "in nothing else but to tell or to hear some new thing." Freethought in its best aspect can only be looked upon as the impetus of a too highly-wrought intellectual activity, which carries its victim on from system to system; each further from the truths he has denounced, till he loses himself in the dark void of infidelity. Christianity does not suit him; not only does it enjoin the practice of self-denial, forgiveness of injuries, and other irksome virtues, but being a religion based entirely upon record and its interpretation, it affords no field for intellectual enterprise. The Christian religion, unlike human science, was given to

man in a finished form, to be learned, and not to be improved. Advanced thought is fruitlessly occupied in attempting to amend it, and its votaries, puffed up with high-flown ideas of intellectual progress, are too proud to accept a plain, intelligible statement of facts, much more to study the Scriptures with a view to obtain practical instruction from them. Their ideas are vague and inarticulate, and they reject the Bible, not so much because they are averse to its truths, but because the mistiness of their sentiments abhors whatever is distinct, definite, and fixed. Science being the only God at whose shrine Freethinkers are willing to bow, they are slow to accept any conclusion which is not based upon scientific discovery. As well try to persuade the mole who grubs in darkness beneath the earth that the succulent bulb on which he feeds is but the root of a tree which opens into a glorious world of sunshine and splendour, as to convince the scientist of the truth of any phenomena which he cannot investigate to his own satisfaction.

It is assumed by Freethinkers that the rejection of the Bible is a necessary consequence of modern scientific research—that the records it contains are at variance with facts, and opposed to the natural order of things as revealed to us by modern discoveries.

Now, as I believe, on the other hand, that the Bible is the written Word of God, and as such, to be implicitly believed and studied with reverence, and that

“ Its bright and steadfast rays  
Shall prove no false and treacherous light to lure,  
But a safe beacon, leading through the gloom  
Unto the haven sure ;”

I will endeavour to show, not only that human science, so far as it goes, in no way contradicts, but that it confirms with unerring accuracy, the pages of Scripture, and that the more we investigate the works of the Almighty, the more shall we find them in close harmony with His Word. I should have been glad to see some abler pen employed in this task, but, *faute de mieux*, I feel compelled to come forward and give some reasons for the faith that is in me. I will therefore meet the Bible opponents on their own ground—that of scientific discovery ; and as the Mosaic history of the creation is usually the target at which Freethinkers hurl their weapons of ridicule and defiance, I will confine myself in this article to a comparison of that history as given in the first chapter of Genesis with the history of the same work recorded in the bosom of the earth, page by page, since it first came into existence. It is important that we should commence the Scriptures with confidence, for if the first page of the Bible puts forth an uncertain sound-

in what part of it shall we place any reliance? The retrospect I am about to take will not be without interest to the general reader. It will of course be understood that I am only giving the opinions of the most advanced authorities on the subject.

We read that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; and the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep."

Now, it is believed by all antiquarians that in the beginning this planet was a large mass of molten igneous matter. Its form, as we can prove, is an ellipsoid—an ellipsoid of revolution; and it is affirmed by various eminent authorities—Humboldt amongst others—that its present geometrical form reveals its earlier condition. The difference between the equatorial and polar diameters is 26 miles; and this, it is affirmed, is precisely the figure which a large mass like the earth, of similar consistency, and revolving with the same velocity, would assume.

Then, as to the internal heat, this is no longer a question of theory: it has been proved *ad demonstrandum*. In the first place we have volcanoes and burning mountains belching forth their molten contents through fissures in the earth in various places, besides hot springs in different countries; and we have proved by actual experiment that the deeper we penetrate the earth the hotter it becomes, so that the depth of a shaft may be ascertained by its temperature. In some of the deep borings for artesian wells, calculations have been made which go to show that for every 90 feet of sinking we get an additional degree of heat. This would give about  $56^{\circ}$  in the mile, so that if we could sink to that depth we should find a temperature of  $105^{\circ}$ . Reasoning by analogy, we conclude that the heat is greatest in the centre of the globe.

The conclusion, then, to which science has arrived from these premises, is that this large mass of igneous matter, becoming cooled by radiation into space, a hard external crust was formed, which we have found to be of granite formation, *i.e.*, granite mixed with various other rocks and metals. Granite, as we know, is the fundamental or bed rock, no other rock having been found to underlie it.

This external crust having been formed by refrigeration, the process of construction then commenced by the washing away of the detritus from its unequal surface into the various hollows and valleys, and the formation in the course of long ages of the sedimentary rocks, which are now estimated by geologists to comprise a depth of 20 miles. These sedimentary rocks have been deposited in regular layers, and it is sufficient to say that a knowledge of the successive order of these formations is one of the first principles of the science. It is estimated that the

time occupied in their deposition cannot have been less than five millions of years. The giant power in the centre of the earth—fire—has, by means of volcanic disturbances, upheaved in many portions of our globe the original granite crust, together with the various superincumbent strata, so that the edges of the different stratified rocks have been accessible to the scientific explorer. The fossils discovered in these rocks, now distributed among the various museums throughout the civilized world, will be found so many links in the strong chain of testimony which science offers in support of Bible truth.

“And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

In the various works into which I have dipped in getting up this subject, I have found very few comments upon this passage; but one writer, Dr. Causland, gives a beautiful interpretation of it, which seems to me to be borne out by the use of a similar figure of speech in other parts of the Bible. He describes it as the first act of Almighty God in the creation of life—the pouring of vitality upon the waters. When “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,” then life first started into existence.

This is also the teaching of science, as I shall proceed to show. During the long ages which were occupied in the deposition of the Laurentian and lower system of sedimentary rocks, which are supposed to reach a depth or thickness of about five miles, no organic life existed. But, towards the close of that system and the commencement of the next or Cambrian system of rocks, a careful investigation of the formations of that era showed that a small foraminifer or coral insect had sprung into existence—the first and lowest order of animal life. “The Spirit of God had moved over the face of the waters,” and life had commenced to glimmer feebly in the ocean depths, and for long years the only tenants of the vast watery waste were lowly zoophytes and submarine insects of this order. The interpretation of the above passage receives confirmation from the employment of similar expressions in other parts of the Scriptures. Thus, in the Psalms we read: “Thou sentest forth Thy Spirit, and they were created;” and again, in the Book of Job, “By His Spirit He hath garnished the earth.”

Thus, life had commenced, but as yet the Divine command had not gone forth—“Let there be light.”

And here again science confirms the Scripture record, by proving that the lowly submarine insects created up to this period *were born without organs of vision.*

But this was to follow:—

“And God said: ‘Let there be light.’ And there was light. And

God saw the light, that it was good. And God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And the evening and the morning were the first day."

All this time the earth was under water, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. Thick gaseous vapours, arising from the heated globe, hung over the waters and excluded the light. But now a dim, uncertain ray penetrated them, and while the Cambrian system of rocks was being deposited, the submarine animals, which increased in number and variety, were all *born with organs of sight and hearing*. The Almighty had said: "Let there be light," and then provision was made for the enjoyment of that blessing. But it was not until the fourth day that the sun was to shed its direct rays upon the earth.

Thus terminated the first day or era of creation. It commenced with the creation of heaven and earth, invisible and undeveloped, shrouded in obscurity, and devoid of animal life, and it ended with the beginning of animal life and the introduction of light into the globe.

This was the first day, or era, for the word "day" is evidently not intended to represent the limited period of twenty-four hours. To say that six of our days only were meant would be to give a strained interpretation of the word, not warranted by the context. For although it would have been quite possible for the Almighty to create in one moment of time a world fit for the habitation of man, the Scripture narrative shows that such a supposition is untenable. Eve was created on the sixth day; yet, before that, Adam was created, a garden was prepared for him, and all the animals were passed in review before him, and received their names, which to a being possessed only of human faculties would have been an impossible task. On the other hand, the history becomes perfectly intelligible if we take the word in its extended sense—in the sense in which it is used in many languages, and throughout the Bible—as an indefinite period of time, representing in this case one-sixth portion of the time occupied in creation.

Thus we read: "The day of the Lord;" "The day of God's wrath;" "The night is passed, and the day is at hand;" "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day;" "And in that day the deaf shall hear the words of this Book, and out of darkness and obscurity the eyes of the blind shall see." The Prophet Amos says: "For the days are coming that I will send forth a famine into the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the word of the Lord. \* \* \* In that day the fair virgins and the young men shall faint for thirst." In the 2nd chapter of Genesis, too, Moses himself uses the word in a similar sense, for he says: "These are the

generations of the heavens and the earth, when they were created, in the day that the Lord created the earth and the heavens, &c.”

The evening and the morning do not, in fact, constitute a day, but a night, according to the division of time given in the Mosaic record. The Jews computed their days from sunset to sunset.

Again, the words “evening and morning” are used to denote the conclusion of each day except the seventh, where they are not used; the inference being that the seventh day or era is not yet completed. The original Hebrew, literally translated, runs thus:—“Then evening was, then morning was, day one,” which seems rather to convey the idea of a succession of seasons than one day. Nor would it have been consistent with the harmony and regularity which had characterized all God’s works to destroy whole races of animals admittedly in existence, in order to recreate them in a single day of twenty-four hours. Man was then commanded to divide his time into seven portions, and to commemorate the great work of creation by keeping not only the seventh day as a day of rest, but also the seventh year.

“Six years shalt thou sow thy ground, and gather the corn thereof, but the seventh year thou shalt let it alone, and suffer it to rest, that the poor of thy people may eat whatsoever shall be left, &c.”

The word was, then, evidently used in its extended sense; and the history of the creation was probably conveyed to Moses in the usual way in which Divine communications were conveyed, by a vision, or a series of visions, each occupying the intermediate period between the evening and the morning, *i.e.*, the night, just in the same way as occurrences of past years often pass before us in review in the short space of a few minutes, in a vision or dream.

Thus, in six visions, each vision representing one-sixth portion of the period occupied in the creation of the world, the Almighty gave to Moses a complete and faithful epitome of this great work, to be recorded by him for the benefit of mankind. A fuller explanation of His grand celestial ideas would have been more than the mind of a mere human being could receive or his memory retain.

That this was the case, and that Moses was divinely inspired, is sufficiently shown by the miraculous preservation of the record itself, when every other record contemporaneous with it—whether sacred or profane—has perished. The Mosaic narrative stands alone in the early history of the world’s creation.

It is clear, too, that Moses could have obtained this exact though brief history from no human source. Scientists of his day could not have informed him that the earth was originally “without form, and

void:" that the watery age had been succeeded by a vegetable age, then by an age of reptiles, to be followed by the creation of birds and beasts and herbs for the use of man; and that, lastly, man had been placed upon the earth to be the lord of all created beings. In those days, simple, unquestioning belief in God's Word took the place of "advanced thought," and the cloud of witnesses which science has since unfolded were absent when he penned this history.

CHAS. H. BARLEE.

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### CHARLES BRIGHT.

MR. CHARLES BRIGHT, who is now so well known in the Australian colonies and New Zealand as a lecturer on subjects connected with religious and social reform, Rationalism, and Spiritualism, is a native of Doncaster, Yorkshire, where he was born on the 16th February, 1832. He was educated in Doncaster and Liverpool, where his family removed when he was eleven years of age. Mr. Bright was for some years in a merchant's office in the latter place, but having studied shorthand under Mr. Henry Pitman, the brother of the inventor of phonography, Mr. Bright subsequently became connected with the Press. Living in Manchester for a year or two, he was an active member of the local Athenæum. Mr. Bright left England for Australia in the year 1853, in the steamer *Great Britain*, and, on his arrival in Melbourne, formed one of a party bound for the Ballarat goldfields, the great centre of attraction at that time, in Victoria. Returning to Melbourne in the middle of 1854, he was appointed on the reporting staff of the *Argus*, with which journal he was connected, in various capacities, for more than twenty years. He was, for five years, editor of one of the weekly newspapers which preceded the *Australasian* under the *Argus* proprietary—viz., *The Examiner*—and he also edited *Melbourne Punch* during three years, when it was the property of Messrs. Kelly and Aspinall. At the end of 1866 Mr. Bright was appointed secretary in Australia to the London and Lancashire Insurance Company, which position he held for more than eight years, only resigning it when he had resolved on devoting himself to the lecture platform. During the whole of this period, however, he contributed largely to the leading columns of the *Argus*, *Australasian*, *Age*, *Leader*, and other newspapers.

In the latter part of the year 1869 the subject of Spiritualism came to be generally discussed in Melbourne, owing mainly to the lectures delivered by Mr. B. S. Nayler, a gentleman of magnificent literary attainments, fine elocutionary powers, and, although upwards of seventy-five years of age at the time, immense energy and vigour. Mr. Bright was requested to write a series of descriptive articles on the subject in the *Argus*, and deemed it necessary, prior to doing so, that he should know something about it. He had already spoken against it, and ridiculed it in debates at the Melbourne Eclectic Association, but found now, as he came to study it deeply, that it was a very different and much more important matter than he had pre-supposed. The result was a series of papers in the *Argus*, giving a *resumé* of the *rationale* of Spiritualism, and a review of the Harmonial Philosophy of Andrew Jackson Davis, together with an account of the rise and development of the new movement in America. These articles were transferred to the columns of the *Australasian* and other journals, and subsequently published in pamphlet form under the *nom de plume* of "Epsilon." Mr. Bright continued his researches into Spiritualism under the guidance of Mr. Nayler, until he became thoroughly convinced of the fact that what we term "death" is but a change in the conditions of existence. When Mr. Charles Foster, the marvellous American medium, visited Australia, he brought a letter of introduction to Mr. Bright from an old friend, Mr. Henry Edwards, the well-known actor and entomologist; and during Mr. Foster's five weeks' stay in Melbourne Mr. Bright enjoyed a rare opportunity of studying the phenomena attaching to Spiritual mediumship, of which he took full advantage.

It was at the beginning of 1872 that the subject of this sketch was first prominently known in Melbourne as a Freethought lecturer. He was a member of the committee of the Unitarian Church at the time when the late Rev. Mr. Higginson became too ill to continue his ministrations. In order to prevent the church from being closed, four members undertook to deliver, in rotation, Sunday lectures after service. These were Messrs. James Smith, H. G. Turner, John Ross, and Charles Bright. The pulpit was accordingly removed, a platform substituted, and Mr. Bright, on the second Sunday morning in January, delivered the opening lecture, Mr. Smith occupying the platform in the evening. The new arrangement was eminently successful, and the church was crowded. During that and the following year Mr. Bright lectured not only at the Unitarian Church, but at the Masonic Hall for the Spiritualistic Association, and at the Trades Hall for the Free Discussion Society.

Early in 1875 he was waited on by a deputation from the committee

of the Melbourne Spiritualists' Association, requesting him to deliver a course of thirteen Sunday evening lectures at the Temperance Hall, a large building capable of accommodating twelve or fifteen hundred people. This series proved immensely successful. Although Mr. Bright then wrote his lectures out and read them from the MS., crowds were attracted, and the sitting accommodation of the hall was taxed to the uttermost. It was in the middle of this year that Mr. Bright resigned his position as secretary to the London and Lancashire Insurance Company, receiving very flattering testimonials from both the English and Australian Boards of Directors. He subsequently lectured at the Town Hall, the Princess' Theatre, and the Opera House in Melbourne, to very large and enthusiastic audiences.

At the commencement of 1876, Mr. Bright was invited to visit Dunedin, New Zealand. Here a committee was formed, and, as no large building was available, the vast canvas erection known as Wilson's Circus, was secured for Sunday evenings. This place, which seated 3000 people, was crammed each Sunday evening during the month it remained in Dunedin. Mr. Bright afterwards visited the other towns of New Zealand, and after a short tour in this colony and Queensland, returned to fulfil a lengthy engagement in Otago. He was now fairly launched on a career which he is not likely to relinquish so long as health, strength, and capacity are granted him.

In January of last year, at the conclusion of a course of lectures extending over twelve months in Dunedin, a controversy arose in the papers between Mr. Bright and the Rev. M. W. Green, Minister of the Christian Disciples, which culminated in a public debate occupying four evenings. In the committee appointed to decide upon the question for discussion, the Attorney-General of New Zealand (the Hon. Robert Stout) acted on behalf of Mr. Bright, and in effect defined the terms of debate. The subject to be considered was thus stated:—"The Divine Origin of Christianity," accepting the following definition of terms:—1. By 'Divine origin,' it is understood to be of Divine origin in the sense in which no other religion is. 2. In the term 'Christianity,' it is understood that there are included the Deity of Jesus, and his death as an atonement for man's sin." This debate caused the greatest excitement in Dunedin. The Queen's Theatre, where it was held, was crowded with ladies and gentlemen from floor to ceiling, over 6000 admission tickets being issued. The entrance fee was fixed at the uniform charge of sixpence to all parts of the house, and £160 were taken; the proceeds, after paying for the theatre and advertising, were handed over to the local Benevolent Asylum. The debate was published, and is still obtainable;

it is therefore not necessary for me to animadvert upon the conclusions that were arrived at.

Mr. Bright's present visit to Sydney commenced in April last, since which time he has occupied the stage of the Theatre Royal each Sunday evening, lecturing to very large, intelligent, and appreciative audiences. He has also delivered addresses on various occasions for the benefit of the Psychological Society and the Progressive Lyceum. For the information of country readers and others, I may say in regard to Mr. Bright's lecturing that it is marked by great force, earnestness, and accuracy. The lectures are delivered freely, without MS., and have been powerful in awakening the slumbering reason in many an accidental hearer. Instances have come to my knowledge wherein much good has been done by Mr. Bright's pitiless logic and his ceaseless efforts to clear away the cobwebs of superstition surrounding the eternal truths manifested in nature.

That this earnest reformer may be long spared to continue the good work which he has thus far so ably and unweariedly carried on, will doubtless be the sincere prayer of all those who have had the privilege of attending the lectures given by him in the Australian colonies and New Zealand.

CHAS. CAVENAGH.

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### AUDI ALTERAM PARTEM.

I SHALL not dispute the wisdom which decided upon giving insertion, in the first issue of this magazine, to the article headed, "Is Spiritualism a Delusion?" but I cannot avoid doubting the wisdom of the writer in attempting to grapple with a subject of which he so evidently knows nothing. At the same time he is certainly in earnest, and desirous of the truth, and we are therefore bound to accord him respect, especially as he writes in a tone of goodwill to the cause, and carefully avoids the abuse which non-believers are so apt to lavish upon believers in Spiritualism.

Mr. Lennan will therefore, I hope, do me the justice to believe that I am actuated by no illwill towards him in writing this paper, but that I am merely desirous of affording the readers of *Freethought* an opportunity for hearing a reply to his article.

He begins by saying that Spiritualists have not yet decided whether to call Spiritualism a science or a religion. This is a mistake. All

Spiritualists are agreed that religion has nothing to do with the question, which is simply whether spirits can and do communicate with mortals, and which, being affirmed, constitutes a man a Spiritualist, no matter what his religious belief may be.

He tells us that, sitting in circle, others have said they saw or heard things which he could not hear or see, and that he had come to the conclusion that they were deluded. Is this just? Because his spiritual faculties are dormant, he doubts their existence.

He complains of the misstatements made by spirits, and adds, "I cannot imagine spirits telling lies, or that spirits living in the presence of God would do wrong." Mr. Lennan herein shows how little he has comprehended the teachings of Spiritualism as to the condition of man in the next world. God being omnipresent, we live in his presence as much as spirits do, or can do; and spirits, being but men divested of the flesh, are open to error and wrong-doing even as we are. If Mr. Lennan is an orthodox Christian, he will probably admit that even the devil once "dwelt in the presence of God," and was good—yet he rebelled, and with him one-third of the angels. Adam and Eve were created "good," yet they fell. It does not do for a Christian to try that line of argument.

Mr. Lennan urges that there can be no progression if spirits lie. Now, in the first place, it is not pretended that progression begins at once, for that would imply that there is no after-punishment for sin, as happiness must begin to be felt by any spirit or man who knows that he is progressing in virtue. Then, too, there are different grades of sin, and spirits who have got away from the propensities to kill or steal may still regard lying as no crime—or rather think nothing at all about it, as nine out of every ten liars do on earth. But, above all, it must be remembered that a large proportion of the supposed spiritual communications emanate merely from the medium, and that everything that comes is more or less tinged by the idiosyncracies of the instrument through which it is made known.

Mr. Lennan next wants to know, "How can Spiritualists disprove the divinity of Jesus Christ?" Spiritualists, as such, attempt nothing of the sort, for millions of their number are still orthodox Christians, as witness the Howitts, Halls, and others. Freethinking Spiritualists disprove the divinity of Christ, as any man can do who will allow his reason fair play. But let Mr. Lennan remember that it is not the Freethinker's business to prove a negative, but to confute the arguments of those who assert Christ's divinity. As a matter of fact, Christians never do this, being content to *believe* without asking reasons.

He goes on to say that Spiritualism, having made Jesus a mere

man (which is *not* the work of Spiritualists, as aforesaid), now proceeds to "take away the fear of a dread hereafter from mankind." If this means that the orthodox hell is abolished, he is right; but he should remember that while Christianity teaches that a villain of the deepest dye can escape the consequences of his misdeeds, and be rewarded even as the most just of men, by a simple act of faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ, Spiritualism teaches that *every* sin will certainly bear its punishment. It seems to me that such a belief must surely tend to keep men more moral than one which leaves them the chance of death-bed repentance.

Mr. Lennan asks why some should get manifestations and others not. He might as well inquire why everybody cannot write poetry like Shakespeare, or paint like Raphael.

He objects that the "physical strength" required to tilt tables, &c., might be better applied. If the tilt of a table suffices to convert one materialist to a belief in a future life and its accompanying responsibilities, I think it about as good work as could be done even by the most advanced of spirits.

He finishes thus: "I think, before Spiritualists try to clear away the inconsistencies that they imagine are in the Bible, they should first, in the words of that book, "take the beam out of their own eye." As I said before, Spiritualists, as such, have nothing to do with such work; but Freethinkers, who do expose the errors of the Bible, are very little divided amongst themselves. The real divisions in the Spiritual camp are amongst the Christian Spiritualists.

Most of the errors into which Mr. Lennan has fallen have arisen from his misconception of Spiritualism, and esteeming that to be a religion which is only a science. That so many Spiritualists are Freethinkers arises from the facts—first, that very orthodox Christians seldom venture to make any inquiry trenching upon religious ground; and secondly, that when the reason is allowed fair play, it soon masters prejudice, and so "proof" is asked for where "faith" was once sufficient.

I had proposed dealing also with an article in *Freethought* entitled "Natural or Supernatural." The author thereof has also fallen into error; but, as my space is limited, and he promises a further instalment, I must defer answering him for a time.

In all humility, I would advise gentlemen, before they rush into print about Spiritualism, to state their objections to some well-read believer. I have not the slightest doubt that they would then forego their intentions.

HAROLD W. H. STEPHEN.

## ARE CHRISTIANITY AND SPIRITUALISM ANTAGONISTIC?

As one that has had but little experience in the mysteries of Spiritualism—as a child standing before an unexplored ocean of knowledge—I have ventured a few lines on the subject that forms the heading. What Christianity is, perhaps nine out of every ten would differ in defining, but such, as I take it, appears simply to consist of one God, the Father of us all, His greater Son, Christ—I mean greater than we ourselves are—and of the Spirit, or essence of God, an uncreate Spirituality that acts on us in a way that we may feel, but may not define of ourselves, as simply spirits clothed in flesh while on this earth, with good and bad impulses, and liable to good and bad impressions, and going on to a future beyond the grave, if we prove in this life our capacity to exist in a second one. My ideas of Spiritualism are gathered from a little theory and less experience, but, as honest, sober imaginings, they may command respect, if they do not coincide with others' ideas on the matter.

The orthodox idea of Heaven is one that no really intellectual mind can or will recognise as even a probability. That in that future, exalted state, we shall be secure from a host of evils that are inseparable from our moral and physical natures, no one doubts that believes in a future state at all. The exploded notion of a hell I shall not trouble my readers with, besides the mere mention thereof. But Heaven is a state of perpetual rejoicing—so says popular religious opinion. Think you that the mighty energies of a Newton, a Herschel, or a Tyndall, would be content to pass an eternity of idleness—for such the aforesaid opinion would seem to amount to. No; the knowledge that their mortality alone hindered their mighty minds from penetrating and unfolding would be pursued with more gigantic power and superhuman energies, and the mysteries of the universe would eventually be made clear to their wondering vision. It is only fair to suppose that if in this lower life we are free agents in thought and deed, so, under grander and brighter auspices, our actions would be equally unrestrained. Imagine, then, if you can, the awe-struck wonderment that a great astronomer or scientist would feel at seeing and solving the great mystery of the source of the Sun's light, or the workings of the rings of Saturn, or any of the vexed problems their telescopes have but faintly conjectured. And, to descend into commonplace, would not the great majority of those whose lives had been so far blameless on earth enjoy a perfectly untrammelled

existence, brought into nearer relationship with the Great Supreme ; and, as they were capable of greater love and veneration towards that Ineffable Being, they would also increase in knowledge, "going on from strength to strength." The remembrance of their companions in the life struggle on earth would naturally be deep and intense ; and though their incorporeal forms would unfit them to be seen by mortal eye, yet they would desire often to look at, with feelings of love and tenderness, those upon this earth they once associated with. It is just the precise amount and influence of that affinity I am endeavouring to theorise upon.

Independently of Biblical and direct Spiritual messages by the mediums of the present day, we have little, save our human, fallible minds, to guide us. But, as we know the handicraftsman takes many a long year—sometimes a lifetime—to attain extraordinary proficiency in his art, so, then, the Great Unseen cannot be rushed upon by any would-be fools. Were we to examine some of the scientific discoveries of Edison, the majority would be nonplussed to account for the marvellous results obtained from such comparatively simple instruments. There is no elaborate machinery employed, truly ; and were we to set a most accomplished mechanic to accomplish the same things by wheel and crank, he would, in all probability, fail most miserably. If he, then—knowing nothing of electricity, and caring less—were to scoff and ridicule the inventions—speaking from a materialistic standpoint—we should all despise him. Why not also a dogmatic and rigid positivist in matters Spiritual ? The mysteries therein contained are more tremendous than any of a simply scientific nature ; for while the telescope, with all its wonderful modern improvements, only explores the inert far-distant, the advocates of the mind—telescoping, so to speak—deal with living and moving beings, with whom the depths of earthly wisdom are but trivialities. Granting, in a future state, to our perfected selves both love and wisdom, is it incongruous to imagine that there should be a means of sending and receiving messages to and from the spirit-world ? To the earnest and thoughtful student, not to the sceptic and scoffer, would be granted a knowledge of these things. From the wide gulf between the natural and the supernatural, such communication would necessarily be but rare, and under certain circumstances. In the hurry of business, and the clamouring rush for daily bread we are all more or less engaged in, such pursuits would be distasteful and incompatible ; but in the seclusion of our chambers at night the crude inexperience of the beginner might in time turn to the matured knowledge of the future. That such knowledge would jar with a liberal and enlightened Christianity I fail to see. Why the superhuman should have disappeared with the apostles

without any declaration to that effect seems strange, especially as Paul himself says that, "Of spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant." Precisely so; Paul himself saw many things in the silence and solitude of his dungeon, that of them "it was not lawful for a man to utter," that must have made the greatest earthly splendour pale and dim by comparison. Why, then, my readers, Christianity can or ought to be regarded as distinct from Spiritualism, I fail utterly to understand. Like electricity, the knowledge of the reality of the unseen is but in its infancy, as far as the present age is concerned; and when our minds have become sufficiently prepared by "prayer and fasting," and not till then, shall we understand what only an enlightened man can understand, as, in the same way, a savage cannot comprehend music till after years of training and practice. The time is coming, surely, but very slowly, when those professing Christianity and Spiritualism will be joined hand-in-hand in the glorious work of mental advancement, so that the light shed on the future may make us contemptuous of the victories of the tomb over inert clay, and, having crossed the Jordan into the unseen, happy to be able to mix with and enjoy the companionship of those that have gone before, besides being able and willing to cheer on the earnest and true in heart that are yet in the wilderness.

A. J. IVIMEY.

Copeland, February 29, 1880.

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## IS THE PRACTICE OF SPIRITUALISM DESIRABLE OR JUSTIFIABLE ?

WE have all been reared in a belief in Supernaturalism, but, at the same time, all of us outside the pale of the Catholic Church have been taught to regard a supernatural occurrence as an impossibility. That is to say, our religion has been based upon supernatural occurrences, yet we, as a body, have agreed that such things do not happen in our days. Hence it is that Spiritualism is offensive, not only to our religious feelings, but to our common sense. For this reason, men of science refuse to waste their time in what they term a profitless pursuit; men of religion either look at it in a similar light, or devoutly protest against meddling with the Powers of Darkness; and men of common-sense consider that their property in that quality would be endangered by any serious consideration of such a ridiculous subject. The result is, that the vast majority of those who do take up their pens to write down Spiritualism

possess only a very superficial knowledge of their subject, and are apt to make up for their lack of knowledge by increased vehemence in denunciation. It must also be remembered that, previous training having rendered all very indisposed to admit the truth of Spiritualism, converts to that belief are apt, having once surrendered their prejudices, to surrender also their judgment, and blindly accept every marvellous tale which comes to them accredited from a spiritual source.

So the task of investigation is rendered doubly hard, through the difficulty in obtaining any valuable assistance from the works of sceptics, and the unreliability of the utterances of believers.

In attempting to set forth what I deem the most cogent reasons why Spiritualism should not be practised or accepted, I propose to steer clear of the rocks upon which so many goodly barks have been wrecked. I do not approach the subject with any prejudices or predilections; I have no special faith in any revealments, and I know I am able to bring to my task a cool head.

I have no prejudices, because I conceive the term "supernatural" to be a misnomer—because I believe that Nature's laws, as made by God, are immutable; and, therefore, that whatever has occurred, or may occur, has a natural origin, though at present we may be in ignorance of that origin.

I have no faith in revealments, because faith is a quality which I find myself unable to exercise, unless my reason has been previously convinced.

Finally, I know that I bring to my task a cool head, because I am quite as sensible of the value of the arguments for as against the subject in dispute.

In undertaking such an enquiry as this, it is necessary at the outset strictly to define terms. I will therefore say that I regard, as comprehended in the word "Spiritualism," a belief—first, that communication between mortals and the spirits of the dead is possible; and, secondly, that the future state of man is a state of progression. That is, I find, all that Spiritualists put forth as their common platform; agreeing to differ upon all other points in connection with the matter. But it seems to me that in the first proposition is involved the corollary that communication *does* take place, and that it is not only possible, but desirable.

The first, and most common, of the objections against Spiritualism is that which I will term the "common-sense objection," which is, that the whole affair is delusion, based upon fraud and hallucination. This may be a very pleasant way of settling the matter, but it is not logical, and

should not, therefore, be admitted to a place in any argument conducted upon logical principles. It is not possible to prove a negative, and therefore the person adopting this line of opposition must place himself in the position of a querist, and, finally, can only with justice assert that the evidence proffered has been insufficient to convince him. He says, "These things do not occur, and, when you think they do, you are either under an hallucination, or have been the dupe of a clever conjuror." Obviously, when asked to prove this proposition, he can only reply by saying, "Show me something under conditions where fraud or self-deception are impossible." The Spiritualist tells him that can be done if he exercise patience and perseverance, and the chances are a hundred to one that he declines the trouble. But, even if he pursue the matter and discover fraud, or meet with no success, the subject is no nearer a settlement ; for his individual experience cannot be regarded as of any weight in an argument wherein it would be equally easy to adduce contrary testimony from just as competent persons.

I therefore reject the "common-sense objection" as being of no value in debate, and am contented, for the purposes of argument, to admit that phenomena of the nature claimed by Spiritualists do occasionally, perhaps very often, occur. I say "occasionally," because Andrew Jackson Davis, the greatest authority of the movement, states that a very large proportion of what are deemed to be spiritual phenomena, or manifestations, have no such origin.

The second objection to the Spiritual theory is that which has been so earnestly fought for by the late Sergeant Cox, which I shall call the "psychic objection," and which assumes that the various phenomena are caused by some subtle emanation from the human body. It is not worth while devoting any space to the consideration of this theory ; for, if it be hard to believe that the spirits of the dead can move tables, or appear in material forms, it must be ten times harder to accredit those wonderful feats to an impalpable fluid, acting without the knowledge or control of the person from whom it emanates. Moreover, such evidence as Sergeant Cox has been able to procure in support of his views might fairly be regarded as equally favourable to the Spiritual theory.

Next I come to the "Satanic objection," which attributes the phenomena to the devil and his imps. This objection is always advanced by ministers of religion when they find themselves unable to deny the facts of the phenomena. It involves a belief in the Bible, and a further belief in the "ministerial" interpretation thereof. Its advocates contend that necromancy, or seeking communion with the spirits of the dead, was expressly forbidden by God. Unfortunately, the Spiritualists

have also their texts to quote in support of their view, that such communion was even recommended. Opinions are so divided on this question that it is difficult to arrive at a decision ; but, even if I were prepared to admit the value of the objection, I should still refrain from advancing it in argument, for, logically, it is valueless, being based upon an assumption in itself not susceptible of logical proof. It may serve to deter a pious Christian from embarking in the Spiritualistic ship, but the world is not wholly composed of pious Christians ; and an argument, to be really valuable, should be acceptable to all men.

Some sceptics hold that the mental phenomena are the result of mind-reading and unconscious cerebration ; but, as this objection does not cover the whole ground, but obliges its advocates to adopt some other theory in order to account for what are termed the physical manifestations, I shall not devote any time to its consideration, especially as Spiritualists contend that statements are often made through mediums which could not, by any possibility, have been within the knowledge of any person present.

Up to the present, the reader will doubtless say that, although I have assumed the part of prosecutor, I appear to have been retained for the defence ; for I have, in advancing objections, in each instance shown their worthlessness. My object has been to place on record all the objections commonly urged against Spiritualism, in order to show that I have given due consideration to each of them before urging that which I hold to be the only logical argument which can be advanced. I have thus cleared the ground, and am able to deal with the subject unimpeded by considerations of extraneous matter.

I begin by conceding, for the purposes of argument, all that spiritualists claim ; that is to say, I will admit that communion with spirits does take place, and that the future of man is a state of progression. As I said at the outset, the first of these propositions involves, further, that such communion is desirable, and this is the point on which I join issue. If it can be shewn that communion with spirits is undesirable, the question may fairly be regarded as set at rest ; for the study and practice of any harmful thing would naturally never be entered upon by anyone of sound mental condition.

In the first place, all Spiritualists appear to agree that spirits of every grade of development can and do communicate with mortals, but that the process is easier to those who approach nearest to the mundane condition ; that is to say, that the higher in grade a spirit may be, the less easy is it for him to communicate, and the less likely is he to undertake the task. It follows, as intelligent Spiritualists admit, that the vast

majority of the communications purporting to come from the spirit-world emanate from spirits of small experience and low development, who are for the most part less fitted for the post of teacher than that of learner.

Now, it is obvious that, to render the communion of any value to mortals, the nicest discrimination is necessary, in order to distinguish truth from falsehood or error. But such discrimination cannot be expected from ordinary minds, especially as the feeling of awe engendered by such communion with an unseen world invariably creates a tendency to overvalue the importance of the communications. Thus it is that the history of the movement shows that the most preposterous assertions made by spirits have found ready acceptance, even from the cultivated intellects of leaders of the cause. Let us briefly glance at some of the most noticeable of the absurd doctrines inculcated by spirits, and eagerly adopted by wise and foolish alike.

In Auburn, in the United States, a body of Spiritualists termed themselves the "Apostolic Circle," and claimed that their spiritual guides were St. John, St. Paul, and the prophet Daniel. They taught that the second advent of the Messiah was at hand, and they soon secured a large following. After a time they migrated to a place called Mountain Cove, and established a society on communistic principles. At Mountain Cove they became so far advanced, that the instructions of the saints were found to be insufficient, and the Holy Ghost personally superintended their séances. Their leader was a certain Rev. T. L. Harris, who afterwards abandoned them, and denounced Spiritualism as the work of the devil. This Harris wrote mediumistically a series of poems which are said to be of the highest literary merit.

An early convert to Spiritualism was J. M. Spear, a gentleman whose philanthropic labours had made him widely known in America. He is said to have been a marvellous medium, possessing all spiritual gifts in a high state of development; nevertheless, we find this gentleman propounding many absurd theories, which culminated at last in the "new motive power" which was to revolutionise the world. A machine was constructed under spirit direction, and the vital power which animated it was supposed to have had mortal birth through the mediumship of a certain lady of irreproachable character! Unfortunately, a mob of rowdies smashed up the machine, and it does not appear that Mr. Spear ever constructed another. He had a numerous following, even amongst the best and most respected adherents of the movement.

In Boston, a certain Spence, assisted by his wife, established a society called the "Angelites," or the "Harmonial Society," the leading principles of which were that man, if he lived "harmoniously," could not

die, and that only a certain proportion of human beings attained to immortality. These startling doctrines made an extraordinary sensation amongst the American Spiritualists, and spread so rapidly that for a time it seemed as if they were going to obtain universal credence. Eventually the Spences bolted with a large sum of money which had been placed in their hands by their credulous followers. Among other things, these people said that spirits constantly supplied them with money and clothing—yet that did not prevent them from asking for money, nor their dupes from giving it!

It may be contended that these are mere ephemeral aberrations which have long since come to an end, but it must be remembered that they were the result of "spirit" teachings, and that many honourable and learned men were their dupes.

It is worthy of note also that the Mormons and the Shakers are claimed as Spiritualists, and that their doctrines are said also to bear the spiritual stamp.

The Freeloze movement, although originating outside of the spiritual ranks, very speedily secured assistance from the spirit-world, and its great exponent—Victoria Woodhull—is said to act under spirit influence.

I need not, however, confine myself to such cases, where the delusion is so palpable, for at the present hour there are so many divisions amongst Spiritualists, that the thinking man is compelled to seriously doubt the wisdom of the intercourse. The French Spiritualists, led by Allan Kardec, inculcate the doctrine of re-incarnation, which is for the most part vehemently repudiated by their English and American brethren.

In all countries where Spiritualism has made any headway, there are to be found many believers in what is termed "Occultism," of which Mrs. Britten, Madame Blavatsky, and Colonel Olcott are the chief exponents. Occultism teaches a belief in astrology and magic, and avers that most of the physical phenomena are produced by "elementary spirits;" that is to say, by the demons, gnomes, genii, and fairies of the folk-lore of all nations. Most Spiritualists ridicule these notions, but all admit that their promulgators are acting under spirit influence!

But the most striking divergence of opinion is on the question of the truth of Christianity and the divinity of Jesus Christ. Perhaps the majority of Spiritualists are opposed to these notions, but there are an immense body of Christian Spiritualists who still cling to the Bible, and hope for salvation through Jesus. Among them may be mentioned Mr. and Mrs. Howitt, and Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall, who are noted for the work they have done in the cause of Spiritualism. Surely, on such an important question, something like unanimity might be expected.

I come now to another phase. It appears that communications are largely tinged by the idiosyncracies of the medium, and that very much that is even supposed by the medium to come from his spirit friends is but the emanation of his own brain. How, then, are we to discriminate? I find that no rule is laid down for guidance in this perplexing matter.

When it is further remembered that Spiritualists admit that the identification of spirits is almost impossible, and can only be approximately made, and, further, that they say that millions of the inhabitants of the spirit-world are for ever striving to lead men astray, and even fight against the spread of Spiritualism, I think it will be seen that the path of a Spiritualist is by no means strewn with roses. It would be well to remember that "fools rush in where wise men fear to tread," and at least to postpone any attempt to establish an intercourse with the spirit-world until we are fully cognisant of the dangers and difficulties which will surely beset us on every side.

Therefore I say that, even if every iota that Spiritualists claim be conceded, it is still questionable whether the practice of Spiritualism can be justified.

"KIAMA."

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"BUT WHUSTLIN' ON THE LORD'S DAY I'LL NO PAIRMET."

A CERTAIN old lady, of doubtful morals, but great piety, kept what she termed a "hottle" in the City of Edinburgh. Many gay and festive gallants frequented this establishment, and much whiskey was nightly consumed there. It chanced, one fine Sunday morning, that an Englishman, of jolly temperament, who had been staying there on what is termed a "howling spree," came downstairs whistling a merry tune. This was too much for the pious hostess; she tackled him forthwith, informing him he might get drunk, or otherwise misconduct himself after an orthodox fashion, but that "whustlin' on the Lord's Day she'd no pairmet." Even as it was with that old lady in Edinburgh, so is it in Sydney with certain other old ladies, who have not the slightest objection to drinking, gambling, &c., in bar-parlours, but draw the line at "whustlin," or, in other words, opening the reading-room of the School of Arts, "on the Lord's Day."

They object that the proposed change is but the insertion of the thin edge of the wedge, and that the sanctity of the Sabbath will be dangerously imperilled if a section of the community is enabled to find

food for the mind during a season which should be spent in devotional or semi-devotional exercises. It is well to bear in mind that Christian theory is something widely different from Christian practice. Theoretically, the Sabbath is a day which should be spent in worship, self-examination, religious teaching, and study. Practically, it is a public holiday, a small portion of which is, by the bulk of the church-goers, devoted to a perfunctory attendance at some place of worship, whilst the remainder is occupied by amusement and gorging. The wealthier classes rise late, attire themselves in their most resplendent raiment, go to church—where they yawn through the performance, and take stock of their neighbours' clothing—and come home to a heavy meal; after which the elders go to sleep, whilst the younger members of the family, if female, lounge about, reading novels and discussing the aforementioned clothing; if male, go out to visit their lady friends, or to some popular haunt down the harbour. These have no interest in the proposed movement, and we may leave them out of the question.

With the lower orders, the performance is much the same as far as the morning is concerned, but in the afternoon the head of the family, not being interested in lady friends or trips down the harbour, and having a house too confined in space to render it habitable when the children are at home, adjourns to the public-house.

This is the actual state of affairs, and yet the very orthodox resent any attempt at a change. Truly, it can scarcely be marvelled at that Freethinkers attack the Churches when there is such marked divergence between their teachings and the practice of their adherents. The Jewish Sabbath was strictly a day of rest and devotion, and it may be that Jesus Christ intended that it should be so kept by his followers, but he could never have contemplated the possibility of its degenerating (?) into a mere holiday. Not any more, for example, could he have contemplated the possibility of ministers of his gospel greedily seeking riches and preferment, when he himself taught that it was harder for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, and incessantly urged his followers to take no thought for the morrow, &c.

The fact is that, even as it has been found necessary to revise the Word of God (!), so has it been also found necessary to place a different interpretation upon those sayings which, in their literal reading, so strongly condemn the pet practices of the godly. If the Sabbath were kept as the Sabbatarians would have it kept, the machinery of society would soon be sadly out of joint, and so the line has to be drawn somewhere. People must travel on a Sunday, must have good meals

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on that day ; above all, even the most godly must have their Monday's newspaper, which is written and printed on the holy day. But the people must not be allowed to read on that day. They may drink, gamble, or do any objectionable thing with closed doors, but they may not assemble in a reading-room.

Why is this thus ? It is impossible, under the circumstances, to avoid entertaining the suspicion that this phase of Sabbatarianism arises from the clerical dread of the people becoming too enlightened. A religion which demands blind, unreasoning faith on the part of its believers, and absolutely prohibits enquiry whenever enquiry borders upon dangerous ground, cannot afford to encourage the people to think. Clerics may preach about the march of progress and the general advance of knowledge, but at heart they know that their influence will wane in proportion thereto. The doctor lives by the diseases of the people, and cannot exist where all are healthy. The priest or parson lives by the mental diseases of his flock, and his occupation would also be gone if all the world were morally healthy. In those millennial times, when every man will be a priest in his own house, where will be the place for your mitred and surpliced gentry, who now lord it through the terrors of their following ? Just so soon as man ceases to fear, he will button up his breeches pockets—a fact which is well known to those who are engaged in the work of building up the new religion of love and harmony, and belief in a just God.

The case, as far as the question as to opening the reading-room of the School of Arts is concerned, is simply this : Shall the terrors of the clergy be suffered to prevail, and the people be denied another small chance for enlightenment, because it would suit their moral doctors better to have them mentally diseased by ignorance and debauchery ?

M. S. M. S. A.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

## CHARLES DICKENS AS A SPIRITUALIST.

*(To the Editor of Freethought.)*

SIR,—It has come to my ears that objections have been taken to my claiming Charles Dickens as a Spiritualist. I am well aware that at one time of his life he scoffed at mediums, but, nevertheless, I contend that the only intelligible expressions of faith to be found in his works are purely Spiritualistic in their nature, and it is on these grounds that I claim him. Should this method of procedure not be approved of, I can only reply that I have the highest orthodox authority for it, for Professor Lightfoot, now Bishop of Durham, in reviewing the first volumes of "Supernatural Religion," makes use of the following expression: "In spite of our author's repudiation, I boldly claim the writer of the concluding chapter of 'Supernatural Religion' as a believer in a personal God."\* And in like manner I claim Dickens as a Spiritualist. At present my studies are in a different direction, and I cannot spare the time to go through his works, but at some future date I may give you a paper on "Charles Dickens, the Spiritualist."

Yours, &amp;c.,

St. Leonards, March 8th.

GEORGE LACY.

*\*Contemporary Review, May, 1875.*

## MEMORANDA.

We hope to publish next month an illustration on toned paper of the inkstand sent to Professor Newman by the Freethinkers of Sydney, and a copy of the letter accompanying the same.

In consequence of excess of matter in hand, reports of seances, lectures, meetings, &c., are held over till next month.

We beg to call attention to the Spiritualistic gathering at the International Hall, advertised in this number, to take place on the 31st instant. It will be well worth attending.

In next issue a portrait and sketch of the life of John Tyerman will be published.

The portrait of Charles Bright given with this number was copied from a photograph taken specially for *Freethought* by Mr. Boyd.

## TO CONTRIBUTORS.

*Articles on both sides of questions bearing on Freethought and kindred subjects are received for publication, and the genuine signature of author is much preferred. All manuscript must be in by the 28th of each month. Write on one side of paper, and number pages. Put all quotations and foreign names in the plainest writing to prevent mistakes. Write in ink, and condense as much as possible. To save loss of time, please mark all manuscript in top left hand corner—"pro," or "contra," as the case may be, as in future the index will be published in that manner.*

*Address all correspondence to the Editor, Box 152, G.P.O., Sydney.*