

STUDYING THE BIBLE :

OR,

BRIEF CRITICISMS

ON SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL

SCRIPTURE TEXTS.

BY

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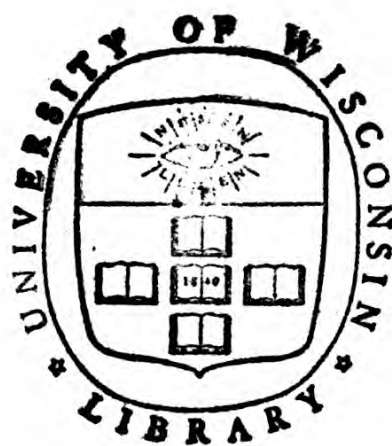
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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE.

It has always been a common expression with Christians, that the antiquity of the Bible, and its preservation down to the present time, are self-evident proofs of its Divine authenticity and of the unavailing criticism and opposition it has received from the writings of sceptics. But this argument is altogether specious, or entirely unsupported by facts, as will appear to the commonest observer of history on a moment's reflection. The Bible is not the most ancient volume that we have received from the past, therefore antiquity is no proof of Divinity; and further, when we consider how this pretended Heavenly Revelation has always been, and is yet, upheld and guarded by law, public opinion, bigotry, social proscription, and other pains and penalties, we cease to wonder either at its long preservation or its undue influence. Give any other book but half the adventitious or extraneous supports that the Bible has received from Christians for the last thousand years, and it could not possibly fail to become generally known and popular.

But with all the safeguards thrown around it, the Bible is rapidly losing its hold on the minds of the people, though not three centuries have elapsed since Infidels began to criticise and expose its true character, and within that period 68 of them have been prosecuted for blasphemy, 10 burnt alive, 2 hung, and afterwards burnt, 1 judicially murdered, 1 poisoned, and 2 executed. Yet, in spite of these barbarities, or Christian "evidences," instigated by a remorseless and sanguinary religion, free inquiry or a fearless and candid examination of

(iii)

the Bible has continued, and, as a consequence, superstition has declined and mental liberty been promoted.

Many commentaries on the Bible, at different times, written by Infidels, have appeared, and done good service in the cause of truth against error. And we have now the pleasure of presenting, in the following pages, another and a novel commentary of the kind written by a woman. The author is Mrs. ELMINA DRAKE SLENKER, of Elizabethton, East Tennessee, and the chapters here appended were published originally in the BOSTON INVESTIGATOR. They excited much attention at the time, and at our suggestion they have been somewhat revised, and we now issue them in book form, for the benefit of the author, and as a useful contribution to the catalogue of Infidel works. The reader will find this commentary to be one of the keenest, liveliest, wittiest, and most sensible he ever met with,—the production of an intellect not much indebted, perhaps, to classical schools for its culture, but one which by strong natural ability is of no ordinary character. Though making no pretensions to literary acquirements, and writing as she could obtain occasional leisure from her household avocations, yet Mrs. SLENKER has produced a valuable book for reference and preservation. We commend it with confidence to the Infidel public as a work with which they will all be satisfied, and we ask for it a generous patronage, as its circulation will not only help our cause, but essentially aid and encourage a worthy and deserving lady to continue her able efforts to promote reason and remove error and superstition.

J. P. M.

Boston, Jan. 1, 1870.

STUDYING THE BIBLE.

INTRODUCTION.

WE read our Bibles one and all,
Read of man and of his "fall,"
Of Cain and Abel, Noah's Ark,
Of wars, of murders foul and dark,
Of every kind of sin and crime
That man *could* do in that old time;
And while we read, we stop and think,
That 'tis from God's own fount we drink.
He made the world and all therein;
Made man himself—*made him to sin*,
And him inspired to tell the tale
Which long hath been both old and stale.

When a mere girl, my mother offered me a dollar if I would read the Bible through; so with the tempting bait luring me on, I commenced the task, and, as I read, child-like asked questions, many of which proved, as is generally the case, too profound for the theological lore of my maternal relative, and at last despairing of reconciling many of its absurd statements with even my childish philosophy, I commenced jotting down extracts, accompanying each with a few of the ideas which they awakened, and the result was that I became a sceptic, doubter, and unbeliever, long ere the "Good Book" was ended:

and indeed for that matter, the END was never reached, nor has it been to this day. Yet I read enough to know that it is a volume of fabulous contradictions, falsehoods, and nonsense, "from the fabled cosmogony in Genesis to the fabled destruction of the world in the Book of Revelations," — a book which no one, with any pretensions to a knowledge of Nature and her laws, of man in his best and highest development, could believe to be a revelation from a Being as much superior to the *best* man as that best man would be to the "vilest sinner on God's footstool," or the wickedest wretch in the lowest and hottest apartment of his subterranean regions.

It is a book which would, in this enlightened (?) age, have been long ago laid upon the shelf, had its teachings not been engrafted upon the intellect of almost every child in civilized communities, almost as soon as it was able to talk or to understand. Almost every school-book, newspaper, almanac, every public lecture, every primer, every story told to the little child, is full of this one subject, and thus this Bible-religion becomes a belief grown up with the growth, welded to, and incorporated with, the young and expanding intellect, until it forms a part of the very organism itself. It will therefore take whole years of patient, persevering toil, years of study and persistent *un-doing* to clear away all the weeds, filth and rubbish that has so long encumbered the intellect of the race, and to plant therein the seeds of truth, wisdom, purity and freedom of thought! The *old* must be destroyed and rooted out, ere we can sow the *new*; so I will endeavor to do *my* part by sending forth to the world

of truth-seekers a few of these jottings down of Scripture texts and the thoughts they called forth, hoping they may help to rid the world of such a mighty incubus as this old book has for so many centuries proved itself to be, bending down all science, knowledge and philosophy to the crude ideas and undeveloped intellect of a dead and buried past.

“Let Truth and Falsehood grapple. Who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?”—[*Milton*.

CHAPTER I.

"IN the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth."
—Gen. i. 1.

When was the *beginning*? What was there before the beginning? How did it look before there was anything — when all was nothing?

"And the earth was without form."—Gen. i. 2.

As all THINGS have length, breadth, and thickness, and consequently some form or shape, and as this Bible-earth had NO FORM, it must have been nothing! So "in the beginning God created" nothing out of nothing!

"And God divided the light from the darkness."—Gen. i. 4.

As darkness is only the absence of something, the absence of light, it must have been a difficult task to separate the two, to sift out *nothing* from *something*. And into what sort of a vessel did he put this nothing?

"And God said, let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters."—Gen. i. 6.

From this we are to suppose that a large tin slide or a partition of some sort was slipped between or through the water, cutting it in two parts, one of which was kept up in the sky to save for rain, the other left for ponds, lakes, rivers, seas and oceans.

“Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place.”—Gen. i. 9.

Are they, or were they ever, all in one place?

“God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night.”—Gen. i. 16.

Why not have made it to shine all night and every night, then? It would have been of far more *use*, and have saved a deal of discussion on moon theories, planting in the dark and light of the moon, making soap according to the same, and doing many other things too numerous to mention, and all by these same moon signs or *shines*! For it is all *moonshine*, anyhow.

“He made the stars also.”—Gen. i. 16.

Stars were not deemed to be of much account in those days, I presume, as so little labor was supposed requisite to create them, and so few words wasted in speaking of the act.

“God said, let *us* make man in *our* image.”—Gen. i. 26.

“Us” and “our!” Had God a help-mate or counsellor in his work of creation? Or, mayhap a whole gang of workmen?

“And God made every plant before it was in the earth, and every herb before it grew.”—Gen. ii. 5.

What a task to make every plant, herb and weed, and stick them one by one in the ground all over the earth, just as a gardener would a beet, cabbage, or a sweet potato plant! No wonder he was tired, had the back-ache, and was obliged to rest on the seventh day!

"Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."—Gen. ii. 17.

Yet in chapter i. 29, he says, "I have given you EVERY TREE;" and as to dying, the story itself contradicts that, for they both lived to a good old age, Adam being 930 years old when he died.

"Who that had common sense, could e'er believe
This silly trash of Beelzebub and Eve—
Of trees of life, of Adam, and his apple?
None with the intellect of Sancho's dapple."
—Yahoo.

CHAPTER II.

"Unto Adam and to his wife did the Lord make coats of skins."—Gen. iii. 21.

Turned tailor, did he? No wonder Andrew Johnson is not ashamed of his old trade, since the Lord himself was a member of that "cabbaging" fraternity!

"Unto Cain and his offering he had not respect, and Cain was very wroth."—Gen. iv. 5.

And why should he not have been wroth? Surely, the fruits of the ground were much better as a peace offering than the raw or roasted carcass of some dead animal. Would not Abel have been angry had the Lord slighted his offering and accepted Cain's? And where went Cain when the Lord sent him "from the face of the earth?" Did the Lord take pity upon

his loneliness and make him an Eve out of a rib? The account speaks of his *wife*, and we read there were none living on the earth save Cain and his father and mother.

Now, as we read on farther, we come to the Ark-story — a *whopper* of a story it is, too! A small vessel like that containing all those men, women and children, all those animals, birds, reptiles, insects and creeping things, together with all the food necessary for the maintenance of them all for so many days, weeks and months! Then, too, it was *pitched* outside and in, all air-tight save one little window at the top. How did they all get air to breathe? And what an amount of labor to care for and feed them all — to preserve peace and harmony among this “happy family!” — and what a regular cleaning-house time they must have had of it, every day, and a dozen times a day for that matter, and all the dirt and filth to carry up and throw out of that little window! On asking a friend of mine a short time ago how he supposed the ark could hold all the animals, he said, “Why, the little ones could stand under the big ones!” A bright idea, that! all to stand wedged tightly together all those long weeks! Yet how many there are, even in this day, who THINK they believe it! think so, because they have never allowed themselves to question or to doubt it.

“The Lord smelled a sweet savour.”—Gen. viii. 21.

If he enjoys “sweet savours” so much, why not continually surround himself with them, since he has only to say, “Let it be done,” and it will be?

"I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. I will look upon it that I may *remember* the covenant."—Gen. ix. 13-16.

Of course there was never any rainbow before that! and had he not created one especially for a "token of a covenant," he might have forgotten his promise, as this Jewish God seems to be a forgetful sort of a person, saying a thing at one time and contradicting it at another.

"Let *us* go down and there confound their language."—Gen. xi. 7.

Us again! And how many had to *go down*? Enough to teach each one of these builders a *new* tongue? And was the Lord really afraid they would reach heaven with their high tower?

"Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister."—Gen. xii. 13.

Only a *white lie*, which we will suppose the Lord winked at, since he and Abram were such good friends as to be in constant converse with each other.

And in Gen. xix. 26, you may read —

How Madame Lot did make a halt,
And thus became a lump of salt!
Such foolish, childish tales as these,
A barbarous race of men might please;
But sure such tales could never claim
From Reason's sons of Truth the name.

"And Jacob said to his father, I am Esau."—Gen. xxvii. 19.

Like Abram, he, too, could prevaricate, lie, and deceive; deceive, too, his poor old father upon his death-bed, and commit a foul and grievous wrong upon his brother likewise. Who can conceive of a deed more base? Is it strange that the continual

study of such deeds as are here recorded should make men full of guile, deceit and fraud?

In chapter xxxii. 30, he says, "I have seen God face to face," and just before he speaks of *wrestling* with him; but can we believe this after having just read of the great fraud perpetrated by him upon his father and brother?

"And there are yet five years in which there shall neither be earing nor harvest."—Gen. xlv. 6.

In Gen. viii. 22, we read, "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest.....shall not cease."

In Exodus, chapter iv., we find recorded a dispute between Moses and his God, in regard to Moses's qualification as a speaker and persuader who should induce the Israelites to rob and leave the Egyptians. At length the Lord gets angry and *gives in* sufficiently to allow of Moses taking a spokesman in the form of his brother Aaron, "who should be to him a mouth-piece." It seems that Moses had tongue enough to talk the *Lord* over to his way of thinking, even if he was dubious of his power in that line with the Israelites; but I suppose he knew by previous experience how easy it was to mould his God to his will, and that the Israelites had more pluck and spirit.

"And it came to pass by the way in the inn that the Lord met him and sought to kill him."—Exodus iv. 24.

A real tavern brawl, was it? And the Lord not *all-powerful*, as we have been told that he was!

Read Exodus, chapter viii. :—

"How Moses over Egypt's land
Dispersed the frogs by God's command;
How flies and lice came at his call,
And plagued Egyptians one and all."

"The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh."—Exodus ix. 12.

Chapter xiii. 15, says Pharaoh hardened his own heart, and this would seem the most reasonable of the two; for if the *Lord* did it, was Pharaoh to blame?

"Before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall there be such."—Exodus x. 14.

What a pity Agassiz could not find some fossil remains of these peculiar locusts! They would be a great curiosity, and might prove to be of much assistance to naturalists by developing some new scientific idea.

"But the Egyptians pursued after them, (all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh.)"—Exodus xiv. 9.

"ALL the cattle of Egypt died."—Exodus ix. 6.

By reading the whole chapter, (ixth,) you will perceive that the cattle are killed several times over—killed and made alive again, no doubt, so as to show the power of Moses's God unto Pharaoh!

"They saw not one another, neither rose any up from his place for three days."—Exodus x. 23.

Would it be natural to remain inactive and foodless because it was dark? Or were they psychologized to their seats?

"The children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, and the waters were as a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left."—Exodus xiv. 22.

This is contrary to the known law of Nature, which says, water always seeks an equilibrium and a level. Who ever saw water piled up in standing walls?

"The Lord took off their chariot wheels."—Exodus xiv. 25.

Wonder if he got any tar on his hands while so doing? Couldn't stop them by his *will*, of course!

"They could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter.....The Lord showed him a tree, which, when he had cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet."—Exodus xv. 23-25.

A strange tree that must have been! Why was not some of it preserved as a HOLY RELIC that we might test and prove its virtue?

"Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."—Exodus xxi. 24.

"The Lord is a man of war."—Exodus xv. 3.

To one who was brought up a Quaker, and had listened for years to the teachings of this peaceful, non-resistant class—as I then deemed them to be—this was bad doctrine for a holy and inspired volume to teach.

"And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold."—Exodus xxv. 18.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything."—Exodus xx. 4.

Yet Christians have ever been worshippers of images, worshippers of the cross, and of PICTURES of "Christ and him crucified;" and in the early days of Christianity "The images of the Pagan deities were allowed to remain and continued to receive divine honors, in Christian churches. The images of the Sybils, of which Gallæus has given us prints, were retained in the Christian church of Sienna." "When Gregory perceived that the simple and unskilled multitude persisted in their worship of images on account of the pleasures and sensual gratifications which they enjoyed at the Pagan festivals, he granted them permission to indulge themselves in the like pleasures in celebrating the memory of the holy martyrs, hoping

that in process of time they would return to a more virtuous course of life. There is no doubt that Gregory allowed the Christians to dance, sport, and feast at the tombs of the martyrs, and to do everything which the Pagans were accustomed to do, in *their* temples during the feasts celebrated in honor of their Gods.”—[Mosheim.

“Paulinus apologizes for setting up certain paintings in his church, saying it was done with a design to draw the rude multitude, habituated to the profane sights of Paganism, to a knowledge and good opinion of the Christian doctrines, by learning from these pictures what they were not capable of learning from books.” “Pope Gregory, called the Great, about two centuries later, makes the same apology for IMAGES or pictures in churches, declaring them to have been introduced for the sake of THE PAGANS.”—[Extracts from Taylor’s “Diegesis.”

These extracts show how little Christians really cared for the express commands of their God, as long as they saw that those commands interfered with the increase of their church and their own particular glorification as connected with that church; and the same license is still allowed to Christians in this day. Music is introduced in church; church members are allowed to do many things contrary to the express commands of the Bible, because by drawing the reins too tight, it is found that the “followers of the Lord” are few are far between.

CHAPTER III.

“ Some books are lies from end to end,
 And some great lies were never penned,
 And even ministers have been kenned
 In holy rapture
 A rousing *whid* at times to vend,
 And nail’t with Scripture.”

No very dexterous feat that, either, as there are few doctrines we try to advocate that we cannot “nail with Scripture.”

“ And there went up Moses, and Aaron, and Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel.....and they saw God and did eat and drink.”—Exodus xxiv. 9-10.

And so all these men saw an invisible, incomprehensible *spirit* !

“ Then thou shalt kill the ram and take of his blood and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot.....And Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram and the bread that is in the basket.....but a stranger shall not eat thereof.....thou shalt offer every day a bullock.....Thou shalt offer two lambs day by day continually.....one in the morning, the other in the eveningwith the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil, and the fourth part of an hin of wine.”—Exodus xxix. 20-40.

All this form and preamble, show and ceremony, are gone through with, that the priests may have an abundance of bread, flesh and wine, and live upon the “top of the heap!” The more form, mystery and ceremony that is used, the more easy is it to gull the ignorant and the unthinking, and the better is it for the prosperity of their priestly leaders or rulers.

“Whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.”—Exodus xxxi. 15.

Is this command now obeyed, or was it ever entirely obeyed? If wicked then to do *any* work, is it less wicked now? Yet how many believing Christians leave over any amount of odds and ends for SUNDAY work, because they have more time then—not their regular work, but trifles of cleaning and fixing up; arranging cupboards and drawers, washing and cleaning up the little ones, &c., &c.!

“On the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.”—Exodus xxxi. 17.

And how tired would he have got had he not rested? Worked himself *out of existence*, probably, since if he was capable of being *any* tired, he must have been capable of being a “*big tired*!”

“He took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.”—Exodus xxxii. 20.

Much good, methinks, such a dose did them!

“The Lord spake to Moses face to face.”—Exodus xxxiii. 11.

In just a few verses further on we read, “There shall no man see me and live.” Can there be a plainer or flatter contradiction?

“The Lord God gracious and long suffering.”—Exodus xxxiv. 6.

Can a perfect and all-powerful being suffer?

“The Lord is a jealous God.”—Exodus xxxiv. 14.

Is not such a mean, contemptible quality as *jealousy* derogatory to the character of an all-wise and good God?

“The Lord said unto Moses, write thou these words.”—Exodus xxxiv. 27.

Deut. x. 4, says, “*The Lord* wrote on the tables.”

Now the question is, which of them did accomplish this chirographical feat? We have *divinely inspired* proof on both sides!

"Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the Sabbath day."—Exodus xxxv. 3.

Pretty cold times, methinks, the Saints would find it on some of the coldest days of January, with the mercury 20 degrees below zero, and eating of the cold *frozen* food cooked upon the previous day! Who could expect such frozen beings to experience any worshipful feelings upon a Sabbath cold enough to freeze all the religion out of the system? Love, hate, respect, fear, &c., are lost or merged into the one desire and craving for warmth.

"Ye shall eat no manner of fat of ox, or of sheep, or of goat."—Lev. vii. 23.

Are these *fats* any more healthy now? And have we received license to eat of them since this command?

"The hare and the swine, their flesh shall ye not eat."—Lev. xi. 6, 7, 8.

And are swine any more eatable now? particularly those fattened on slops and raised in foul, close and filthy pens, never getting one breath of pure, fresh and unpolluted air?

"All fowls that creep, going upon all four, shall be an abomination unto you."—Lev. xi. 20.

This peculiar four-footed breed of fowl must have been long extinct, and not even the "fossil remains" of them been found, since we have no mention of them in any work upon the natural history of fowls.

"Thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed."—Lev. xix. 19.

Why more wrong *then* than *now*?

“Neither shall a garment of mingled linen and woollen come upon thee.”—Lev. xix. 19.

They must have looked sharp to have detected the mixture, if as much cheating was practiced in making goods then as is now; and wherefore such a command at all? It seems to be a very unimportant thing for a God to make a *law* against!

“When ye shall have planted all manner of trees for food.... for three years fruit shall not be eaten of; in the fourth year it shall be holy.....in the fifth ye shall eat of it.”—Lev. xix. 23, 24, 25.

Just about as reasonable and philosophical a command as those before spoken of.

“Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard.”—Lev. xix. 27.

Were the heads of the *genus homo* of that day square, triangular, or hexagonal, that they had *corners* to them? In regard to “marring the corners of the beard,” if men marred their beards then as they do now, it is no wonder that even a God would tire of witnessing such a grotesque assemblage of diversely-cut beards as is now presented in even a small group of adult masculines.

“If a man take his brother’s wife, they shall be childless.”—Lev. xx. 21.

Is this so? or was it ever the case? Why make a threat one does not mean to carry out? Surely, a *God* should be wiser than to do that!

Almost all of Leviticus xxvi. is devoted to terrible threats of direful judgments which shall fall upon the people if they refuse or neglect to keep these foolish, absurd, and silly commands—threats that show their God to be anything but a God of Love and MERCY.

Among other things, he says, —

“Ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat.”

“There went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, a day’s journey on this side and a day’s journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earthand while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed.....the Lord smote the people with a very great plague.” —Numbers xi. 31–33.

Quails forty-four inches in depth, and two days’ journey through them! Miles and miles of quails! All dead, too, else they would have flown away! No wonder it created a plague! The wonder is, how they dared eat of them. I should have feared they had died of some pestilence, that so many lay there all at once. The whole tale is rather an incredible one for an *inspired* volume to tell.

“They cut a branch with *ONE* cluster of grapes and bare it between two upon a staff.”—Num. xiii. 23.

No wonder so much wine was made in those days, if it took two men to carry *one* bunch of grapes! In pictures we see two children carrying it, but the inference from the text would be that they were men. A bunch that a *child* could not carry, would be a marvellous cluster in these degenerated days.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.”—Num. xiv. 11.

Here the Lord got completely discouraged with the refractory behavior of his “chosen people,” and so Moses had to coax and plead with him, bringing up such arguments as “What will Mrs. Grundy say?”

“The Egyptians shall hear it.....They will tell it to the inhabitants of this land.....The nations which have heard the fame

of thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness."—Num. xiv. 13–16.

So after all these high and noble (?) motives had been set before the Lord to induce him to forgive the people, he says, "I have pardoned." Yet the pardon was, after all, no pardon at all, for they were condemned to wander forty years in the wilderness, "until their carcasses be wasted in the wilderness,"—and furthermore, the Lord said, "Ye shall know my breach of promise." (Numbers xiv. 34.) Glorifying in and boasting over his own *false* promises! What a perfect being was this Jewish God! How much we ought to honor and reverence him!

"There is a mission for the wise,
Diviner than to stand and teach
Of wonders, marvels, mysteries,
And things beyond all human reach,
And hopes and dreams of vapid faith,
Or what a Hebrew legend saith.

"It is to clear the human heart
Of Error's foul malignant weeds,
Bid Superstition's power depart,
And plant of holy truth the seeds.
Oh! then of high or low degree,
May ours this glorious mission be."

CHAPTER IV.

"Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life."

"Moses said, if these men die the common death of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing and the earth open her mouth and swallow them, then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord....The earth opened and they went down alive in the pit."—Num. xvi. 28-33.

The earth must have been very accommodating just then to open just when and where Moses wished it to! And yet of what avail was it after all? The people growled, murmured, and grumbled, till the Lord had to send a plague and kill off about 14,000 more, and he did it with such a *gusto* that we may fancy he *enjoyed* giving vent to his wrath, and no doubt moved and inspired them to be naughty, so that he might have the *pleasure* of punishing them, and showing his POWER, LOVE and BENEVOLENCE.

"The rod of Aaron was budded, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds."—Num. xvii. 8.

If *this* be truth, then indeed is "truth stranger than fiction."

"And Moses smote the rock twice, and the water came out abundantly."—Num. xx. 11.

Doubtless Moses knew from previous observation, or from present signs, that the rock contained water, and so he performed this apparent miracle that the people might think him possessed of *supernatural* power.

"The Lord said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent and set it upon a pole, and every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live."—Num. xxi. 8.

Would the sight of a brazen serpent cure the bite of a snake *now*? Would it not have been better had the Lord destroyed the serpents he sent "*purposely* to bite them?" Surely, "an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure."

"The Lord's anger was kindled and he swore."—Numbers xxxii. 10.

If the Lord gives way to his anger even to profanity, shall poor frail man be blamed for going and doing likewise?

"Ye shall not tempt the Lord AS YE TEMPTED HIM IN Massah."—Deut. vi. 16.

What could *tempt* him who owns all things and can bring to pass the slightest desire of his soul—who has only to say, "Let it be done," and it is accomplished?

"Thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them, nor show mercy unto them....ye shall destroy their altars and break down their images."—Deut. vii. 2-5.

Following this precedent, all the different sects have continually been at war and enmity with each other, continually striven to destroy all other sects and establish their own.

"Each stupid sect, in error bound,
Think *they* the only road have found
To Paradise complete."

"I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights, I neither did eat bread nor drink water." "And I fell before the Lord, as at first, forty days and forty nights; I did neither eat bread nor drink water."—Deut. 9, 18.

Reading the whole text, we infer that he abode

eighty days in the mount, forty and forty more, and fasted the whole eighty ! Is it probable or even possible that this was so ?

“ The Lord your God proveth you to know whether ye love the Lord.”—Deut. xiii. 3.

Of course, then, this God had not all-knowledge or fore-knowledge, so had to try them ere he knew what they would do !

“ Ye shall not eat of them that chew the cud.”—Deut. xiv. 7.

Of course, then, all *beef*-eaters are sinners ! but still are only doing according to the permission given in Genesis : “ Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you.”

“ Of all that are in the waters : all that have fins and scales shall ye eat, and whatsoever hath not fins and scales ye may not eat.”—Deut. xiv. 9, 10.

Wo ! unto those who eat cat-fish, horny chub, or eels, as they are *scaleless*.

“ Ye shall not eat of anything that dieth of itself, thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it, or thou mayst sell it unto an alien.”—Deut. xiv. 21.

This is giving “ food to him that perisheth ” with a vengeance ! If this is a sample of the benevolence, love and charity of a *God*, what may we not expect from man, a “ poor worm of the dust ? ” Sell and give the flesh of dead and diseased animals to the stranger and the alien ! This is doing as ye would be done by ! Though this be a divine command, who would dare practice it ? Our law-makers, more humane than this Jewish God, would not suffer such

an abomination. Yet would it be any worse crime *now* than it was then?

“ Read Bible through, in every page
 You’ll see how men with thoughtless rage
 Each other rob, destroy, and burn,
 To serve a priest or statesman’s turn.”

CHAPTER V.

“ How coats and shoes for forty years,
 Though always worn, did never wear ;
 How gates and bulwarks kissed the ground
 For nought but horns’ and trumpets’ sound ;
 How General Joshua stopped the sun
 Until his men the battle won.”

“ The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment.”—Deut. xxii. 5.

But ye *may* make your vestments as nearly like unto each other as possible, yea, of the same pattern, so long as ye each wear your own, and thus ye may follow the fashion and *evade* the law in spirit if not in the letter — *vide* present customs.

“ If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son which will not obey the voice of his father and mother.....they shall say unto the elders of his city, Our son is stubborn, he will not obey our voice, he is a glutton and a drunkard.....and all the men of his city shall stone him with stones that he die.”—Deut. xxi. 18–21.

Come, now, friends and neighbors, who will be first in bringing out your rebellious sons that they may be stoned to death? Don’t all come at once, lest there be a scarcity of “ rocks ! ”

“He that is hanged is accursed of God.”—Deut. **xxi.** 23.

One would not think so to read the pious confessions and exhortations of some of the criminals who are hung of late years. One would think hanging to be about the most direct road known to the heavenly land, since few there are who go *that way* that do not go *full of glory*!

“Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy vesture.”—Deut. **xxii.** 12.

It is a pity some of these holy patterns had not been preserved, that we might have dressed in accordance with the taste of this tailor-Deity, who took such an interest in the material, cut, and form of the vestments of his people!

“When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business, but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken.”—Deut. **xxiv.** 5.

Did our present rulers take heed of this holy law (?) when they called upon men to crush the late rebellion? Are not the wives of this day as worthy of being *cheered* up as those of ancient times? Are they not as capable of living “for one year” upon “love and faith?” for of course if they do not work they must not eat!

“If brethren dwell together and one of them die, her husband’s brother shall take her to wife and the first born which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead.”—Deut. **xxv.** 5, 6.

Yet in Lev. **xx.** 21, we have it that a man shall *not* marry his brother’s wife, and if he does, they shall be childless. So how shall we decide this knotty but important question? As to being *childless*, we know

that to be a false threat, for it has been tried over and over again, and no such result followed.

"I have led you forty years in the wilderness, and your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot."—Deut. xxix. 5.

Clothes must have been made of very durable material in that day.

How Moses wrote of his own death and burial you may read in the last chapter of Deuteronomy—and believe it if you can!

"And the priests that bare the ark stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan."—Joshua iii. 17.

This, too, at a time when the "river was overflowing all its banks." The waters "rose upon a heap, and those that came down towards the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed and were cut off." Comment is unnecessary. A lie, to need refutation, should be within the bounds of *probability* at least.

"When the people heard the sound of the trumpet, they shouted with a great shout, and the wall fell down flat."—Joshua vi. 20.

The people of that day must have possessed voices of wonderful power, and lungs capable of immense distention, to have caused the walls of a city to fall flat simply by shouting and blowing trumpets!

"The sun stood still and the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies....The sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day."—Joshua x. 13.

This story might have been believed in *that* day, when people thought the sun "rose and set," but *we* know that the *apparent* rising and setting of that luminary are caused by the revolution of the earth, and to have stopped *that* for ever so short a time,

would have convulsed all Nature. The waters would have rushed from their beds, rocks tumbled from their foundations, and everything been one vast sea of confusion, ruin and disaster. And all for what? That a wicked, bloody carnage and slaughter might be completed !

“ Of things above or things below,
What can we reason but from what we know ? ”

CHAPTER VI.

This book, though sacred held so long,
And theme of many a holy (?) song,
Maintained by law, and custom too,
A downward course must now pursue ;
Its texts no longer be a guide
To every hobby we may ride.
A better God, a better creed
We're of this latter day in need ;
So on the shelf the old book lay
With relics of a by-gone day.

“ I have given you a land for which ye did not labor, and cities which ye built not. ”—Joshua xxiv. 13.

This great, just and good *Heavenly Father* treats *all* his children alike, and with justice tempered with love and mercy, does he ?

“ The Lord was with Judah, and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain, but COULD NOT drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron. ”—Judges i. 19.

Is not the Lord all-powerful ? and could such sim-

ple things as "chariots of iron" be any obstacle to his progress? Common sense refuses credence to such an idea. We *could* not believe it if we would.

"After him was Shamgar, which slew of the Philistines 600 men with an ox-goad."—Judges iii. 31.

Of course they all stood meekly submissive and received the blows, else the feat would have been impossible for one arm to accomplish.

"Then Jael took a nail of the tent, and a hammer and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples and fastened it into the ground, for he was asleep and weary."—Judges iv. 21.

As God allowed this deed of mean, unjustifiable treachery towards a poor fugitive to be accomplished, of course it was a meritorious one; yet who of us could so betray the confidence of one who trusted in our promises, and turned to us for help in the hour of need?

"And Samson went and caught 300 foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails, and let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up the corn, the vineyards and olives."—Judges xv. 4-5.

Foxes must have been easily caught in that day, and easily managed, too.

"With the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men."—Judges xv. 15.

About as handy a weapon as an ox-goad, and about as reasonable a tale.

"Now the house was full of men and women....there were upon the roof 3000 men and women. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and bowed himself with all his might, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people that were therein."—Judges xvi. 27-30.

Would not this enormous outlay of strength have torn his arms from their sockets and his body asunder,

ere the house would have fallen? It is impossible for flesh and blood to stand such a strain upon it.

From the book of Ruth we make no quotation, for this neat and cute little love story is familiar to us all, though we hope the heroine will not be condemned as "strong-minded" because she went out in the fields to glean, so that she might catch the eye of the rich farmer and captivate him by her charms. Perhaps it was leap year!

"It *repenteth* me that I have set up Saul to be king.....*The Lord repented* he had made Saul king over Israel."—Samuel xv. 11, 35.

"God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent."—Numbers xxiii. 19.

"The Lord said unto Samuel, fill thy horn with oil and go to Jessie, for I have provided me a king among his sons. Samuel said, how can I go? If Saul hear it, he will kill me. The Lord said, take an heifer with thee and say I am come to sacrifice to the Lord."—Samuel xvi. 1, 2.

Since this "blessed book" is a *perfect guide*, of course we are all free to lie, deceive, and act the hypocrite, as it suits our purpose or convenience, as the Lord himself advises such a course! Had there been a better or a more honorable way, of course the Lord would have chosen it.

"An evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. The evil spirit from God was upon Saul."—Samuel xvi. 14, 23.

Can *evil* proceed from perfection?

"Wickedness proceeded from the wicked."—Samuel xxiv. 13.

Is God then wicked, if evil comes from him?

"How Endor's witch could raise the dead,
And make heroic Saul afraid,"

you may read in Samuel xxviii., which is only one incident among many which proves to us that this "holy book" teaches a belief in ghosts, witches,

spirits, wizards and hobgoblins, some proceeding from God and some from the Devil, but all purporting to be Divine Revelation. All pure truths, actual occurrences, and holy realities.

“Ye, too, believers of incredible creeds,
Whose faith enshrines the monsters which it breeds,
Who, bolder e’en than Nimrod, think to rise
By nonsense heaped on nonsense, to the skies;
Ye shall have miracles, aye! sound ones, too,
Seen, heard, attested, everything — but true!”
—*Lalla Rookh.*

CHAPTER VII.

“Faith, fanatic Faith, once wedded fast
To some dear falsehood, hugs it to the last.”
—*Moore.*

“And David danced before the Lord with all his might.”—
2 Sam. vi. 14.

Of course, then, dancing is no sin, but rather a pleasing sight to the Lord.

“Go tell my servant, David, Thus saith the Lord, thou shalt build me an house for me to dwell in.”—2 Sam. vii. 5.

It is said the Lord dwells not in houses made with hands.

“Rezza put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it. And God smote him and he died.”—
2 Sam. vi. 6, 7.

No wonder this singular and very unreasonable vengeance displeased David, and made him afraid of such a cruel and tyrannical being; doubtless Uzza thought he was performing a good deed in steadying the ark that it might not fall; but Israel’s God was like too

many others who hold the reins of government — too fond of gratifying his passions, and making a display of his power, to wait and hear the claims of reason and justice, which might be set forth in extenuation of any deed which he imagines infringed upon his rights or dignity.

“ I have kept the ways of the Lord, for all his judgments were before me, and as for his statutes I did not depart from them. I was also upright before him — therefore the Lord hath recompensed me.”—2 Sam. xxii. 22-25.

Thus does David boastfully utter songs of thanksgiving, and “blow his own trumpet” of praise; but carefully refrains from all mention of depriving Uriah of his wife, and sending him to the battle’s front that he might be killed! or of condemning a poor, innocent woman to perpetual confinement and widowhood, (chap. xxii. 3,) or putting people “under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and making them pass through the brick kiln,” and many other acts which would prove him to be far from the *good man* he would have us believe him to be.

Speaking of his enemies in the same chapter, verse 23, he says:—

“ I did beat them as small as the dust of the earth; I did stamp them as the mire of the street, and did spread them abroad.”

Is not this conduct “loving your enemies” with a vengeance?”

“ And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.” — 2 Sam. xxiv.

It is such a common thing for the Lord to get angry, that by the time we have followed him thus far through the book, we expect no better things of him, and (in verse 16) we find him *repenting* of his anger, and (in

3*

verse 25) suffering himself to be appeased by burnt-offerings, and now, contrary to the universal practice of the novel writers, we will leave off in a good place.

For—

The plague is stayed, the war is o'er,
And peace and plenty reign once more.

CHAPTER VIII.

Come one and all, your Bible read,
But first be sure your minds are freed
From prejudice, and error too,
So that unbiassed you may view,
With mind illumed by Reason's light,
Truths (?) too Divine for MAN to write.

“Solomon loved the Lord. God said to him, there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.”—1 Kings iii. 3, 12.

Yet this good man (?) had hundreds of wives, and, to please them, “burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods,” to the great anger and jealousy of his own chosen God, who he imagined had done so much for him.

“Elijah said unto Ahab, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to *my* word.—1 Kings xvii. 1.

People must have possessed more power over the elements then than they do now, else Elijah was but a vain boaster, and “stretched the truth.”

“The ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning and evening.”—1 Kings xvii. 6.

Those ravens must have been very bidable! It is a

pity the story does not inform us where they procured the bread and meat; whether it was created expressly for the purpose, or whether the birds exercised their well known thieving propensities, and thus obtained it, and Elijah became a partaker of their ill-gotten store. The waters of the brook giving out, the Lord sends Elijah to Zarepath, and the widow complains that there is but a "handful of meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse." Elijah tells her that it shall last them all till the Lord sends rain, and "she, and he, and her house did eat many days, and the barrel wasted not, nor did the oil fail."—1 Kings xvii. 1-16.

If this was in any other than a holy and inspired volume, we should think it of doubtful authenticity.

In the next chapter we have an account of Elijah building an altar of twelve stones, "according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob," and putting wood upon it, and a bullock, and pouring four barrels of water over it all, three times in succession, and praying over it till the "fire of the Lord fell and consumed the sacrifice, the wood, stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench!"—Now this story seems very incredible, unless the stones were pure unslacked lime, as some have supposed; these, if large enough, may have "licked up" the twelve barrels of water, and produced heat sufficient to have consumed the whole; but if so, does not this destroy the miracle, and make Elijah a deceiver?

"The Lord was not in the wind; after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire."—1 Kings xix. 11, 12.

Then he is not *omnipresent*.

“I will be a *lying spirit* in the mouth of all his prophets.” — 1 Kings xxii. 22.

When a God descends so low as to be a “lying spirit,” can we worship, venerate, or even respect him?

“And Elijah took his mantle and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.”—2 Kings ii. 8.

People whom the Lord favored had no need of bridges or boats in those days, as the waters were easily persuaded to part themselves and leave dry paths across the course of their beds! I suppose this dividing of the waters must be one of the “lost arts,” as we never hear of its being done since those good old Bible days!

“Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.”—2 Kings ii. 11.

Gospel truth! so please don't doubt the fact (!)!

“There came forth little children out of the city and mocked him and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head....and he turned back and cursed them in the name of the Lord, and there came forth two she-bears and tare forty and two of them.”—2 Kings ii. 23, 24.

This wicked act of revenge by Elisha towards little children, for a thoughtless exhibition of sentiments very natural to them under the circumstances — for the perfectly good children we read of in the literature of the “American Tract Society” are extremely rare — is in perfect keeping with most of the great, wise and holy (?) men of Scripture notoriety. It was not strange at all that the children should want him to “go up,” since he could “divide the waters,” and do miracles like Elijah, and also had the wonderful mantle of said Elijah to aid him in hocus-pocusing the

people ! He also multiplies the widow's oil, gives a son to the Shunammite, raises him from the dead, and tries to follow in the footsteps of his *illustrious* predecessor.

"As one was felling a beam, the axe-head fell into the water and he cried and said, Alas ! master, for it was borrowed ; and the man of God cut down a stick, cast it in thither, and the iron did swim."—2 Kings vi. 5, 6.

What virtue was there in the wood that the mere throwing of it in the water should cause *iron* to swim ? Was it the same sort of wood that was used in sweetening the waters of Onarah ? Or are these "truths too heavenly to be understood ?"

"And it came to pass as they were burying a man, they espied a band of men, and they cast a man into the sepulchre of Elisha ; and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood upon his feet."—2 Kings xiii. 21.

Why was not the miraculous power of these wonderful bones further tested, and other dead men raised by them into life ? Who knows but they might have possessed the life-renewing power sufficiently to have kept men in existence forever ? But the story *may*, after all, have a more simple solution. The man may not have been really dead, and the jar of lowering him into the "sepulchre" may have "raised" him, instead of the touch of the prophet's bones. A little more proof would render it more easy of belief.

"Therefore the Lord was *very angry* with Israel, and removed them out of his sight."—2 Kings xvii. 18.

A mistake, surely ; for is not the Lord omniscient and omnipresent ?

"And Isaiah cried unto the Lord, and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down on the dial of Ahaz."—2 Kings xx. 22.

Even were it possible for Divine power to accom-

plish this, it could only be done by turning the earth backward in its revolution, and human imagination could not conceive of the wreck and ruin to all Nature which this would occasion. And why was such a great exhibition of miraculous power required? Why, simply as proof to Hezekiah that the Lord had spoken the truth when he promised to heal him and lengthen his life. Is not this good evidence that even the word of the Lord himself was not always to be depended upon? Had he never deceived the people, made them false promises, and told them "the thing which *is not*," he need not have used actions that spoke louder than words.

"They shall have mysteries—aye, precious stuff
 For knaves to thrive by—mysteries enough;
 Dark, tangled doctrines, dark as fraud can weave,
 Which simple votaries shall in trust receive,
 While craftier *feign* belief till they believe."
 —*Moore's Lalla Rookh.*

CHAPTER IX.

With reverent awe, approach once more
 And read this tale of times of yore,
 Which man, inspired by God, did write
 Concerning Job, who was upright.

"Job was perfect and upright, he feared God and eschewed evil."—Job i. 1.

In Romans iii. 10, we read, "There is none righteous, no, not one;" and Job's own friends, when

condoling with him for his many misfortunes, reproved him for a want of religion, yet he was so very religious that he offered burnt offerings, "lest his sons might have some of them sinned and cursed God in their hearts," thus showing a want of trust and confidence in the goodness of those whose very characters had been formed by him. It does not seem at all right that God should have allowed Satan to afflict Job as he did, not only depriving him of all that made life pleasant, but also causing him to suffer physically to such a degree that he cursed the day of his own birth! As God is omnipotent, he must have known Job could not bear up under all these afflictions; yet, to gratify a whim of Satan's, he suffers him to be tried and tempted as man never was before. Had Job retained his patience and integrity, we might have believed it was done as an example to show us how much a perfect man will undergo for principles' sake.

But Job makes all manner of lamentations, and boasts of his own virtue, knowledge, wisdom and goodness! He also asserts absolute falsehoods; in fine, proves himself to be as frail as the frailest, as simple as the simplest, and as wicked as the wickedest.

He says, "man is born to trouble," whereas we all know that truth and virtue are the *rule*, and all that is trouble is but perverted goodness and an *exception*! He asks if there be any taste to the white of an egg? seeming to assert that there is not, while it is a well-known fact that even the merest child is only *too fond* of its peculiar flavor! He teaches that immortality

is all a myth. He says, "He that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more;" "Man lieth down and riseth not till the heavens be no more;" "If a man die shall he live again?" He exclaims, xix. 23, "O that my words were printed in a book," yet printing was then an undiscovered art! He calls God cruel, and accuses him of "casting him in the mire." Talks much about all the "corners" of the earth, speaking as if 'twere a flat surface, with "ends" and "corners," where one might look off, and mayhap fall off, too! and says, "Hast thou with him spread out the sky which is strong and as a molten looking-glass?" with holes cut in for the stars, we may infer, and "STRONG," so that they may not fall through! Eliphaz makes him out to be a very bad and wicked man, telling him that all his goodness fails to please God, for it is as nought; that he "stripped the naked of their clothing," xx. 11, though this, from its sheer impossibility, must have been a false accusation. He withheld bread from the hungry, water from the weary, sent the widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken. xx. 6, 7. If such "perfection" pleases God, may reason and common sense deliver me from pleasing or believing in such a Deity. But we are told—

"Reason man never must pursue,
The Bible only can be true—
Must be frail Reason's only teacher,
Culled out and fashioned by the preacher!
And if we dare a word dispute,
They rank us with the meanest brute,
Or send us to their lowest hell,
Forever there in fire to dwell."

CHAPTER X.

The Book of Psalms we'll now review,
 Perhaps we'll find a thought that's new ;
 King David speaks of woes and cares,
 Assails God's ears with many prayers,
 Confessing now his judgments just,
 And that for evil all men lust ;
 Anon of his own goodness boasts,
 Rejoicing that the Lord of Hosts
 Upon his enemies shall rain
 Brimstone and fire, war and pain.

"Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest."—Psalms xi. 6.

As there are "none righteous, no, not one," "none that doeth good," (Psalms xiv. 1,) the Lord, to have sent it upon *all* the sinners, would have been obliged to let the sulphurous flood fall upon all the inhabitants of the earth. Do we not see that the "wicked flourish like a green bay tree," that the "sun shines alike on the just and the unjust," the Christian and the Infidel, the godly and the ungodly? That God is no more a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God, than that he "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb?" Not one prayer was ever specially answered, any more than one cold wind was divinely turned aside from the poor "unfleece" shivering lamb. Fire and brimstone (*alias* thunder and lightning) have no more power to fall upon the wicked than the godly. The

good man is as often harmed by the lightning stroke, or any other natural calamity, as is the wicked !

“ The earth shook and trembled because he was wroth ; there went up a smoke out of his nostrils and fire out of his mouth—coals were kindled by it.”—Psalms xviii. 7, 8.

A pleasing picture this of a great, wise, and merciful Deity !

“ The foundations of the world, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils, were discovered.”—Psalms xviii. 15.

Blew the world aside and showed its foundations ! Did he ? Wonder whether it stood on a “ big turtle ” or was “ rocks all the way down,” or whether it was upheld by the great and fabled “ Atlas ? ”

“ His anger endureth but a moment.”—Psalms xxx. 5.

“ The Lord’s anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness *forty years*.”—Num. xxxii. 13.

Are forty years of *anger* counted as only a *moment* ?

In Psalms xxxvii., we read—“ I have been young and now I am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” Is it not these very righteous ones who *do* suffer ? The *good* of earth—those generous, kind and noble souls, who share their last crust with the starving, who are ever ready with a helping hand to assist the needy or to lift up the fallen, who are too honest to financier, make shrewd bargains, or lend money on usury ; who speak the truth, even though that truth be against their own interests ; — are not these the very ones who *do* come to want, and whose “ seed is found begging bread ? ” Who of us is there who could not point out such needy ones — both among Christians and Infidels ? For there are good people among all

sects, creeds, and classes of men; more good than evil; more right than wrong; more truth than error.

"The days of our years are three score and ten."—Psalms xc. 10.

"His days shall be a hundred and twenty years."—Genesis vi. 3.

Quite a difference between seventy and one hundred and twenty!

In Psalms xci. 10 to 13, we read promises of safety to the godly:—

"There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways.

"They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder and the young lion, and the dragon shalt thou trample under foot."

Where is the Christian according to this text? Are not the dwellings of the godly just as liable to plague and other contagious diseases as are those of Infidels? Are they any more exempt from the venom of poisonous serpents? Dare they venture in the lion's den and tread upon him? Do they never "stub their toes" against stones? Gloriously happy must be the lives of the angels, whose constant employment it is to "bear up" these holy ones "in their hands," so that they may walk safely! How pleasant it must be, to so spend a few millions of the years of eternity! Who does not long for this heaven of happiness? To see further how *merciful* David was to his enemies, read Psalms cix. 1, and then wonder how a *good* God could prosper or reward such a man.

"Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord."—Psalms cl. 6.

And who is the Lord?

Shelley says,—

“ A vengeful, pitiless, and almighty fiend,
Whose mercy is a nickname for the rage
Of lunatics and tigers hungering for blood :
Hell, a red gulf of everlasting fire,
Where poisonous and undying worms prolong
Eternal misery to those hapless slaves
Whose life has been a penance for its crimes ;
And Heaven, a meed for those who dare belie
Their human nature, quake, believe, and cringe
Before the mockeries of earthly power.”

CHAPTER XI.

“ As long as mortals place their fondest hopes
On senseless fables and ambiguous tropes,
And learn God’s words from tales of ancient times,
And form their morals from a book of crimes,
So long will ceaseless strife afflict mankind,
And holy fear enthrall the human mind.”

—*Maid of Midian.*

“ Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth, lest the Lord see it and it displease him and he turn away his wrath from him.”—Proverbs xxiv. 17, 18.

Is it not impossible to *wish* our enemies to suffer, and yet not be *glad* when they *do* suffer? To desire a thing and not be glad when our desire is gratified, is an impossibility. The very expression is a plain contradiction. The sentiment it inculcates is also a wrong one. It teaches us that it is all right enough to *wish* evil to those who are enemies to us, only we must not rejoice lest the Lord see it. Methinks old Solomon must have been a little lacking in his fabled wisdom when he penned this proverb, or uttered it.

"If thine enemy hunger, give him bread to eat, if thirsty, give him water, for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee."—Proverbs xxv. 21, 22.

Here we are not taught to "love our enemies," or to do them good, from any virtuous or noble impulse, but to do so only that we may gratify our feelings of revenge by causing them to suffer mentally even more than they were suffering physically! It is looked upon by the Lord himself as a good deed and worthy of reward, to heap "coals of fire" upon their heads.

"Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit."—Proverbs xxvi. 4, 5.

As we are not required to perform impossibilities, and as it is impossible to obey both of these commands, will some one please point out which is the *divine* one? It is of the utmost importance that we should know, for a command emanating from such a holy source as the "word of the Lord," must be of the highest significance

"A lion turneth not away for any."—Prov. xxx. 30.

"The *fear* and *dread* of you shall be on every beast of the earth."—Genesis ix. 2.

"One generation passeth away and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth forever."—Eccl. i. 4.

Had "the preacher" continued as he begun, and said one earth passeth away and another earth cometh, he would have spoken ALL truth. For as generations pass away, so do worlds pass away, and as new generations come, so do new worlds form out of the chaos of the old worlds, only the cycles of time required are so many millions of years longer that the recurrence of them is not perceptible to the limited circle of our observation. We only *know* it to be so

from the induction of philosophy, reason and common sense. All individual forms and identities must change and pass away. We cannot conceive of a beginning when there was no earth or matter, or of a world made, created out of nothing! So if the materials have always been, they must always continue to be — always passing through certain changes, as the long ages roll by. Even as the seasons come and go, so do the years come and go. As generations come and go, so do worlds come and go.

“ Let heaven and earth, let man’s revolving race,
His ceaseless generations, tell their tale ;
Let every part depending on the chain
That links it to the whole, point to the hand
That grasps its term ; let every seed that falls,
In silent eloquence unfold its store
Of argument. Infinity within,
Infinity without, belie creation !
The interminable spirit it contains
Is Nature’s only God.”

—*Shelley.*

CHAPTER XII.

If to us the preacher preaches,
It’s no less true because *he* teaches ;
If *truth* ’mid error should be found,
The rays of light which it surround
Will from the contrast brighter shine,
Like grapes upon a frosted vine ;
So listen now to truths I tell
Which from a preacher’s lips once fell.

“ All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full ; unto the place whence the rivers came, thither they return again. The thing that hath been is that which shall be, and that which

is done is that which shall be done ; there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See this is new ? It hath been of old time which was before us. There is no remembrance of former things, neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after."—Eccl. i. 7-11.

Is not this the very philosophy which is taught by the Materialists of the present time ? Does it not plainly teach us that there was no beginning and no creation, and consequently will be no annihilation and no end ? That Nature works by inevitable and unchangeable laws in one ever-recurring round of cycles, that our immortality is but the immortality of all material things ; that as *all* matter is immortal, so is the matter of which *we* are composed immortal, as it is a part of the

———"Great, stupendous whole,
Whose body MATTER is, and LIFE the Soul ?"

But that which makes us *ourselves*, our own *individual identity* — that alone which we as thinking beings prize, is lost to us and to ours *forever*. What Materialist, Atheist, Infidel, or unbeliever could say more than is here said in plain Anglo-Saxon, in this chapter of "Holy Writ ?"

"That which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts, as one dieth so dieth the other, yea, they have all one breath ; man hath no pre-eminence above a beast. All go unto one place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.....Who shall bring him to see what shall be after him ?.....Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth ?"—Eccl. iii. 19-22.

There is too much of TRUTH in these utterances of Divine inspiration to allow of their being preached from in our pulpits. This doctrine would take from the Gospel-dealers their very best weapons — all be-

lief in a future state of existence ; in heaven, hell, devils, angels, and all the paraphernalia of which they are so used to prating, and they would be unable longer to “fleece their flocks” and live off of the “fat of the land.” If we are to die as the beast dies, of course our whole duty is to *do well* while here, and enjoy all the good we can of this life, and to “rejoice in our own works.” It is only in virtue and goodness that true happiness consists — in obeying the maxim of the wise old Chinese philosopher, “Do unto another what you would he should do unto you, and do not unto another what you would should not be done unto you ; thou only needest this law alone ; it is the foundation and principle of all the rest.”—[Confucius.

“For to him that is joined to the all living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything, *neither have they any more reward* ; for the memory of them is forgotten..... Neither have they any more a portion *forever* in anything that is done under the sun.”—Eccl. ix. 4-6.

Can anything be plainer and more explicit than this doctrine of non-immortality ? Does it not say plainly that *this existence* is all — this life the *end* of all hope, fear, joy, or pain ?

These are *truths*, truths divine !
 Every word, in every line ;
 Who can fail to understand
 This, the work of God's own hand ?
 So plain and simple is the creed
 That even “he who runs may read.”

CHAPTER XIII.

Now, young and old, come every one
And read the songs of Solomon ;
The wisest man (?) the world e'er knew,
Let us his *love-songs* now review,—
For he who plucked a *thousand flowers*
From Love's sweet and rosy bowers,
Was Divinely then inspired
To teach us all that is required
Upon this theme ; so old, yet new,
And what he tells must sure be true.
Else why should God have told the tale
Which youths and maidens seldom fail
To read, and sigh and ponder o'er,
And read again, and sigh for *more* !

Yet from these holy songs no extract can be made suitable for the perusal of a refined and enlightened public ; for like too many other chapters and passages of holy writ, they contain expressions and allusions which are not suitable for perusal, not even if read as young converts are advised to read the Scriptures, "on bended knee, with a holy and reverent awe, and a firm determination to believe every word to be an inspiration from a great, wise, good and perfect God."

One fact must ever strike the unprejudiced reader who reasons and thinks upon what he reads, and who does not swallow "Gospel doses" — like bitter medicine — all at a gulp ; that is, that the headings of the

various chapters have no reference to the subjects therein treated upon. It is far more reasonable to suppose that Solomon — judging from the great number of his wives — must have possessed a large organ of amateness, and dwelling upon the subject of love, as much as he undoubtedly did, should have written upon it in such a “novelish” strain. Nothing ever inspires one to verse and song as much as a wound from the arrow of the “little blind archer, Cupid,” and this wise old gentleman was doubtless well scarred over with such honorable (?) wounds. Knowing all this, is it not much more reasonable to suppose that the subject of the songs in question was *human* love, rather than that of a love between Christ and the Church, which no one would ever dream of calling it, were it not for the false — *intentionally* false — headings of the chapters? Though this is not the only instance of such false headings in this “Book of books,” still it is the most *glaringly* false of them all, from its entire inapplicability. If I mistake not, the name of Christ, God, or even the Church, is not mentioned in a single chapter of this “holy song.” It has ever been held a virtue to *lie* for the good of the church, to deceive the vulgar, and speak to them in parables, that “seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand.” The intelligent, thinking, reasoning man *knows* that all “Gospel” is but *fable* and *superstition*, but he thinks the low, vulgar, and ignorant are only to be governed by their *fears*, so he supports the humbug for their benefit. (?) Just because it is easier to appeal to their physical fears than arouse the dormant faculties

of reason and judgment. The mother whips the child for the same object, just because it is *easier* and more expedient for *present purposes* than to teach it by precept and example, to impress upon it line upon line by slow and patient continuance !

“ Falsehood now triumphs, deadly power
Has fixed its seal upon the lips of truth,
But the eternal world
Contains at once the evil and the cure ;
Some eminent in virtue shall start up,
Even in perversest time,
And man, with changeless nature coalescing,
Will undertake regeneration’s work,
And pure health — drops from the cup of joy —
Fall like a dew of balm upon the world.”
—Shelley.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ The church invented lying words and modes
Empty and vain as its own coreless heart,
Evasive meanings, nothings of much sound,
To lure the heedless victims to the toils
Spread round the valley of its Paradise.”
—Shelley.

“ I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of goats.”—Isaiah i. 11.

Yet both in Leviticus and Exodus the Lord continually commands them to offer up to him in sacrifice, rams, goats, &c., so that he may *smell* the “sweet savor,” and be *pacified* by the fumes of smoke, burnt flesh, and frying fat ! But perhaps by this time he had got too much of a *good thing*, and so cries “enough !”

"Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth ; they are a trouble unto me ; I am weary to bear them."—Isaiah i. 14.

Can perfection hate? Can omnipotence be wearied and troubled? If so, if such paltry things as "new moons" and "appointed feasts" could weary and trouble this supreme, all-powerful ruler, few must be his hours of rest and happiness, considering all the things which he must behold, that would cause "hate, trouble and worriment" to his all-seeing eyes, as he glances over the daily doings of all the inhabitants of all the vast cities, the smaller towns, villages, and hamlets, and all the wide-spread countries of the globe, to say nothing of other worlds, globes, and spheres innumerable! How deserving of *infinite* pity such a miserable Deity must be! Then, too, he has not one solitary friend to whom he can turn for sympathy or condolence. He is *alone*, like some august monarch upon a throne, ruling over a world of infinitesimal beings of the lowest stage of slobbering idiocy. For how infinitely small must the minute modicum of knowledge that *we* possess seem, in comparison with that of the all-comprehending and all-knowing great *I Am*? How supremely ridiculous to think that *such* a being could be *troubled* with the "new moons," and "feasts," of such an insignificant race of pigmies!

"Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord."—Isaiah i. 18.

Yet how afraid are all the believers in the different creeds and sects of this day of "reasoning together" upon the subject of Christianity! They too well know how impossible it would be to blind people long to the

light of the glorious truths which would sweep away, like a deluge, the whole structure which they have so carefully built up out of materials collected from the old heathen mythologies and ancient tales, traditions and fables, and remodelled into a new system and given the new name of the Christian religion, and which has less than a shadow of a foundation, stands on *less* than nothing! even as a falsehood is not only *not* truth, but is *less than truth*! Taylor says — and by the way *every* Infidel should own, read, lend and circulate that “book of books,” Taylor’s “Diegesis”: — “The highest honor we can pay to truth is to show our confidence in it, our desire to have it sifted and analyzed, by how rough a process soever, as being well assured it is *that* alone that can abide all tests, and which, like the genuine gold, will come out all the purer from the fiercest fire.”

“I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. Mine eyes have seen the Lord, the Lord of Hosts.”—Isaiah vi. 1, 5.

In the heading of this chapter we are told that Isaiah saw the Lord “in a vision,” but if we “reason together” upon the subject, letting the false heading alone, as the work of false and designing men, we shall perceive by the reading of the text that he asserts he really saw the Lord himself in “*propria persona*,” and was thereby made a man of “unclean lips,” and a seraphim had to take a live coal with the tongs from the altar and touch his lips with it to “purge the sin!” How puerile all this seems to be to the uninitiated and unsanctified!

What does Paine, the “Author-Hero of the Ameri-

can Revolution," say ? :—"The book of Isaiah is one of the most wild and disorderly compositions ever put together — has neither beginning, middle, nor end, and, except a few sketches of history, is one continued, incoherent, bombastical rant, full of extravagant metaphor without application, and destitute of meaning; a school-boy would have scarcely been excusable for writing such stuff. It is — at least in the translation — that kind of composition and false taste called 'prose run mad.' "

"In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired."—Isaiah vii. 20.

Fancy a God shaving himself! And with a *borrowed* razor, too! What balderdash! What a mean, contemptible opinion of *Deity* must the brain have held that could conceive of such an idea! It is no marvel that men who take for a guide a book teaching such ridiculous ideas of a God, should be wedded to a religion that Shelley calls—

—————"A prolific fiend,
That peoples earth with demons, hell with men,
And heaven with slaves."

CHAPTER XV.

This world's fair joys content them not,
They fain would seek a happier lot ;
Nor can they wait a future state,
But think the Lord will e'en create
Here on earth a paradise
Of gentle forms and dove-like eyes,
That everlasting peace will reign
Over mountain, hill and plain,
The lamb and lion quiet dwell,
Just as they did (?) ere Adam fell !

"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.....and the lion shall eat straw like the ox."—Isaiah xi. 6, 7.

If it were *better* so, why were they not created so that they might dwell together in harmony at first ? Why were any made carnivorous, if a better and happier state or condition of things *could* have been ? The great geologists and naturalists tell us that animals preyed upon each other long before the existence of man upon the earth, so it cannot be through Adam's fall that strife and carnivorousness came into the world. If their nature is inherently thus, can any power change it as long as a lion is a lion, or a leopard a leopard ? It may all sound very nice in poetry and romance to read of this harmonial condition between natural antagonists, and by a long and forced system of training the rat may be taught to devour the cat,

or each to dwell in peace together, but it is not cat or rat nature, and cannot be made so in general.

In chapter xiii., the "Lord musters up the armies of his wrath," pours out all sorts of threats upon the people, men, women and children, and threatens to "shake the heavens and remove the earth out of her place," a threat impossible of fulfilment, and not really meant to be performed, but which shows God to be very *human* in his wrath, for men when very angry always threaten to do many things they never can or meant to accomplish.

"The moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed."—Isaiah xxiv. 23.

Of course we are not to take this literally, since suns and moons have not the human or animal feeling of shame or surprise, therefore we must twist, turn, and parableize it, and make it suit any purpose we choose. This is a blessed privilege that we have of turning and twisting Scripture to suit present *needs* or desires.

"The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven fold as the light of seven days."—Isaiah xxx. 26.

Where is this new accession of light to be obtained? How will the eye of man, beast, or bird bear the strength of the seven fold rays? What will be its effects upon the earth and its vegetable and animal life?

+ "The ends of the earth were afraid, drew near and came."—Isaiah xl. 1.

Again, "the *ends*' of a *globe*! and these impossible "ends" to possess the feeling of *fear* and the power of contracting, curling up, "drawing near!"

"I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things."—Isaiah xlv. 7.

If evil comes from God, it must be *good*, for "God saw everything that he had made and it was very good." Genesis lii. 14.

"His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men."—Isaiah lii. 14.

Now this passage is said to have reference to Jesus, and by the description we see that he is very far from being the "beautiful Jew" he is always represented to be in the Bible plates and in picture books! Indeed, if his visage was so woefully marred, he must have been hideously, frightfully ugly. If we should thus photograph him, it would not then be thought quite so *romantic* to fall into his misshapen, crooked, and ill-shaped arms! We are naturally all lovers and worshippers of the beautiful. So the "blessed Savior" must ever be painted and described as beautiful, let the arrow shoot as wide of the mark as it will. Christians seek not truth, only *effective* weapons. What is more effective than beauty — beauty in the human form, in the human face divine?

"Beauty which makes hearts that feed thereon
Sick with excess of sweetness."

—*Shelley*.

CHAPTER XVI.

If lies and oaths from God proceed,
 As we in Jeremiah read,
 It surely can't be very wrong,
 To use a word that's pretty strong,
 Or "stretch the truth" to serve an end,
 And with the false the real blend.

"If they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to *swear* by my name, the Lord liveth, as they taught my people to swear by Baal, then shall they be built in the midst of my people."—Jeremiah xii. 16.

Having been taught that it was wrong, wicked, coarse and vulgar to swear, and more wicked to swear "*by God*," than by anything else, how shall we reconcile the command of the Most High with the laws and statutes of the land, to say nothing of our own educated conscientiousness? The Almighty, being a "jealous God," could not abide having his "chosen people" swear by other gods and heathen deities, so commanded them to swear by *his* name as they had been taught "to swear by Baal!"

"I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the Lord; I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy."—Jeremiah xiii. 14.

Would a God of "mercy, love, charity, forbearance and long-suffering" be apt to utter such a horrible threat as this?

"I am weary with repenting."—Jeremiah xv. 6.

"The Lord fainteth not, neither is weary."—Isaiah xl. 28.

"I will fan them with a fan."—Jeremiah xv. 7.

Imagine the situation — a great, big God Almighty waving a great, big fan — *fanning the people!* How sublime!

"Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar and as waters that fail?"—Jeremiah xv. 18.

Methinks this is using plain language — calling God a liar! Is it any wonder that so many of this day fail to trust and believe in his promises, when those with whom he had daily intercourse and communion, and who knew him personally, had no confidence in his pledged word?

"Mine anger which shall burn FOREVER."—Jeremiah xvii. 4.

"If they will not obey, I will utterly destroy that nation."—Jeremiah xxii. 17.

"If that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil I thought to do unto them; if it do evil I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them."—Jeremiah xviii. 8-10.

Who could not prophecy in such a style as this? A prophecy with an if, a but, or a reservation to it, is simply no prophecy, and amounts to just nothing at all.

"I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters."—Jeremiah xix. 9.

What a kind, just, good, and merciful Deity! How we ought to love, worship, and admire him! Is he not worthy of all praise?

"O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed."—Jeremiah xx. 7.

Lying and deceiving go hand in hand, and are God-like qualities!

"Cursed be the day wherein I was born."—Jeremiah xx. 14.

Can we wonder that he got angry and out of

patience with such a deity as this — a God who deceives, lies, and utters such bitter curses and threats as we read in the sixth chapter?

“Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying a man-child is born unto thee.”—Jeremiah xx. 15.

And why curse an innocent man who only proclaimed a truth, and did not thereby make or mar one hour of his life? Oh! the short-sightedness of these old heroes of Biblical literature! Should novel-writers or biographers of this day picture out such characters as these as their *best* creations and best specimens, how would the critics pounce upon their works and hold them up to direst ridicule!

“If ye will not hear these words, I SWEAR by myself that this house shall become a desolation.”—Jeremiah xxii. 5.

Of course, God knew his simple word would not be believed, so he confirmed it with an *oath*!

“For because of swearing the land mourneth.”—Jeremiah xxiii. 10.

Yet by precept and example and by supreme commands they were taught and compelled to swear.

“The Lord shall ROAR from on high, he shall MIGHTILY ROAR upon his habitation. He shall give a shout.”—Jer. xxv. 30.

As it is but a “step from the sublime to the ridiculous,” the rubicon is surely passed when such contemptible expressions are used concerning an all-wise, supreme being, the greatest, best, and purest we can conceive of.

“And the PEACEABLE habitations are cut down because of the FIERCE ANGER of the Lord.”—Jeremiah xxv. 37.

What love, mercy, and justice we see here displayed! A savage, *fierce*, angry God, destroying the homes of quiet, peaceable people, because of his *fierce*

anger ! Is it strange that men get mad, angry, revengeful, savage, and FIERCE, and fight, slay, and destroy each other, when their God sets them an example ? As is a man's God, so is his own nature ; if he worship angry, FIERCE gods, thus will he develop these qualities in his own nature.

" Yet hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah : Thou shalt not die by the sword, but thou shalt die in peace, and with the burnings of thy fathers so shall they burn odors for thee and lament thee, for I have PROMISED the word, saith the Lord."—Jeremiah xxxiv. 4, 5.

Now turn to chapter lii. 18, 19, and see if this prophecy or promise be fulfilled :—" And the King of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then put out his eyes, bound him in chains, carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death."

Are such false prophecies the offspring of Divine revelation ? Who of us could not prophecy or guess as near the truth as did this great prophet ?

" The outworn right, the old abuse,
The pious fraud transparent grown,
The good held captive in the use
Of wrong alone—
These wait their doom from that great law
Which makes the past time serve to-day,
And fresher life the world shall draw
From their decay."

—J. G. Whittier.

CHAPTER XVII.

Of visions wonderful and strange,
Imaginings beyond the range
Of human ken and human thought,
By power of God (?) we see here wrought
Upon this holy prophet's mind,
By him transcribed for all mankind.

The Book of Ezekiel commences with the narration of a marvellous vision. He says he saw cherubims, with four faces and four wings, and other like wonderful attributes, and he also describes a something which he calls the "glory of God," which spake to him and handed him "a roll of a book, written within and without," commanding to "eat the roll," and said "go and speak unto the house of Israel." He says, "I did eat it, and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness."

This is a new and easy way of obtaining wisdom and knowledge — swallowing it down bodily, digesting it physically instead of mentally, thus making it food for body and mind all at once! Wonder if the figurative expression of "devouring books" is derived from this incident? If the Lord had only sent us Bibles (*alias* books — for the terms are synonymous — that we could thus *literally swallow* and find sweet to the taste, maybe we might be able to understand and comprehend the holy mysteries which they contain without so much dispute and controversy.

In chapter v. 1, he is commanded to "shave off his

hair and beard, and divide it in three parts, and burn one-third, smite one-third about with a knife, and scatter one-third in the wind ; ” and after the whole three-thirds are disposed of, he is commanded to “ bind some in his skirts ” and cast some in “ the midst of the fire,” which command proves that Ezekiel’s God was rather deficient in the art of calculating fractions !

“ If the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet.”—Ezekiel xiv. 9.

No wonder it has always been held to be a virtue to lie and deceive for the “glory of the church,” and that so much deception is and always has been practiced by ministers and by professors of all the various sects and creedists of Christendom, when their God himself sets them the example, though it is expressly said in the commandment “Thou shalt not *lie* ! ” Yet what is *deceiving* but lying in actions ? and actions are said to “speak louder than words,” for words are but empty breath — simple sounds — while actions are realities, tangible events. “Bishop Burnet, in his treatise, ‘*De Statu Mortuorum*,’ (*purposely written in Latin* that it might serve for the instruction of the clergy only, and not come to the knowledge of the laity, because, as he says, ‘too much light is hurtful for weak eyes,’) not only justifies, but recommends the practice of the most consummate hypocrisy, and that, too, on the most awful of all subjects, and would have his clergy seriously preach and maintain the reality and eternity of hell torments, even though they should believe nothing of the sort themselves.” —[Taylor’s “Diegesis.”]

Mosheim and Lardner, and other of the "big guns" on whom we depend in a great measure for our knowledge of ancient Christianity, confess to forgeries and deceptions of all kinds among the clergy, but say it was "all done for the good of the church!" that in time "the lie would be believed, and answer as well as truth!" Rev. Daniel Hartman said here, last winter, during the great revival in the Methodist Church, that "if he KNEW there was no truth or reality in the Christian religion, he would still advocate, preach it, and desire to believe it, because of the happiness it gave him and of its power for doing good." Now *I*, for one, protest against being *frightened into being good* by any great "*boo*" the preachers or their Gods can ever raise or invent. If TRUTH will not make or keep people good, nothing will do it, and if one preacher will preach what he KNOWS to be false, how shall we be assured that ANY of them will tell all truth?

To learn that Ezekiel is a *false* prophet, we have only to read the 20th verse of the 18th chapter, which says, "The Son shall not bear the iniquity of the Father," while Exodus xx. 5, says, "I *will* visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children until the third and fourth generation."

And we know the child DOES bear the iniquity of the parents, and suffers for their sins, both physically and mentally. It is one of Nature's inevitable and unchangeable laws that this should be so, not as a revenge or punishment for sin committed, but as a natural and unavoidable consequence of a departure from the laws of right and justice. Let the wrong-

doing of the parent be voluntary or involuntary, ignorantly or wilfully committed, it matters not. The consequence must of NECESSITY follow the cause, aside from, and in spite of, all that any prophet or his God even could do to avert it !

“ Onward ! there are ills to conquer,
 Ills that on ourselves were brought,
 There is wisdom to discern,
 There is temperance to learn,
 And enfranchisement for thought.
 There are hearts that burn to aid us,
 There are arms in hour of need ;
 Onward teacher ! onward nations !
Will must ripen into deed.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

No evil can from God proceed ;
 He giveth only what we need.
 Can anger in His bosom dwell ?
 Can “ fury ” cause His heart to swell ?

“ I gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live.”—Ezekiel xx. 25.

Truly, a God-like act !

“ With *fury* poured out I will rule over you.”—Ezekiel xx. 33.

If “ God is love,” can he feel furious ?

“ No foot of man or beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited for forty years.”—Ezekiel xxix. 11.

This prophecy has never been fulfilled. and conse-

quently must be false. Voltaire says:—"If you are inclined for fictions, give the preference to those of Homer, Virgil, and Ovid. He who prefers the prophecies of Ezekiel, deserves to breakfast with him."

Of what that breakfast consisted, for 390 days, you may read in Ezekiel, chapter 4th. In chapter 37th, our author tells us a story of being "set down in the midst of the valley, which was full of dry bones;" not only dry, but "very dry," and the Lord commanded him to "prophecy upon them," after which the "bones came together, bone to its bone, and the sinews and flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them," and after prophecying again to the wind, "the breath came into them, and they stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army." What became of this remarkable army after the farce was over, deponent sayeth not; but we may safely presume they departed again to the "land of shades," like the shadows called up by the mediums of the present day.

Generation after generation have read in Daniel, chapter 3d, of the casting three men into the fiery furnace, "heated seven times more than its wont," and there being seen to walk unharmed amid the flames. Yet who really believes this to be a veritable fact? Who would risk a trial of such a nature upon themselves, believing that God could or would preserve them likewise unharmed?

"He was driven from men, and did eat grass, as oxen."—Daniel iv. 33.

Wonder if he understood chewing the cud?

"In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote upon the wall.....And the king saw the part of the hand that wrote."—Daniel v. 5.

Witchcraft, Spiritualism, or jugglery, which?

The story of Daniel in the lions' den is about as believable as that of the three men in the furnace, only he had one more chance of safety. It is said that a man, by the power of his eye, can keep a wild beast at bay, and in this manner Daniel might have saved himself, as he was a shrewd and wise man; but as for the intervention of a God in the case, it is too absurd an idea to meet with credence. We have no evidence that any all-wise, all-powerful, supreme, intelligent power ever interfered by direct agency between the relation of cause and effect. All we require is *knowledge*, and then we would be able to trace back each effect to the cause or causes which produced it, and by thus doing, we would see that "like causes always produce like effects," in spite of all supernatural agency. If a man be cast into a den of wild beasts and the beasts feel a desire to feed upon his flesh, unless he can subdue them by some power of his own, or receive assistance from others, he will inevitably be devoured, in spite of all the faith he may feel in all the Gods in "Christian or in Heathen lands."

CHAPTER XIX.

“What if all the world oppose?
Truth is stronger than our foes.”

“The Lord said call his name Jezreel.”—Hosea i. 4.

It seems the Lord took much interest in small affairs in those by-gone days, since he went about naming the children!

“They shall walk after the Lord. He shall *roar* like a lion. When he shall *roar*, the children shall tremble from the west.”—Hosea xi. 10.

We may safely suppose HE has given up ROARING in these latter days, since we never hear him.

“I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, a people far off.”—Joel iii. 8.

If the LORD sells human beings, why may not men buy and sell each other? Can the slave-holder want a better plea than this text of Divine Inspiration?

“The day of the Lord is darkness.”—Amos v. 18.

It is said, “They choose darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.” Is this the reason why God chooses darkness for HIS day?

“I hate, I despise your feast days, I will not SMELL in your solemn assembly, and though you offer me burnt offerings, and meat offerings, I will not accept them.”—Amos v. 21, 22.

Is not this a sublime idea? A God being indignant and refusing to have his holy and divine nostrils tittilated with the savory and delicious odor of burnt meat, grease, and gravy!

"The Lord repented for this."—Amos vii. 3.

Why did he do it, then? Had he not *fore-knowledge* to know the result ere 'twas done?

"I saw the Lord standing upon the altar."—Amos ix. 1.

Only one more of those favored ones who have seen *Him* whom "no man hath seen at any time or can see!"

"Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down."—Amos ix. 2.

The old exploded idea of a hell *up*, and a heaven *down*, each of which must be in a reversed position each succeeding day and night as the earth revolves on its axis.

"Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah."—Jonah i. 17.

It was a great oversight in the author of this marvellous tale that he did not particularly describe this wonderful fish, as it must have been a unique and peculiar specimen, made for that identical purpose, and could understand when it was spoken to, for "The Lord spake unto the fish and it vomited out Jonah." (Jonah ii. 10.)

"Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth."—Jonah iii. 8.

There must have been quite a demand for this sort of goods just about that time! Perhaps they kept a supply on hand for such solemn occasions, as it seems to have been a great aid towards obtaining favor in the sight of their God! After all, it was hardly right to blame Jonah for not wishing to go to Nineveh to tell the people of that great city a falsehood, even if the Lord did command him to do so. We cannot

blame him for getting angry with his God when he had obeyed him and prophesied the overthrow of the city in forty days, and then to have God "eat his own words" and "repent and turn away from his fierce anger," (Jonah iii. 9,) just as he — Jonah — had told them he *would* do as he stated, "Was not this my saying when I was yet in my country?"

"Evil came down from the Lord."—Micah i. 12.

"Yet all the works of the Lord are *good*." "He is all love."

"God is jealous, the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies."—Nahum i. 2.

We see the God of Nahum is like all the Gods of the Bible — angry, revengeful and jealous — more an object of fear than love, nothing noble, grand, or sublime in his character, but displaying only low, coarse, and grovelling passions, derogatory even to the name of manhood, and how much more so then to Deity itself?

"God came from Teman."—Habakkuk iii. 3.

Then he is not omnipresent, but comes and goes — here, there, and thither.

"I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that say in their heart, the Lord will not do good."—Zephaniah i. 12.

Can you not see him, friends, candle in hand, peeping about the lanes, alleys, and by-ways of the city, hunting up the fugitives from his wrath? He is neither omniscient nor omnipresent, but has to *go and search* and take a candle to aid his deficient vision!

"Lest I come and smite the earth with a *curse*."—Malachi iv. 6.

A curse is a fitting word for a *finale* to such a vol-

ume of anger, jealousy, war, murder, rapine, bloodshed, and cruelty, as is this which we have been cursorily reviewing and commenting upon. Though rich has been the harvest, considering the holy (?) source from which it emanated, yet such are the multitude of errors, contradictions, absurdities, improbabilities, and impossibilities so thickly strewn all through its pages, that to notice them all as they merit would be the work of a life-time. But hoping the little achieved will be the means of aiding some of the blind and duped ones out of the swaddling-clothes of ignorance, superstition, and credulity, into the pure, bright robes of truth, happiness, and wisdom, I will now commence Volume II., commonly called the New Testament, and

“ If with the chaff some grains of wheat you gain,
Our well-meant labor hath not been in vain.”

CHAPTER XX.

Worn out at length, and much perplexed,
His only son God sends us next ;
His father “ *ghost*,” his mother *maid*, (?)
Himself a “ *myth*,” as Taylor said.

Matthew, chapter 1st, commences by giving a genealogy of Christ from Abraham to Joseph, that seems entirely superfluous, as he explicitly says the Holy Ghost was his father, and certainly his Ghostship wasn't a descendant of Abraham, that Christ's genealogy should be traced from him !

"Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet."—Matt. i. 22.

The usual plan of Bible-makers — this *making* prophecies fulfill themselves.

"Lo! the star which they saw in the east went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was."—Matt. ii. 9.

A very convenient pilot! Wonder if that migratory stellar orb remained stationary after its famous trip? It should have been especially marked and pointed out by all astronomers as a peculiar curiosity.

"When he had fasted 40 days and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungered."—Matt. ix. 2.

The wonder is, that he *ever* had need of food again after so long an abstinence. We degenerate beings, of this later day, would starve in half that time.

"If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off."—Matt. v. 30.

Wise advice this! yet some there are who are ignorant and superstitious enough to follow it. It is not the hand, the mere machine, that is the offending culprit, but the *WILL that moves that hand*, and to that will or mind should the correction or the remedial agent be applied. If we convince the reason and judgment of its error, the "right hand" and the "right eye" will cease to offend, for they only move as they are moved.

"I say unto you, swear not at all."—Matt. v. 34.

Yet our courts compel us to swear, or affirm, which is all the same. Law is never satisfied with the simple "yea," or "nay," — and not one Christian out of ten is content with a man's bare word in matters of business; which shows that though confessedly believers, they are only so in theory.

“Resist not evil,” &c.—Matt. v. 39.

Our friend Henry C. Wright may be able to live in accordance with this doctrine, but I must confess too much of the “old Adam” to meekly take and humbly bear all sorts of wrong and oppression. Human nature revolts at it; and were a few to set themselves up as non-resistants, how soon would they be stripped of everything they possess, — and where would be the good resulting from it? If all were thus, and all good, reliable, responsible, *thinking* citizens, it may be such a state of things might be feasible.

“If a man sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.”—Matt. v. 40.

Aye! give him all thou hast and go and earn more; it will make robbery so easy that perhaps people will quit it out of very shame; — though *when* they do, there will be a very radical change in the race.

“Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.”—Matt. v. 41.

Yes, go on, on, on, it may be you will be *allowed* to stop sometime!

“Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.”—Matt. v. 42.

Of course, it is a *virtue* to encourage the idle and the lazy, the spendthrift and the prodigal! There are always plenty who are willing to enjoy the fruits of the industrious man’s labor, if they can obtain it by asking or borrowing of it.

“Love your enemies; bless them that curse you.”—Matt. v. 44.

An impossibility! we may pity, we may refrain from injuring in turn,—we may even stretch forth a

helping hand to one who wrongs us, but we cannot LOVE an inveterate, unrelenting enemy.

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in Heaven is perfect.”—Matt. v. 48.

Can we conceive of perfection? Can a perfect being exist either as God or man? Can we conceive of perfect happiness or perfect misery—here or hereafter? “Of such stuff dreams are made.” This great, much talked of Sermon on the Mount, is nothing but a mass of absurdities and impossibilities, — sounding all very well as a romance, but for plain, practical, every-day life, it is simply nonsense.

“Self-righteousness is but a filthy rag—
Sweet Jesus only sinners must confide in,
And guard against ‘short-comings’ and backsliding;
Without faith in the Lamb to Hell you’ll go,—
But Lamb’s blood makes you as white as snow.”

—Yahoo.

CHAPTER XXI.

Christians in nothing save the name,
And ever ready they to blame
Those who by DEEDS their faith confirm,
And from the fabled legends turn.

“When thou prayest, enter into thy closet.”—Matt. vi. 6.

Yet Christians much prefer to pray “standing in the synagogue, that they might be seen of men,” — each striving to see who can pray loudest, hardest, and longest, not because they think the Lord is *deaf*,

or prefers long *coaxing*, but that they may be considered more powerful and earnest in THE CAUSE, and more effective laborers in the vineyard, and their prayers are always addressed to the *congregation* rather than to God. They pray for their own emolument, and glory in their OWN GREAT LABORS. (?)

“When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathens do, for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking.”—Matt. vi. 7.

This “much speaking” is the very thing these “squealing savages of salvation” are especially noted for, and being generally very ignorant and at a loss for *ideas* whereby they might do much useful and instructive speaking, they fill up the interstices with ejaculations, exclamations, and “vain repetitions” of all kinds so as to be able to make a great show with very little material.

“Your father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him.”—Matt. vi. 8.

Why trouble him with vain supplications, then? For if ye ask for things ye have *no need of*, a wise father will not grant them.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth.”—Matthew vi. 19.

Who is more eager to lay up treasures on earth than the meek and humble (?) followers of Christ? Who so well know the value and influence of the “filthy lucre” — who beg, wheedle, and coax so hard for this “root of all evil,” even taking the penny from the reluctant hand of the innocent child to pamper their own luxurious and pampered appetites — collecting their alms not in secret, as they are bidden, but with the utmost publicity, even in their synagogues, and

those who bestow them give thus publicly to be "seen of men," that they may win a name for piety and benevolence? How few, how meagre would be the contributions, were each to drop his mite "unsight and unseen" into some hidden and secret recess! So well do these Gospel-dealing beggars know this, that they generally resort to the most public and conspicuous place, often heading the subscription list with a big name, and sometimes a fictitious amount, just for effect and show, and each contributor doubling and quadrupling his donation because ashamed to have his name appear as giving less than "so and so." And this is "not letting the left hand know what the right doeth!" This is practical Christianity!

"Take no thought what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or what ye shall put on."—Matt. vi. 25.

Who likes to feast upon the "fat of the land" better than the smooth, sleek, oily, rotund, well-fed preacher of the Gospel? For whom is the fatted calf, the early chicken, or choice sirloin of beef oftener set before than this "black-coated" gentry? And who so well, so richly, so spotlessly, so faultlessly apparelled, from the crown of the fashionable beaver to the tip of the patent leather boot? Who better knows the effect of an attractive "*tout ensemble*" than these "reverend" hypocrites—these *leeches* upon an honest, industrious, yet ignorant community?

"These followers (?) of the meek and lowly Jesus,
Teach they the precepts that *he* taught?
Believe they in his God or mammon?"

CHAPTER XXII.

Our sovereign ruler, leader, guide,
 Our joy, our love, our hope, our pride,
 Is Jesus Christ, God's first-born Son, (?)
 And TRUTH alone falls from his tongue.

"If God so clothe the grass of the field which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"—Matt. vi. 30.

Have those of "much faith" been found to have more or better clothing than those who have less of this "substance of things hoped for?" I am thinking if the Christian waited for the *Lord* to clothe him, he would find himself ere long with rather a scanty outfit! Let the struggle for food, clothing, land, and home once cease, and men wait in idleness for the Lord to provide for their wants, and the race would soon become uncivilized, and the land a wilderness!

"Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for things of itself."—Matt. vi. 34.

How impossible to be obeyed is such advice! If we "take *no* thought for the morrow," we should neither wash our clothes that we might be clean on the morrow, nor bake bread that we might eat on the morrow, nor gather grain that we might grind it on the morrow, nor sow that we might reap on the morrow. Who can conceive of a life that takes *no thought* for the morrow?

"Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find."—Matt. vii. 7.

Although we are told in the next paragraph that

every one that asketh receiveth, we know this is not an invariable result of "asking" and "seeking." On the contrary, it *never* occurs out of the ordinary course of Nature, thus showing that when it does come, it is the result of producing causes, not the *special reply* of any interposing power, to the pleading of the asker or seeker. In Proverbs i. 28, we read the direct reverse of what Matthew says — "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." Which is true Gospel? Who is best qualified to judge of the Lord's *willingness* to listen?

"Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sickness."—Matt. viii. 17.

We have no evidence that he ever took any infirmity upon himself, or bore for any one any sickness as a result of healing them. It is not an impossibility that some may have possessed, and may *now* possess the power of healing by "laying on of hands," as it is called; but if they do it, it is no proof of Godly or Christly power, or even that they are wiser or better than others, only that they are differently constituted and organized.

"Let the dead bury the dead."—Matt. viii. 22.

And how are they to do this miracle? Who ever saw a dead man buried by the dead? Our civil laws do not allow us to leave our dead for the dead to bury, nor does humanity and common decency permit it. A wise and practicable command this, to emanate from the holy son of Him "who knoweth all things!"

"He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm."—Matt. viii. 26.

Perhaps he saw the presage of a "lull in the tem-

pest," and thus took advantage of the people's ignorance, as many would-be deities and other wonder-workers have done, and ever will do, seeking thereby to rivet still stronger the fetters of their credulous and unsuspecting dupes.

"Whosoever speaketh against the "Holy Ghost," it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."—Matt. xii. 32.

This "Holy Ghost" is such a mythical sort of personage, that we seldom hear him, or it, spoken of, so perhaps we are in but little danger of committing the "unpardonable sin."

"Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."—Matt. xii. 36.

There must be a tremendous large account-book in which the "idle words" of all poor humans of every land are set down from day to day, from week to week, from year to year, from age to age, from cycle to cycle; and woe to the patience of the poor judge who is obliged to listen to the account upon that great, expected, much talked of, wonderful day of judgment!

"While yet he talked to the people, behold his mother and his brethren stood without desiring to speak with him. He said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? Who are my brethren?"

"And he stretched forth his hands towards his disciples and said, Behold my mother and my brethren."—Matt. xii. 46-49.

Very filial conduct, this! but in exact accordance with the declaration, "I come not to send peace on earth, but a sword, — to set the son at variance with his father," which harmonizes so well with the precepts of non-resistance that have been before men-

tioned, that, like Paddy's ale, "the subject thickens as it clears!"

"He taught them justice, truth and peace,
In semblance; but he lit within their souls
The quenchless flames of ZEAL, and blessed the sword
He brought on earth to satiate with the blood
Of truth and freedom his malignant soul."

—[Shelley.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"To gull the mob and keep them under,
The ancients told their tales of wonder.
A pious fraud or holy blunder,
A rainbow sign,
An earthquake, or a blast of thunder,
Were held divine."

"Why speakest thou unto them in *parables*? He answered, because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given."—Matt. xiii. 11.

A never-varying practice of preachers and teachers of the olden time was this of blinding the eyes of the vulgar, the common people, the ignorant masses, — speaking unto them only just such things as would serve their own purposes.

Taylor says:—"It would be hard to authenticate a single instance of the existence of a translation of the Gospels into the vulgar tongue of any country into which Christianity was established, at any time within the first four centuries. The clergy, or those engaged and interested in the business of dealing out spiritual edification, whose testimony we have alone

on the subject, mutually criminate and re-criminate each other according as they grasp or lose their hold on the ascendancy (and so are held to be orthodox or heretical) with corrupting the Scriptures." Four hundred years are a long time, and in that day when books were few and only in manuscript, how much of forgery and interpolation might have been resorted to and passed unnoticed and undetected, and even if now and then one were found out, how easy to smuggle it up and keep it away from the public, lest it might injure the church, or if approved of, to let it remain as the real "Simon Pure," that it may "help the cause along!" Even as worse things are now hidden and smuggled up in her corrupt and deceiving heart.

"A grain of mustard seed, which is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree."—Matt. xiii. 32.

Jesus must have been very ignorant and unobservant of the seeds and habits of plants to have thought mustard the smallest of seeds, when there are seeds so minute as not to be perceptible to the naked eye, and there are many herbs whose stature and size exceed that of the mustard tree.

"Shall cast them into the furnace of fire, and there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."—Matt. xiii. 50.

Would an earthly parent cast his children into a *furnace of fire*, let them be ever so wicked? Could he see them suffer fiery torments even for one hour? Would he not rather strive to reform them and make of them wise, good, and virtuous citizens, loving and obedient children? Is God more vindictive and less merciful and kind than man? If he *would*, hath he

not the power to make the wicked *all* good? save them *all* from sin, and to depopulate the subterranean regions of its last tenant — sinners, imps, devils and all, and make them all worthy to inhabit his highest heaven? If he had the power, would he not be worse than barbarous not to do it?

The miracle related in Matthew xiv. 19-21, of feeding 5000 men, besides women and children, with five loaves and two fishes, and taking up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained after the feast, is too much of an improbability for us to attempt to believe, even of this great prestidigitateur!

“Jesus went unto them walking on the sea.”—Matt. xiv. 25.

And this when the ship was in the midst of the sea “and tossed with waves.” Peter, too, walked on the water, but “got afraid;” so Jesus had not only to walk himself, but to bear up Peter also. Whoever *can* really believe this, is perfectly welcome to do so; but Infidels prefer more and better evidence than an old Jewish legend to substantiate a thing so contrary to the unvarying, unchanging laws of Nature.

In chapter xv., Christ again feedeth the multitude — 4000 men, *plus* the women and children — with seven loaves and a few little fishes, “and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full!” What a blessing such a *Saviour* would have been to the starving thousands who were confined in Confederate prisons, and to other thousands who at divers other times and places have died for want of “loaves and fishes!” — thousands who were good, true, and noble, who called vainly upon the name of

Jesus for aid he could not, or would not give! If we see good men starve *now*, and no loaves and fishes given or sent — and when do we ever see food thus miraculously bestowed on any? — is it not conclusive evidence that it was never so bestowed?

“Just search the subject through the piece,
 ’Tis fraught with blunders such as these,
 That lying priests their flocks may fleece
 With warely conscience,
 Teach human beings by degrees
 To swallow nonsense!”

CHAPTER XXIV.

—————“’Tis a tale
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
 Signifying nothing.”

“He was transfigured before them; his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias, talking with him.....behold a voice out of the cloud which said, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”—Matt. xvii. 2-5.

“Dreams, empty dreams!” Or was it psychology, ventriloquism, spiritualism, witchcraft, jugglery, or what? Fable it may be, truth it cannot be!

“If ye have faith even as a grain of mustard seed, [that smallest (?) of all seeds,] ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”—Matt. xvii. 20.

Our *faith* is like that of the old woman who prayed at night for the mountain to be removed that rose between her home and that of her neighbor friend, and

on rising the next morning, and seeing it still in the old spot, exclaimed, "Well, I thought it wouldn't go!" We cannot remove mountains or accomplish miracles through faith, first, because we cannot have the requisite faith; second, a miracle is an impossibility, and we cannot conceive of the accomplishment of impossibilities.

"Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."
—Matt. xvii. 21.

In those days when any were afflicted with certain sicknesses or diseases, mental or physical, they were said to be "possessed of devils." Now we know sickness is often cured by fasting, and prayer might also be useful as a remedial agent, inasmuch as all sincere, earnest desires and aspirations have an effect upon the MIND, and as faith works "miracles," the very idea that prayer would be beneficial, might, through the influence of the imagination, work upon the physical system and help to effect a cure.

"Go thou to the sea and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up, and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take and give unto them for me and thee."—Matt. xvii. 27.

"What wondrous feats some fish could do!—
Could swallow prophets, and could bring
The cash for taxes to a king."

"And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church, but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."—Matt. xviii 17.

"If this does not involve all that the unwary admissions of Eusebius Epiphanius would lead unto, even the previous existence of the whole Christian dynasty in all its corruption, or in all its purity, long anterior to any time when such language could have been

used, or the Gospel which contained such language could have been written, if it betray not its design to subserve the purposes of ecclesiastical usurpation, if it savor not of Popery in the rankest tank that ever Pope himself was Popish, there is no skill in criticism to discover any truth below the surface of expression — no wrong in any wrong that can be put off as right — no Rome in Italy — no daylight in the sunshine.” — [Taylor’s “Diegesis.”]

“If two of you shall agree as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven.” — Matt. xviii. 19.

Can this assertion be proved true? Can it not rather be proved ten times a lie? In the case of two opposing armies, whose thousands of each side, not only the passably good, but the purest, best, noblest, and holiest (?) of them all, are praying, imploring, and beseeching in all earnestness and faith, each for the victory of their own side — both cannot win. So how can the prayers of any of the *twos* on one side be granted without disappointing all the *twos* on the opposite side? And this is only one case of thousands which might be mentioned.

“Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven.” — Matt. xviii. 21, 22.

Very rare, — so extremely rare, that *one* well-authenticated case would be a miracle. Is this Christian precept carried out practically by any member of the whole Christian fraternity? Nor can we expect men to be magnanimous or forgiving, as long as they found their morals on such a book as the Bible, or

look up to, and reverentially worship, such a cruel, vindictive, revengeful Deity as is represented in that book of heathen mythological tales and fables.

“If thou wilt be perfect, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor.”—Matt. xix. 21.

Yet just before that, in verse 17, he says, “There is none good but one, and that is God.” If not *good*, can they become *perfect* simply by giving *all* to the poor, and thus becoming an object of charity themselves? And how many Gospel-seekers are there who wish to become *perfect* in this money-sacrificing manner? Do not their actions and daily life show their disbelief in this Christly doctrine? Their scramble after the “filthy lucre” is proof that they desire riches above *perfection*!

“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.”—Matt. xix. 24.

Poor blind dupes! Why could they not understand the policy of this saying? These Christians were of the poorest and lowest class, and consequently were the most to be benefitted by this “giving up all thou hast to the poor”—meaning thereby, as Christians now are ever striving to do, in all ways,—to obtain possession of money, wealth, and power, by precept, teaching the despising of it, that they may the more easily coax and wheedle it from their dupes. One of their most effective modes of begging is, to select two or three of the youngest and prettiest females of the flock, and by wheedling and sophistry, fill them with a holy *zeal* and emulation, so that they will strive to see which can obtain the most of the “needful” by

the power of their feminine arts and wiles from the "lords of creation," who are generally the favored holders of the "purse strings" — and woe to the poor wight who falls among such "holy thieves!" If their arts and flatteries will not prevail, they manage to obtain possession of his pocket-book, and help themselves playfully, (?) well aware that the poor victim will hardly dare complain, lest he be called mean, miserly, and stingy. Oh! "consistency, thou art a jewel!"

" Thus for sect and creed they fight,
And call their zeal the rule of right;
And what they wish is, at the best,
To see THEIR church excel the rest."

CHAPTER XXV.

" Then hug thy ' Scripture ' Yahoo, never doubt it,
You'd tumble headlong in the pit without it ;
For though it isn't in the Ghost's hand-writing,
The parsons all declare 'tis his inditing."

" These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered and said, Friend, I did thee no wrong ; didst thou not agree with me for a penny ? "—Matt. xx. 12, 13.

Was not Jesus less just than are our rulers of the present day, who awarded the soldiers who enlisted under small bounties at the beginning of the war, a sum in addition to what *was promised*, considering that those who enlisted at " the eleventh hour " had

received larger bounties than they, and that justice demanded such additional pay? There was no pleading off with the excuse, "Is it not *lawful* for me to do what I will with mine own?"

"And they brought the ass and the colt and put on them their clothes, and they sat him thereon."—Matt. xxi. 7.

Sat him on both at once, did they? *STOLEN* animals, too, from the account. Suppose we should steal horses *now* on the plea that "the Lord hath need of them," should *we* escape the penalty meted out to horse thieves? And had they any better right to the property of the poor laborer than we have?

"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that bought and sold in the temple, and overthrew the tables of money-changers and the seats of them that sold doves."—Matt. xxi. 12.

This is practical "non-resistance!" "doing as we would be done by!" "resisting not evil!" &c. How much easier it is to preach than it is to practice, Christ shows by his acting in contradistinction to his peace maxims issued with such great unction in his far-famed impracticable "Sermon on the Mount." And the next question is, what became of the money of those money-changers when Christ so unceremoniously upset the tables and drove them all out? Did he gather it up for his own use? confiscate it for the *cause*? or what? His morals on the subject of property-ownership seemed *LAX* enough to warrant us in believing he would have no scruples in doing either!

"When he saw a fig-tree in the way, he came to it and found nothing thereon but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever; and presently the fig-tree withered away."—Matt. xxi. 19.

A little more *practical* (?) love, charity, and for-

bearance ! For though the offending fig-tree did not possess reason and judgment whereby it could *feel* and *sense* the consequences of this act of revenge, yet the effect of such an example of hasty passion shown by the Son of God himself could not be very beneficial to those who saw it, or to those who heard of it, or those who read of it, or those who in the future *will* read of it. If we, who have so little influence in the world, should be careful of our every thought, word, and act, lest their *ever-continuing, never-ceasing* effects should work more of evil than of good to humanity, how much more cautious should those be who set themselves up as *infallible guides* ?

“ And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, **BELIEVING**, ye shall receive.”—Matt. xxi. 22.

With the words of this verse comes to my mind a short poem that I used to repeat with great unction when I was a little, praying, pious Christian :—

“ Oft have I prayed, **BELIEVING** prayer,
Yet nothing could obtain,
And in my folly oft I said,
Lord, is thy promise vain ?

“ In youth, I prayed that I might win
The race of youthful pride,
Though hope it burned like fire within
My heart, it was denied.

“ I prayed for wealth, I prayed for power,
Nor wealth nor power was mine,
In lingering pain I prayed for health,
Yet saw my health decline.

“ At length, when Wisdom spoke, my son,
Christ’s kingdom is of Heaven,
Ask heavenly things, it shall be done,
I asked, and it was given.”

And this has ever been the universal reply to the bewildered doubter who asks *why* his earnest, fervent *believing* prayers are not answered according to the promise? "Ask *heavenly* things it shall be done;" — that is, ask for the unreal and the intangible, the imaginary nothing, and you may FANCY you obtain it, and then if you want any of earth's *real goods*, you must employ other faculties to win them. The state of content that is often felt by the prayist after an unusually eloquent petition, arises from a feeling of submission to the "powers that be," — to the INEVITABLE!

CHAPTER XXVI.

"And when the King came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment. Then said the King to the servants, bind him hand and foot and cast him into outer darkness."—Matt. xxii. 11, 13.

How could he expect them all to be clad in wedding garments, when they were called right in off the public highway, and mayhap too poor to own a change of raiment?

"Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things are fulfilled."—Matt. xxiv. 34.

Yet in spite of this Divine (?) prophecy, hundreds of generations have passed away, and "stars have not yet fallen from Heaven," nor "the angels come, with a great sound of a trumpet," to announce the coming of the Son of Man!"

“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.”—Matt. xxv. 46.

Punishment *after death* can be nothing more or less than *revenge*, and therefore no just, perfect, and good God would inflict it upon a creature of his own making, and who does precisely as he was ordained from the beginning to do. Punishment, if ever resorted to, should be made either as a warning to others, or as a means of preventing the commission of future sin by the criminal. Now it is not right nor *just* to make a man suffer that he may furnish an example to others, and if the punishment is to be away off in hell, that much talked of but intangible region, it surely cannot serve as a warning to us *here*, for we do not see or realize it, and have no proof of it. Secondly, it cannot be a preventative of *future* crime, as the punishment is to last forever and ever, and ever and ever! and there would be no more time in which to commit sin. So it can only be used as a means of satiating a pitiless, implacable feeling of malice and revenge in the heart of the punisher — him whom men falsely call a God of love and mercy!

“The self-sufficing, the omnipotent,
The merciful, and the avenging God!
Hell gapes forever for the unhappy slaves
Of fate, whom He created, in his sport,
To triumph in their torments when they fell!”

—Shelley.

CHAPTER XXVII.

“ And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose.”—Matt. xxvii. 52.

Did they return to their graves after “visiting the Holy City and appearing unto many,” or did they continue to roam over the world, ever living, never dying, like the fabled Ahasuerus or Wandering Jew? We read that it is appointed unto all men ONCE to die, so of course a *merciful* God would not raise them from the dead and condemn them to die a second death! But perhaps they were translated to Heaven alive, as Elijah is said to have been! Yet there is an obstacle to this, also, for flesh and blood cannot enter the Kingdom! Is there any other horn to the dilemma?

“ All the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine. And Jesus gave them leave.”—Mark v. 12, 13.

According to Voltaire, there were no swine at all kept in that country at that time. How then can this be a true account? And even conceding the tale to be true, how can we reconcile it with the idea of a just, good, and benevolent Being, causing such a wasteful sacrifice of property as the destruction of 2000 swine, when he could have just as easily have sent the devils by themselves into the sea? What became of said devils after the swine were choked in the sea, deponent saith not

“ And he could there do no mighty work save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folks and healed them.”—Mark vi. 5.

Then he could not have been ALL-POWERFUL. Yet

Matthew says, xxviii. 18, "ALL POWER is given unto me in Heaven and earth."

"Commanded that they should take nothing for their journey save a staff only, but be shod with sandals."—Mark vi. 8, 9.

Matthew says, "Provide neither shoes, not yet staves." Who has the right of the story?

"When they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled (unwashed) hands, they found fault."—Mark vii. 2.

Why not? Cleanliness is not only "NEXT to Godliness," but it is before and ahead of Godliness — better than Godliness — for it is the source of much, if not all, goodness. We cannot think pure, good, or high thoughts when we are conscious that through outward impurities our bodies are absorbing noxious and corrupting influences, that will not only affect our health, but by their unsightliness, will displease and disgust those with whom we come in contact. Therefore, it *does* matter that the "outside of the platter" should be clean as well as the inside, as any good house-wife will testify, Scripture to the contrary notwithstanding; and therefore let all Infidels eat with clean hands and live with clean hearts.

"Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery."—Mark x. 11.

There is no exception to this. It is spoken positively and emphatically concerning both the man and the woman, that there shall be no law of divorce at all; that the two are "one flesh," and cannot be made two again by any law, human or Divine. Yet this law, though much more strongly and positively insisted upon by Christ himself than is the Sabbath law, is not half so rigidly enforced as is said Sabbath

8*

law. Indeed, it is almost a "dead letter" throughout all Christendom. Men put away their wives, and marry again and again; and even ministers — who should be a law to themselves and a guide to their congregations — do MORE than this:—

They preach of Christ, his sayings quote,
And on them all pretend to dote;
But when they wish some law to break,
They quickly then some meaning make
To suit the end which they design,
And think hypocrisy no crime.
So long as they the masses rule,
What odds the wrong, or what the tool?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"So shall my votaries, wheresoe'er they rave,
Proclaim that Heaven took back the saint it gave;
That I've but vanished from this earth awhile,
To come again with bright, unshrouded smile;
So shall they build me altars in their zeal,
Where knaves shall minister, and fools shall kneel!
So shall my banner through all ages be
The rallying sign of fraud and anarchy;
Kings yet unborn shall rue my name,
And though I die, my spirit still the same,
Shall walk abroad in all the stormy strife,
And guilt and blood that were its bliss in life."

—Moore.

"He shall receive an hundred fold now in this time.....and in the world to come eternal life."—Mark x. 30.

And since we have known the first part of this promise to repeatedly fail of fulfilment, is it strange

we should doubt the reception of the promised eternal life ?

“ But to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give.”—Mark x. 40.

And why not, when “ ALL POWER is given unto him in Heaven and earth ? ”

“ And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh.”—Mark xv. 23.

Matthew says, xxvii. 34, “ They gave him vinegar mingled with gall.” It is hard to account for such a discrepancy in the narration of so simple a transaction, as both were holy and inspired penmen, writing under the immediate supervision of Holy Ghost & Co.

“ He that believeth not shall be damned.”—Mark xvi. 16.

Belief being involuntary, we shall then be damned for what it is out of our power to do !

“ And Jesus increased in wisdom.”—Luke ii. 52.

Was he not “ equal with God,” “ one with the Father,” and consequently knew all things ? Where then was there room for this *increase* of wisdom ?

“ Being forty days tempted of the Devil, and in those days he did eat nothing, and when they were ended he was afterward hungered.”—Luke iv. 2.

If he were God, he had no need of food ; if man, he would have starved to death, and therefore in neither case could he have “ hungered.”

“ And the Devil taking him up into a high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.”—Luke iv. 5.

There must have been kingdoms on only one-half the globe, then, as it is impossible to see on both sides at a time, let the mountain be as high as it would ; and even to see the whole of one-half, must have re-

quired extraordinary visual organs, strengthened by some dozen pairs of spectacles !

“ I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”
—Luke v. 32.

Of course not, since there are “ none righteous, no, not one; ” and consequently, if he call any, they *must* be sinners.

“ Woe unto you when all men shall SPEAK WELL of you.”—
Luke vi. 26.

Yet it is said, Ecclesiastes vii. 1, “ A GOOD NAME is better than precious ointment; ” and in Proverbs, “ A *good name* is rather to be chosen than great riches.” Now, shall we seek a *good name*, or not ? Who shall decide this doubtful question ?

“ Give to every man that asketh of thee, and of him that taketh away thy goods, ask them not again.....and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great.”—Luke vi. 30-35.

I would like to see the churches setting this Christly example to the worldlings. How many preachers with “ fat salaries,” would continue to preach, if they gave to every one that asked ? They prefer ASKING to giving, and instead of “ lending hoping for no return,” they continually borrow, and tell the poor victims to look to the Lord for their *reward*.

“ Every one that is perfect shall be as his Master.”—Luke vi. 40.

A very safe saying, since there cannot be, in the nature of things, a *perfect* man ! We cannot conceive of a perfect being neither upon earth, nor in some future Heaven away off, no one knows where.

“ And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak.”—Luke vii. 15.

Because this is a Gospel truth, (?) people will insist

upon swallowing it down bodily, whereas, if it were not read with the "eye of faith," it would seem perfectly incredible. When the life is gone out of a seed, plant, tree, animal, or a man, it is beyond the power of any being or existence to put it back again. The sick may be healed, the deaf made to hear, and the blind to see, but never can the dead be made to live, not in this life, nor in any other, for they, as individual identities, are gone forever. For them there is no more life, no more existence, and never, never can there be any more.

"Let others fancy worlds above,
Where mysteries are unfurled,
Enough is *here* for us to love,
We need no other world."

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Must we then importune and tease,
And cringe and fawn before we please?
Can God enjoy the groan, the tear,
Fit only for the despot's ear?"

"Though he will not rise and give unto him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth."—Luke xi. 8.

Can God be importuned, coaxed, teased, and worried into doing what he does not wish to do? The *parable* and the application, the *fable* and the moral imply that he can. Only coax, please, and importune long enough, and you will obtain whatever you wish,

whether it be just or unjust, right or wrong. What matters it, when by your importunities you can wear out the patience of this perfect, all-wise, omnipotent, and UNCHANGEABLE Deity, so that he grant your demands and wishes for the sake of getting rid of you? as a certain girl is said to have married a persevering suitor so that she might no longer be troubled by his importunity.

“Joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.”—Luke xv. 7.

Is not this giving a premium for sin? A good, kind, and virtuous man, who has passed a long life of charity, love and benevolence, leading, both by precept and example, thousands of his fellow beings in the way of truth and right, making the whole world better for *his* having lived, shall *he* and the ninety-eight others, who are of like goodness, all be cast in the shade by a mean, low, despicable vagabond, who has rioted away a lifetime in guilt, sin and debauchery; leading, coaxing, and pulling down, associate, neighbor, and friend, to his own level? Yet who at the end of such a degraded, corrupt, and worse than useless existence, *repents* and casts off the burden of his sin upon the Atlas-like shoulders of an atoning Deity? Reason and common sense teaches us that this is not, and cannot be, true Gospel. Philosophy says there can be no atoning for sin, no washing away of crime, no forgiveness through repentance. A wrong once committed, is evermore a thing of the past, beyond redemption, and we must inevitably suffer the consequences of every wrong thought, word, deed, or

action, just as surely as effect follows cause. This is one of two inevitables.

“If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.”—Luke xix. 40.

An impossibility, which no accumulation of faith could make one believe.

“He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.”—Luke xxii. 36.

Matthew says, “All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” But, like humanity in general, Christ doubtless found it far easier to *preach* non-resistance than to carry out the idea *practically*. When weak and few in numbers, he was content to send out his disciples without purse, scrip, shoes, or sword; but as they began to wax strong, and to acquire fame and renown, they dropped the mask of humility and weakness, trusted to outward appearances—the dress, purse, scrip, and the *sword*—just as all sects in all times, ages, and generations have ever done, just as they will ever continue doing, so long as they believe in the Bible God—a God of war—a terrible and avenging God!

“Look round the globe, for near two thousand years
The Cross has deluged it with blood and tears;
Nor will the Yahoo happier days e’er find,
While he with Gospel-light continues blind;
His intellect may march as he supposes,
But in the mud ’twill stick with Christ and Moses.
Of real intellect there’ll be no spread
Till such stuff’s driven from his bothered head.”

CHAPTER XXX.

If we quote the law that's OLD,
 'Tis "out of date" then we are told;
 But to the NEW they bid us turn,
 And there ALL wisdom we shall learn.

"And Pilate asked him, saying. Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it."—Luke xxiii. 3.

Rather an ambiguous reply, that! A truly honest man would have scorned all evasion, simply replying yes or no. Conscious in his own rectitude and uprightness of purpose, he would have boldly "stood his ground," trusting to truth and the right.

"To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise."—Luke xxiii. 43.

A fitting reward for his crimes! The cross, as well as the gallows, is the quickest, shortest, and surest road, it seems, to *Paradise*. Though the whole life be full of iniquity and evil, yet if at the very latest fractional part of that existence the culprit professes repentance and a belief in Christ, (repentance because he cannot sin more if he would), he goes straight to Heaven, and enjoys an endless eternity of happiness, surrounded by and equal with the noblest, best, and purest of all times and all ages. And this is Heavenly justice, strict and *impartial*!

"A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have."—Luke xxiv. 39.

We read that "flesh and blood cannot enter the

Kingdom." Yet "while he blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into Heaven," (Luke xxiv. 31), flesh, blood, bread, broiled fish, and honeycomb likewise.

"All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made."—John i. 3.

"God made not death." (Wisdom of Solomon i. 13.) "God is not the author of confusion." (1 Cor. xiv. 33.) Who did make them?

"No man hath seen God at any time."—John i. 18.

Yet according to this same old book, many men *have* seen God, and talked to him "face to face," though it is doubtful if any one believes it, even upon *Scripture* authority, for there is the same PROOF that "no one hath seen him."

"They asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith I am not."—John i. 21.

Yet Matthew xi. 14, says, "This is Elias which was to come."

In the second chapter of John we are told that "Christ turned water into wine," and this, too, when the men "were well drunk." What an "example" and "shining light" this for all ages and generations to follow — this converting into a curse and an evil that which *was* Nature's purest and best beverage! What Christian can advocate "total abstinence from all that intoxicates," while believing at the same time that Jesus is a perfect guide and pattern to all goodness, in all times and for all ages?

"No man hath ascended up to Heaven but he that came down from Heaven."—John iii. 13.

"And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into Heav-

en." (2 Kings ii. 11.) And Enoch was translated, and tradition assures us the Virgin Mary was, also; and to this day is the event spoken of and the condition of the weather prophesied from it all as veritable facts.

"They sought to slay him because he had done these things on the Sabbath day."—John v. 16.

And was it not just as right for them to keep their holy days free from profanation, as it is for people to keep holy the Sabbath day *now*? If *we* be subject to fines and penalties for trespassing upon the Sabbath law in this day, why should he expect to be exempted from persecution when he refused to abide by the decision of the laws then in vogue?

"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."—John vi. 53.

"Æsop's poor heathen had a God and beat him;
Enlightened Christians make a God and eat him.
Christ's flesh and blood is by the faithful taken,
And gulp'd down just like so much beer and bacon.
Sure spawn'd from Hell's dark pit some wretched dreamer
First thought of gobbling up his dear Redeemer!"

—Yahoo.

"Harper's Weekly" says:—

"We hear of horrid sects at present in Russia, practicing cannibal and human sacrifices with rites almost more devilish than any recorded in history. 'The communism of the flesh of the lamb,' and the 'communism of the blood of the lamb,' really seem to have been invented by the lowest demons of the bottomless pit. The subject is too revolting to be pursued in detail; it is enough to say that an infant, seven days old, is bandaged over the eyes, stretched over a dish, and a silver spoon thrust into the side so

as to pierce the heart! The elect suck the child's blood — that is, 'the blood of the Lamb!' The body is left to dry up in another dish full of sage, then crushed into powder and eaten in small cakes — that is 'the flesh of the Lamb!' We must really apologize for stating these things, but they are actually occurring in Russia in 1869!" And all this is the fruit of this Bible-religion. Christ so *commands*, and ignorant but well-meaning devotees perform, as they truly believe, HIS wishes!

CHAPTER XXXI.

Dost ask me why I never look
 For something *good* that's in the Book?
 It is because where *all's* Divine,
 And *Gospel truth* in every line,
 One feels impelled to point each flaw
 That's in the great and Holy (?) Law!

"He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him."—John vii. 1.

In Luke xii. 4, he says, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." 'Tis much more easy to *preach* than to practice. When his *own* life was at stake, affairs put on an entirely different aspect!

"For neither did his brethren believe in him."—John vii. 5.

"Familiarity breeds contempt." "A prophet hath no honor in his own country."

“Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.”—John vii. 32.

Were not Jonah and Nahum Galileans?

In John viii. 15, Christ says, “I judge no man,” and in chapter v. 22, he says, “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” So if neither of them judge, we shall all go “scot free,” and then what is going to become of that great much-talked-of “Day of Judgment?”

“If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.”—John viii. 51.

It is an utter impossibility for any *fallible* being to keep *all* he commands, so the promise is an entirely safe one. But if it *were* possible, common sense would teach us that in time the human system would wear out; and if it did not, an existence of a few millions or billions of years would wear out all our capacity for enjoyment, and then we should gladly break a command so that we might thereby obtain the blessed boon of non-entity!

“Then the Jews said unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? And Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.”—John viii. 57, 58.

No marvel that they “stoned him till he hid himself!” It was impossible that they should believe such an absurd and preposterous assertion. Would we believe it of any man now? Then why ask us to believe it in some old Jewish legend, picked up, where, when, or by whom, no one can tell, and translated again and again, till no one knows what it might have been in the original?

“If ye were blind ye should have no sin.”—John ix. 41.

Far better to have *remained* blind; then salvation

would have been a certainty ! Ignorance in this case is surely bliss.

Why teach "Christ crucified," when by thus teaching you suspend the whole of the believers of your doctrines over an everlasting, eternal, never-dying, ever-continuing, burning Hell ?

"Millions shall live and die,
 Who ne'er shall call upon their Saviour's name,
 But unredeemed, go to the gaping grave.
 Thousands shall deem it an old woman's tale,
 Such as the nurses frighten babes withal ;
 These in a gulf of anguish and of flame
 Shall curse their reprobation endlessly !
 What then avail their virtuous deeds, their thoughts
 Of purity, with radiant genius bright,
 Or lit with human reason's earthly ray ?
 Many are called, but few will I elect."

—*Queen Mab.*

CHAPTER XXXII.

"And from the lips of Truth one mighty breath
 Shall, like a whirlwind, scatter in its breeze
 That whole dark pile of human mockeries ;
 Then shall the reign of MIND commence on earth,
 And, starting fresh as from a second birth,
 Man, in the sunshine of the world's new spring,
 Shall walk transparent, like some holy thing."

—*Lalla Rookh.*

"For a good work we stone thee not ; but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, maketh thyself God."—John x. 33.

It is not to be wondered at that a man calling himself, over and over again, "the Son of God," "equal

with God," one with God, and again, at other times, protesting that he was no more "the Son of God" than were others "Sons of God" to whom the word of the Lord came, and who did his work, should be looked upon with dislike, distrust, suspicion, and doubt.

"My Father is greater than I."—John xiv. 28.

"I and my Father are one."—John x. 30.

Sublime philosophy this! *I am greater than myself!*

"And they put on him a *purple robe*."—John xix. 2.

Matthew says, xxvii. 28, "They put on him a *scarlet robe*!" If the color of the robe was of sufficient importance to require a divinely inspired description, why such a discrepancy in the two statements?

"And he, bearing his cross, went forth."—John xix. 17.

Matthew says, xxvii. 32, "They compelled a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, to bear his cross."

"Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not the King of the Jews, but that *he said I am King of the Jews*."—John xiv. 21.

Which inscription would have been much better than any of those purporting to have been written by the four Evangelists, each of whom word this simple sentence in a different manner, as if none of them knew exactly what it was, and so had written it from hearsay!

"Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out."—Acts i. 18.

Matthew xv. 5-7, says, "And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the

silver pieces and bought with them the potter's field." The question now is, how any reasonable person can be so blinded by prejudice and superstition as to *pretend* to believe that such contradictory accounts of so remarkable an occurrence can both be the work of men inspired by an all-wise, all-knowing, all comprehending Deity !

"For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus both Herod and Pontius Pilate and the people of Israel were gathered together." Acts iv. 27.

"Who shall decide when doctors disagree?" Having been taught always to obey kings and rulers as being only next to, if not equal with, God himself, how should the poor Jews know what to do when kings and Gods were at loggerheads?

"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."—Acts iv. 31.

What a convincing proof of the power of prayer some such a token from the great, incomprehensible, all-powerful myth would be, to prayer-makers and prayer-listeners, now-a-days ! *Perhaps* it might shake a little of his Holy Ghostship into *us* incredulous, unbelieving, sceptical doubters, Infidels, and Atheists.

But past is now the golden age,
When miracles were all the rage;
By faith alone we must believe,
And from the Book our light (?) receive !

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Though "each for all and all for each,"
Christ and Gods and dreamers teach,
Yet 'tis found in every place,
Men love themselves, and then their race!

"Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had *all* things in common..... As many as were possessors of lands and houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the Apostles' feet, and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."—Acts iv. 32-35.

These doctrines of Communism are very beautiful in theory, but they have been tried again and again, at all times and in all ages. Yet in no single instance has a Community succeeded in living, unless there was more or less individualism embodied in its platform. We cannot have "all things in common," without destroying the main incentive to active, earnest labor. The bird has her nest, the beast his lair, and each claims the prey he captures as his own individual property. We are all organized as distinct and separate identities, and are whatever our individuality and the circumstances surrounding us make us to be. An inventor spends a lifetime of thought and labor in creating and forming some new machine, almost starving himself and family that he may have the means of accomplishing his work. Would he thus slave and strive if he knew he and his would gain no more fame, honor, or wealth by the results of his skill and ingenuity, than would "Tom, Dick, and Harry,"

who had carelessly and unthinkingly idled away their hours? Would another spend years and years in close and exhausting study, and then as many more in arranging his magazine of knowledge in some cherished work, if he knew a whole community would equally share with him the glory and honor and profit of that work? No! We all work first for ourselves, then our families, our town, our county, our State, our native land, and *then* the world. We are the centre around which revolve all our thoughts, desires, and wishes. If we are benevolent, it is that we may gratify our organs of love and benevolence by the good deeds we do to others. Self is the propelling power. "Self-preservation is the first law of Nature."

"The angel of the Lord by night opened the prison-doors."
—Acts v. 19.

Such a miracle requires more proof than an old Jewish legend can give, to support its claims to credibility! No "angel of the Lord" opens prison-doors *now*, and there are no men, or set of men, so good and so useful that any God or angel could or would open prison-doors to free them from "durance vile." *If* these Apostles ever existed, *if* they ever were in prison, *if* they ever got out secretly, it was all done in a natural manner, and was proclaimed by them to be an angel's work, that they might the more firmly establish their power and their faith by the seeming miracle.

"And he gave him none inheritance in it; no, not so much as to set his foot on."—Acts vii. 5.

Abraham should have been sharp enough to have

"taken a bond and mortgage" on the land, for he had had dealings enough with his God to have been aware that he could not with safety trust to his bare promise !

"The spirit of the Lord caught away Philip. But Philip was found at Azotus."—Acts viii. 39, 40.

Only another miracle.

"And by him all that believe are justified from all things."—Acts xiii. 39.

"He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness."—Mark iii. 29.

"And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid, but they heard not the voice."—Acts xxii. 9.

"And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no man."—Acts ix. 7.

"And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice."—Acts xxvi. 14.

It is evident that the writers of this transaction need some cross-questioning ere we can tell who heard, who saw, who stood, and who were fallen to the earth ! From the confused jumble of the account, one might be led to doubt the whole affair, were not the truth of the tale vouched for by the Almighty himself !

But Christian faith devours it all,
For that no miracles can stall ;
No tale's too strong to be received,
And with credulity believed.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Read your Bible, study well,
 How Adam lived and how he fell ;
 How Christ was born and how he died,
 How they and we are justified ;
 By faith, by works, caprice, or whim,
 God's book must tell what pleases him.

"For the INVISIBLE THINGS of him from the creation of the world are CLEARLY SEEN, being understood by the things that are made; even his eternal power and Godhead."—Romans i. 20.

"Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?"—Job xi. 7.

"There is no searching of his understanding."—Isaiah xi. 28.

"They CHANGED the glory of the uncorruptible God into an IMAGE made like to corruptible man."—Romans i. 23.

"What is God but 'an image made like man?' Each man gives to his God qualities in which he only images and projects himself. Such as are a man's thoughts and dispositions, such is his God; so much worth as a man has, so much and no more has his God. Knowledge of God is self-knowledge. By his God thou knowest the man, and by the man his God. Religion is man's earliest form of self-knowledge. What was at first religion, becomes at a later period idolatry; man is seen to have adored his own image. Every advance in religion is therefore a deeper self-knowledge."—[Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity.

"For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner?"—Romans iii. 7.

It is always counted a virtue to lie for the good of

the church. Long ago, before the reputed coming of Christ, it was considered lawful and praiseworthy to lie and deceive, if the church could profit by the lie. "Eusebius, one of the most zealous of the Christian fathers, and the writer on whom Christian divines chiefly and most implicitly rely, heads chapter xxxi. of book 12 of his 'Evangelical Preparation' thus:—How far it may be proper to use falsehood as a medicine and for the benefit of those who require to be deceived."—[R. D. Owen.

Now, how Christian divines can "implicitly rely" upon the writings of one who wilfully writes lies *for a purpose*, is a marvel.

"A little jargon," says Gregory, the Divine, "is all that is necessary to impose on the people; the less they comprehend, the more they admire. The doctors of the church have often said not what they THOUGHT, but what circumstances and necessity dictated to them. The learned Mosheim, a zealous advocate for Christianity, who by his writings has deserved the esteem of all good and learned men, intimates his fears, that those who search with any degree of attention into the writings of the Fathers and most holy doctors of the fourth century, will find them all, without exception, disposed to lie and deceive whenever the interests of religion require it."—[Dr. Chapman.

"There, ye wise saints, behold your light, your star,
Ye would be dupes and victims, and ye are."

—Moore.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Elected then by God's own grace,
 The chosen ones shall see his face ;
 The rest perforce to Hell must go,
 To please the Lord, who wills it so.

"There is none righteous, no, not one."—Romans iii. 10.

"The **RIGHTEOUS** perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart."—Isaiah lvii. 1.

"The **RIGHTEOUS** shall flourish like the palm tree."—Psalms xcii. 12.

If there are **NONE** righteous, how can they "perish" or "flourish?"

"By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin."—Romans iii. 20.

"The doers of the law *shall* **BE JUSTIFIED**."—Romans ii. 13.

Will they be justified or not? Can a writer so soon forget a previous passage and give to it a flat contradiction?

"To him that *worketh not*, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."—Romans iv. 5.

"Confusion worse confounded!"

"The law *worketh* wrath, for where no law is, there is no transgression."—Romans iv. 15.

Then better have *no law*, and all will be saved, and no sin will be in the world.

"Now we are delivered from the law."—Romans vii. 6.

Matthew says, "I am come not to destroy the law, but to fulfill." "Till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be

fulfilled." Is, then, the *law* still extant, or has it passed away?

"The creature was made subject to vanity."—Rom. viii. 20.

"God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was **VERY GOOD.**"—Genesis 1. 31.

VANITY, then, must be "**VERY GOOD,**" and "lying spirits," like those spoken of in 1 Kings xxii. 23, — those 400 preachers or prophets — must have been "*very good.*"

"All of them inspired by the Spirit from on high,
And all of them a lying as fast as they could lie."

"The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand not of works but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.....Whom he will, he hardeneth."—Romans ix. 11-18.

A plenty more of the same sort! And this is Heavenly justice. To do as he pleases, as he takes a fancy — not regarding the deserts, the virtue or goodness of any, but *choosing* even before their birth who he will love and who he will hate, who shall be master and who slave. And wherefore? All to show his own despotic power — to show that he can do as he wishes, whether it be just or not. Truly did man make God in his own selfish, tyrannical image, in those days of blind, benighted heathenism.

"God's partial, vengeful, passionate, unjust,
Whose attributes are rage, revenge and lust,
Such as the souls of cowards might conceive,
And formed like tyrants, tyrants might believe."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

As each and all are God ordained,
 Let each and all then be sustained ;
 Condemn thou none who o'er thee reign,
 If thou eternal life wouldst gain.

“ The powers that be are ordained of God.”—Romans xiii. 1.

Would it not be to the infinite credit of this same God, then, that he should only ordain such “ powers ” as are able and worthy to rule the nations ? such “ powers ” as should be *worthy of respect, love, and obedience* ?

“ Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God ; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.”—Romans xiii. 2.

Tremble, now, all ye who are resisting the “ powers ” that be, for you will either be *lost*, or your God will be a false prophet.

“ One man esteemeth one day above another, another esteemeth every day alike ; let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”—Romans xiv. 5.

Not only this verse, but the whole chapter, gives us the privilege of choosing according to our convictions, — leaves us free to keep the Sabbath as a holy day, or to simply regard it as we do other days.

“ There is nothing unclean of itself, but to him that esteemeth anything unclean, to him it is unclean.”—Romans xiv. 15.

Consequently there is nothing right or wrong, good or bad, save as we are *taught* and educated so to regard them, or as our own reason and judgment regards them.

"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."—Romans xiv. 21.

How many of our preachers and would-be-guides are willing to thus crucify their appetites and martyrize themselves, from the fear of becoming "stumbling blocks to the weak?" They are too fond of their flesh-pots, of the rich and ruby wine, of the meersch-chaum and cigar, and all other luxuries, to be willing to become in REALITY what they pretend to be in theory: true guides to practical Christianity. Wonder how many pounds of the "vile weed" their "Lord and Master" consumed while setting himself forth as "King of the Jews" and "one with God?"

"Even Christ pleased not himself."—Romans xv. 3.

Then he alone was to blame; for "having all power" and being "one with the Father," he *could* do exactly as he pleased, and doubtless *did* do so, for if it did not please him to do what he did do, why did he do it? Doubtless he gratified the strongest motive at the time of action, and it pleased him so to do, or he would not have done it.

"Now the God of PEACE be with you all."—Romans xv. 33.

"The Lord is a man of WAR."—Exodus xv. 3.

Were there two Gods? One of peace and one of war? One named God and one Lord?

"I Tertius, who wrote this Epistle."—Romans xvi. 22.

Was Tertius another name for Paul? or is the epistle FALSELY attributed to Paul?

"The God of PEACE shall *bruise* Satan under your feet shortly."—Romans xvi. 20.

What consistency! A God of peace resorting to kicks, stamps, and bruises, using his pedal extremity

as a corrective, instead of moral suasion, love, charity, and forbearance!

A God of war, a God of peace,
A God whose anger ne'er will cease;
A God of charity and love,
Who's everywhere, yet dwell's above;
Whose temper weareth every shade
Of him by whom the God was made!!

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Creator He, the great First Cause,
Who Nature made and all her laws;
If He be weak and *foolish*, then
Hath He pre-eminence o'er men?

"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men."—1 Cor. i. 25.

How weak must have been the conceptions of the author of this text, of what should constitute the high and lofty character of a Being who is supposed to possess capacity and wisdom to form, govern, and control the immense and boundless universe of worlds upon worlds! Can foolishness or weakness, even in the most limited or infinitesimal degree, belong to such a power?

"I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one no not to eat."—1 Cor. v. 11.

But if such an one "pay largely to the church,"

10*

and buy "front seats in the synagogue," and is great among the people, ye may then keep his company and eat with him *ad libatum*, for money taketh away all sin in the eyes of the church, as well as in the eyes of the world's people. Though the rich man may not enter Heaven, he *may* sit at the head of the best man's table, and occupy the best seats in the house of the Lord — the seats *advertised* in our public prints as "affording a view of nearly all the congregation!"

"Dare any of you having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?"—1 Cor. vi. 1.

Though uncertain and unstable as is the law of the land, — particularly when meted out by a set of sharp, keen-witted lawyers, who make their living, and win fame, honor, and renown by proving wrong to be right, and right to be wrong, — yet the church law is still more so, for she invariably judges as she thinks best for her own advantage, regardless of right or wrong, client or defendant. Her own selfish aggrandizement has ever been her *one* and *sole* aim. For that, all other rights are sacrificed, and to that end are all church laws made, and church decisions pointed.

"The saints shall judge the world."—1 Cor. vi. 2.

When, where, and how? What and where are these saintly judges?

"Know ye not that we shall judge angels?"—1 Cor. v. 3.

It is generally imagined that when poor sinful mortals attain to the blessedness and dignity of angeldom, they are then, and forever after, pure, sinless, and

perfect, and are consequently **SAFE** from all further evil and wrong-doing. In Heaven there is no crime, no temptation, and therefore no need of judgment or judging.

“There is utterly a fault among you because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?”—1 Cor. vi. 7.

Very few among Christians are there, who will not claim the protection of the law rather than of the church. They trust more in the wisdom of carnal man, aye, and more in his *justice*, too, than they do in that of the church, or of church members. Self, self, self, has ever been the idol of the church. Self stands before justice, peace, love, humanity, or anything else, in the world or out of it!

“Oh! had the Yahoo eyes, he’d plainly see
What bitter fruit grows on the Gospel tree;
What pestilential crabs have ever grown,
And ever will, where’er this tree is known.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

“’Tis against religion, is it? That’s enough;
A parson’s creed demands no better proof,
For Faith’s not worth a fig which can’t dispense
With things that give the lie to common sense.”

—Yahoo.

“I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I.”—1 Cor. vi. 8.

Therefore, if any one wishes to be a Christian, “to love God with his whole heart and soul,” to “pray without ceasing,” to be a true follower of Christ, he must live in single wretchedness, attend to no worldly

business, have no worldly pleasures, but give up *all* for Christ's sake. Indeed, if we "sell all we have and give it to the poor," we shall be *obliged* to follow Paul's advice, because we should not have the where-withal to support a family; and as "in Heaven there is no marrying or giving in marriage," of course the LONE life is the only *true* life.

"To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."—1 Cor. viii. 22.

A good excuse for evil doing is this plea of friend Paul's. Shall I become one with a band of robbers, liars and thieves, and thus myself aid and abet in the doing of evil, in the bare hope of saving some of them? Would it not be better to show them by our own virtuous and upright conduct that "goodness is its own reward," and is the only true road to contentment and happiness? To live out our creed in our lives is the best way to show its goodness. If Infidels *live* good lives, they prove the *practical* goodness of these truths, and not "be all things to all men," like "that saint of saints, the frenzied Paul!"

"Yet so it is; a Paul has lived and died;
A cursed religion has sprung up and rent
The world with factions. Men have fought and prayed.
As with one breath; their energies they've spent
In brutalizing wars, where hellish strife
Could prompt each man to seek a brother's life."

"Doth not Nature itself teach you, that if a man have long hair it is a shame unto him?"—1 Cor. xi. 14.

Why then picture Christ and the sages of old as having long, curling locks?

"If a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her."—1 Cor. xi. 15.

But if *fashion* demand that a woman wear her hair short, who sooner or more eagerly follows that fashion than the Christian woman? The church-goers are ever "A No. 1" in the line of fashion's followers, for it is in "God's holy house" that people go to show off their fine apparel; go to see and to be seen; to study the fashions and criticise their neighbor's garb, or look upon it with envious eyes, and striving with each coming week to add some new attraction to their own. There women go "to be seen of men," and what woman of taste would go with "long hair" to places where fashion's followers all wore clipped tresses? Ask it not for Christ's sake, nor for Paul's either!

"Take eat, this is my body, which is broken for you. This cup is the New Testament in my blood."—1 Cor. xi. 24, 25.

"The Lord's Supper is a rite lineally descended from the ancient eaters of human sacrifices. Once, instead of bread and wine, real human flesh and blood were partaken."—[Feuerbach.

This is only one more proof that Christianity is only heathenism, altered and fixed over to suit the purposes of the times, and it sadly needs a new remodelling ere we of this day can feel that it is at all what the requirements of the age demand. Instead of putting new wine into old bottles, it would be better—since they are past being made clean—to throw them all away and get an entire new stock—something real and practical, something to *live* by as well as die by, and to cling no longer to—

"Specious names,
Which, learnt in soft childhood's unsuspecting hour;
Serve as the sophism with which manhood dims
Bright Reason's ray."
—Shelley.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

'Tis woman's foe, that book of creeds,
And never while its texts she heeds
Will she be wise, or great, or free,
So kill the root, destroy the tree.

"Let your women keep silence in the churches."—1 Cor. xiv. 34.

It is just such texts as this that have always been making slaves of women, pushing them back from the fountains of knowledge, and making them mere appendages of men! What class of people will not degenerate and become weak and frivolous under such a dispensation? It is no marvel that the mass of the women of this day care so little whether they obtain equal rights with their brother man! Those rights which a noble few, too far-seeing to be blinded by old creeds and prejudices, are so zealously laboring for! Knowing not by experience the value of freedom, light and knowledge, they care not to strive for them.

"If they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home."—1 Cor. xiv. 35.

And if, as it is too often the case, the man be more ignorant than the woman, what then? Why, she must still bow in humble submission, because the law and the Gospel pronounce him her lord and master! and bids her be subservient to him.

"Subject yourselves unto the powers that be." If you should be poor and ignorant, and be so unfortu-

nate as to lose husband, father, and brother, and have no claim upon any one of these mighty potentates of the masculine gender, and to whom you may legitimately turn for information and support, why, you may then remain ignorant and starve besides, unless you strain every nerve and gain a precarious subsistence at the wash-tub, scrub-broom, or the needle. I've just finished making a tucked skirt for a lady of this place, 30 tucks, containing 1,680 stitches each! the whole skirt containing about 50,500 stitches!! the pay was \$2, and board yourself!!! and all the sewing done by hand, for poor seamstresses can never save enough ahead from family expenses to buy a sewing machine.

A friend of mine has just completed six dresses, five sun-bonnets, two pairs of pants, and two shirts, and all for \$3,75, and to wait for the pay at the convenience of the employer. Yet women have all the rights they need or want! And in the face of all this, and more too, the editor of the Spiritual Banner of Light takes Brother Seaver to task for admitting into that good old pioneer of freedom, the Investigator, so much stale, worn-out (?) criticism and argument upon the Bible. But while giving friend Colby all due credit for uprooting and exterminating much of ignorance and superstition, yet we must claim for our Investigator a much greater advancement in true scientific knowledge, founded upon *reality*, *fact*, and **SOLID MATTER**, instead of vague dreams, ethereal essence, and sublimated spirituality.

CHAPTER XL.

In human form our sins he bore,
That we might reach the Heavenly shore,
Yet all in vain the deed was done,
As out of ten there's only one
Saved from hell to sing his praise,
And round his throne sweet music raise.

"If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant."—1 Cor. xiv. 38.

Why preach or teach men at all, then? If ignorance is bliss, let man be ignorant. So the text would seem to read, at the least. But *we* prefer knowledge to ignorance, even if it do rob us of the false and futile hopes of "some luxurious lubber land, where brooks run wine, and trees bend with ready-made viands," situated away off in some unknown region of infinite, illimitable space.

"Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die."—1 Cor. xv. 36.

The seed does not *wholly* die, else it would never be "quickened," and little, if any part of the seed of leguminous plants, such as beans, peas, &c., die, or those of the melon or cucumber tribe, for the cotyledons or seed-lobes come up out of the ground and form the first or seminal leaves of the plant, and are called seed-leaves, BECAUSE THEY ARE THE SEED. Thus we see that friend Paul was one of the least of botanists, as well as the "least of the Apostles."

"We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."—2 Cor. iv. 18.

Oh! for the eye of "faith," that we also might see "the things which are not seen," for it is very evident that we cannot see "invisible things" with the "natural eye."

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."—2 Cor. v. 19.

Is it reasonable to suppose that an all-wise, overruling power would take upon himself the form of a man, and from a little child grow up to a fully developed specimen of the "*genus homo*" ere he could work out this great scheme of heavenly redemption?—whole years wasted in *growing up*, and thousands meanwhile dying in sin? And after all those long years of teaching, suffering, and striving, is the world really any better off because of *his* having been in it? Is it not indeed far worse off?

"Do different sects in friendship e'er unite?
No; Christ's disciples all like tigers fight.
The lambkin said he came to bring a sword,
And, lamb-like, Christians use it for their Lord."

And had there never been a Christian religion, man would not have been for so many ages chained down to its old heathenish ideas and customs, but would have been taught in their stead, industry, temperance, honesty, frugality, and all the arts and sciences, anything and everything calculated to make him wiser and better while here upon the earth, which is our abiding place.

We are a natural and chemical formation of the earth, and are mentally and physically fitted for the earth. We are of earth and earthly, and it is conse-

quently our manifest duty to train ourselves and those under our care and influence, for earth's highest enjoyments, regardless of all imaginings as to what *may* be, or is to come, in some far off future state of existence!

"He hath made him to be sin for us."—2 Cor. v. 21.

We are far in advance of that age in which such an idea as this could be tolerated. 'There was a time when one man could take upon himself the punishment designed for another, suffering for his sin, if so be that both desired it, and law and public opinion were thus satisfied; but such heathenish customs belong to the past. We of this day know it is IMPOSSIBLE that one can bear sin for another, or ever could do so, though he might do penance for others' crimes. If we wilfully err, we must inevitably suffer the consequences of our wrong doing. The very thought of it haunts us; it is a thorn in our memory. It meets us in our moments of greatest self-gratulation. We can never run from the evil we HAVE done, or the wrongs we *have committed*; and though none may know of it but ourselves, it is still to us a constant avenger, indelibly impressed upon the tablets of the mind, blotting and defacing its fair pages.

No one can bear this burden for us, or redeem us from the consequences of that which is irrevocably past and done. And is not this thought a greater inducement for the accomplishing of good deeds and virtuous actions than any other which could be offered? To know that there is and can be no remedy for sin, and that its consequences must be inevitably met, let the wrong be either a physical or

a mental deviation from Nature's unvarying law. Even if there were a future life for us, the memory of our sins would still follow us there, as would all memories of our past, else *how could we be ourselves?* There is no sure road to happiness but in doing right. Live good lives, and then you will make a heaven of earth, and find the world full of joy.

"How much there is that's beautiful
 In this fair world of ours,
 The verdure of the early spring,
 The sweetly blooming flowers!
 The brook that dances in the light,
 The birds that carol free,
 Are objects beautiful and bright,
 That everywhere we see."

CHAPTER XLI.

"For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles."—2 Cor. xi. 5.

It is said that "self-praise goeth but a little ways."

"I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service."—2 Cor. xi. 8.

A frank confession! but one that does no honor to a man who made it his business to teach the Bible commands, and among the rest the one that says, "Thou shalt not steal."

"I knew a man in Christ.....caught up to the third Heaven."—2 Cor. xii. 2.

How many Heavens are there? and where are they all?

“Being crafty, I caught you with guile.”—2 Cor. xii. 16.

Craft and guile have ever been the predominant traits of character in all those who have sought to make converts to this Christian religion! Rev. Robert Taylor says:—“The apostolic Father Hermas, who was the fellow-laborer of St. Paul in the ministry, who is quoted as such in the New Testament, and whose writings are expressly quoted as of Divine inspiration by the early fathers, ingenuously confesses that *lying* was the easily besetting sin of a Christian. His words are, ‘Oh! Lord, I never spake a true word in my life, but I have always lived in dissimulation, and affirmed a lie for truth to all men, and no man contradicted me, but all gave credit to my words.’”

“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”—Gal. iii. 10.

Yet who ever did, ever does, or ever can do, *all* that is “written in the book of the law?” And are all, then, cursed?

“If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.”—Gal. v. 2.

Rather a hard row to hoe, since for those who were already circumcised there was no help; and Genesis vii. 10 says, “Every man-child among you *shall be circumcised!*”

“The fruit of the *spirit* is love.”—Gal. v. 22.

Yes, so it would seem from what we read in Judges xv. 14, 15, “The *spirit* of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands. And he found a new jaw-bone of an ass, and put forth his hand and took it and slew a thousand men therewith.” Also the spirit

manifested only love (?) when driving out the buyers and sellers from the temple!

"He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one."—Luke xxii. 36.

Does this manifest love? Does love need swords?

"One God and Father of all, and through all, and in you all."—Eph. iv. 6.

If it be so, that God is *everywhere* at the same time, how could he "come down in a cloud" — "stand in the door of the Tabernacle" — "come down to see the city and the town?" We also read that "He descended in a bodily shape," "returned to Zion," "met Balaam," "walked in the midst of the camp," "came from Teman," "stood upon the altar," and many and manifold other texts, which speak of him as coming, going, standing, sitting, wrestling, fighting, and swearing — all of which go to prove that he was but a man-made creation, dwelling in certain places, the same as man, and possessing the same human qualities — the same frailties, passions, and imperfections.

When this God-making first began,
'Twas in the infancy of man;
And ignorant and full of fear,
He made these Gods his prayers to hear.

With human powers he them endowed,
And meekly to his Gods he bowed.
Three Gods in time became but one,
Called the Father, Ghost, and Son!

But now methinks we're old enough
To cast aside such silly stuff,
And on Reason build our faith,
Despite of what the Bible saith.

CHAPTER XLII.

———— “Religions take their turn ;
 'Twas Jove's, 'tis Mahomet's ; and other creeds
 Will rise with other years, till man shall learn
 Vainly his incense soars, his victim bleeds !
 Poor child of doubt and death, whose hope is built on reeds,
 Bound to earth, he lifts his eye to Heaven ;
 Is't not enough, unhappy thing ! to know
Thou art ? Is this a boon so *kindly* given,
 That being, thou would'st be again, and go,
 Thou know'st not, reck'st not to what region, so
 On earth no more, but mingled with the skies ?
 Still wilt thou dream of future joy and woe ?
 Regard and weigh yon dust before it flies !
 That little urn saith more than a thousand homilies ! ”

—Byron's *Childe Harold*.

“Be ye angry and sin not.”—Ephesians iv. 26.

“Anger resteth in the bosom of fools.”—Eccl. vii. 9.

“Make no friendship with an angry man.”—Prov. xxii. 24.

Can we, then, “be angry and sin not,” if it be against the command to be friendly with an angry man ?

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord.”—Eph. v. 22.

Whether they be drunk or sober, wise or foolish, kind or cruel, submit ye anyhow ; “love, honor, and obey,” thus making yourselves slaves, and your masters tyrants, just as all kinds of servitude on the one hand, and submission on the other, almost invariably affect both the enslaver and the enslaved. The true union of husband and wife is simply a copartnership wherein each should alternately yield to the other as equals in rights, in knowledge, in power, and in love.

Neither should be gods nor slaves, but both true man and woman.

“For no man ever yet hated his own flesh.”—Eph. v. 29.

Then no man was ever yet a Christian, or a disciple of Christ, for he himself says, “If any man come to me and *hate not* his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple;” so if his wife is his own flesh, he must HATE HER ere he can be a follower of the “meek and lowly Jesus!”

“Children, obey your parents.”—Eph. vi. 1.

This, too, needs a *qualification*, for if a parent commands a child to steal, — and how often this is done! — should the child obey?

“Honor thy father and mother, that thou may'st live long on the earth.”—Eph. vi. 23.

Are the lives of those who honor their parents miraculously lengthened? Do they really live longer than undutiful children? This promise of the Lord seems to be like those of many earthly parents who promise children cake, candy, or nuts, to please, bribe, or pacify them, or threaten them with chastisement for some bad deed, and yet at the time they know the promise or the threat will never be fulfilled or enforced!

“Jesus Christ, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.....and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”—Phil. ii. 6-11.

Hére Christ is made to be equal with God, and God himself, or one with the Lord; and God and Lord being synonymous terms, the two are equal in power and wisdom.

"Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded."
—Phil. iii. 15.

Perfection again! when we know perfection to be an impossible quality of any human being! Who can conceive of perfection? Can the finite comprehend the infinite? True, there are those who are so filled and puffed up with a sense of their own godliness, holiness, and self-sufficiency, that they deem themselves to be perfection itself, and are ever ready to exclaim to those whom they imagine less sanctimonious than themselves, "Stand aside, for I am holier than thou." But —

' Does every sanctimonious face
Denote the certain reign of grace?
Does not a phiz that scowls at sin
Oft veil hypocrisy within? "

"Servants, obey in all things your masters."—Col. iii. 22.

Yet we are told to "call no man master." Is such a volume of absurdities, contradictions, nonsense, and balderdash worthy to be called the first, best, and holiest of books — the Book of books — the word of the true and only God? Would that Infidelity could, with one mighty sweep, brush the very last one off from the face of the earth, far away into nonentity, and with it sweep away every vestige of the old Jewish, heathen, mythological religion which it has so long foisted upon our race!

Brothers and sisters, let us then,
Each and all, with tongue and pen,
Strive to redeem this world of ours—
With all its sunshine, birds, and flowers—
From all Bibles, faiths and creeds,
And in their stead, let's teach GOOD DEEDS.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"The Gospel which was preached to every creature which is under Heaven."—Col. i. 23.

Here is Paul, the first Apostle of the Gentiles, avowing that he is preaching a gospel which had already been preached to *every creature*, — preaching a God manifest in the flesh who had been believed on in the world, before the commencement of his ministry, and who therefore could have been no such person as the man of Nazareth, who had certainly not been preached at that time, nor generally believed on in the world, till ages after that time. "The **TIME** assigned as that of the historical origination of Christianity, is the first three or four centuries of the prevalence and notoriety of a system of theology under that name; reckoning from the reign of the Roman Emperor Augustus to its ultimate and complete establishment under Constantine the Great. Any continuance of its history **AFTER** this time, is unnecessary to the purpose of an investigation of its evidences, *as any proof of its existence before this time would certainly be fatal to the origination challenged for it.*"—[Taylor's "Diegesis."

"The Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."—This. iv. 16, 17.

Please fancy the picture! — a big giant of a God Almighty, *jumping* down out of Heaven with a

great shouting and hallooing! and all the "dead in Christ" rising out of their graves, — some from the depths of the sea, some from the battle grounds, and some from the sandy desert, the mountain fastnesses, and all places upon or beneath the earth's surface, where one of these "holy ones" has been lying all these thousands of years, rising all at once, a mixed up mass of all kinds, sorts, and colors, from all nations, wherever the missionary has planted the seed of Christianity; — all these resurrected ones, together with those who are alive, "caught up together, to meet the Lord in the air!" What a meeting there will be! — What pushing, crowding, elbowing, and shoving, there will be among the mass! each striving to obtain a sight of his Lordship!

"Pray without ceasing." — Thes. v. 17.

What man of sense would consent to spend *all* his time coaxing, flattering, wheedling, beseeching, and praising an imaginary being, of whom no one knows or can know anything? Life has higher and nobler aims than this. Where would be the time for work or study? Then, too, how wearisome it would be to God to be so perpetually deluged, bored, and overwhelmed with endless and *useless* petitions!—

"Why should we pray to God most high,
Omniscient Lord of earth and sky?
Our every want does he not know?
Or, are his kind compassions slow?"

"If all men's holy fervent prayers
Enter the great Jehovah's ears,
To grant them all were he to try,
'Twould puzzle the ruler of the sky!"

“ In everything give thanks.”— Thes. v. 18.

Yes, be thankful to the rascal who robs you ! — to the inveterate gossip, who blasts name and fame ! —to the murderer whose knife finds the heart of your best beloved !—to the monster whose treason plunged a whole nation into war and bloodshed !—to the famine and fever that lays your innocent and helpless family low in the tomb ! Be thankful for all these “ blessings in disguise,” and for all the other numerous ills that flesh is heir to, for “ whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” “ Resist not evil,” but meekly and cheerfully submit to every act of treachery and ingratitude, only murmuring after each fresh infliction,—“ Not my will, Oh ! Lord, but thine be done ! ” What a grand, noble, man-like, and energetic race we should become after a few generations of such Christian-like docility ! !

“ Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good.”— Thes. v. 21.

This is an error of the translators. Surely friend Paul had more wisdom than to advise men to reason and *prove* things which should be blindly and credulously swallowed in copious doses of faith !

“ Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.”— Thes. v. 26.

Never hesitate to proffer or to receive the holy (?) salute, even though the brother may be odiously repulsive to you. What though his breath be reeking with the stench of the filthy tobacco weed, the rot-gut of the corner grocery, or the lager of the beer saloon, —you must still put on the semblance of the purest love and the holiest affection ! Let your heart speak or plead as it will, and your whole nature shrink from

the ordeal, yet the Holy Book commands it, and your eternal salvation depends upon it.

“The Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel.”—2 Thes. i. 7, 8.

A precious example of charity, love, forbearance and mercy ! Then, too, “eating his own words,” in which he commands us to “resist not evil,” and if smitten “on the one cheek” to “turn the other also.”

A wizzard sure was Paul of old,
Who with one breath “blew hot and cold,”
Says that is wrong, and this is right,
Then wheels about with honor bright ;
Condemns the last, commends the first,
Till who can say, what’s best or worst ?

CHAPTER XLIV.

“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”—Tim. ii. 4.

We read in 2 Thes. ii. 11, that “God shall send them strong delusions that they should believe a *lie*.” This does not show any great desire on the Lord’s part to have them come to a knowledge of the truth. If we *wish* people to learn the right, we do not delude them with lies. When they wish for good we do not give them delusions ; and does it then seem at all reasonable that a good God would do this ?

"I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."—Tim. ii. 12.

Yet women *have taught, and have wielded authority over man*, from the earliest ages of which we have any record. In Judges we read, — "And Deborah, a prophetess, judged Israel" at that time; and Acts ii. 17, 18, says,— "On my hand-maidens will I pour out my spirit, in those days, and they shall prophesy," — "and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." Again, Acts xxi. 9,— "The same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy." And in our day there are Queens who reign and rule over the largest monarchies, and rule them *well* too, and our women also teach and preach all over the land, and in the days to come they will be the *acknowledged* equals of man — ruling, governing, teaching, and preaching as his equal and co-laborer at all times and in all places. The church, which is the last to yield up any authority, or acknowledge the justice of any progressive cause, or the truth of any scientific discovery, has at last come to see that this ruling and teaching by woman, *must* be, and she is now, in many places, giving to women the privilege to vote for church officers. She knows that by thus stepping ahead of the masses she will gain the credit with them of originating the reform, and thus find and blind a few more credulous dupes, who will become her slaves and sattelites!

But the intelligent and educated classes long ago acknowledged the justice of the plea for the equality of man and woman, and the *real* credit of having brought about the reform—so far as it has advanced—belongs to a progressive few, who have steadily labored with

tongue and pen, amid contumely, scorn, and opposition of all kinds, and thus conquered old Conservatism, in spite of churches, Bibles, and creeds of faith.

“If any man provide not for his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an Infidel.”—Tim. v. 8.

Christ, in his renowned sermon on the mount, says, —“Take no thought what ye shall eat, or drink, or wherewithall ye shall be clothed. For all these things do the Gentiles seek.” Can we have any better authority in regard to the necessity of providing for our own household than Christ himself? Perhaps he meant us to *filch* our living, and thus follow his example as well as his advice. For did he not help himself to corn belonging to others more industrious and better gifted with forethought than himself? And did he not ride on stolen beasts, and *take* whatever he wished for his own or his followers’ need? If those who provide not for their own, are worse than Infidels, how bad must those be who provide nothing, and steal and take and beg what they want? Honesty may not be the best policy *if* Christ be a pattern and true guide!

“Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake, and thine often infirmities.”—Tim. v. 23.

How many drunkards has this little bit of Paul’s advice made since it became a part of Divine inspiration? “A little wine” has led many a man, aye, and many a woman, down to the degradation of a drunkard’s grave! “A little wine,” partaken of, perhaps, at the communion table, has re-awakened an almost conquered appetite, and plunged family and friends into gloom and despondency as they beheld the

loved and once rescued one again sinking into the depths and sloughs of drunkenness ! “A little wine for thy stomach’s sake !” Read this text, then look in your own town, and see the corner groceries, the licensed taverns, the low groggeries, and, worse than all, the lager beer saloons ! Yes, worse, for the plea they give is so specious : that lager don’t intoxicate ! This plea draws into the saloon not only the habitual drinker, but the temperate man also. He who would shun the open Adversary, who boldly shows his horns and claws, fears not to embrace this demon of the cup, with its velvet foot and hidden fangs, and thus fosters a taste for spiritous drinks, and vitiates the whole man, destroying intellect, vigor, and strength, and making of the crowning work of Nature a bloated, bleared-eyed, walking drunkard. “Woe unto him who putteth the bottle to his neighbor’s lips,” and woe unto him who preacheth the text, — “Take a little wine for thy stomach’s sake.”

Perhaps no better closing argument can be offered against the bright and tempting cup, than the following lines of thrilling, soul-stirring poetry :—

“Go stand where I have stood,
And see the strong man bow,
With gnashing teeth, lips bathed in blood,
And cold and livid brow !
Go catch his wandering glance, and see
There mirrored his soul’s misery.

“Go, kneel as I have knelt,
Implore, beseech, and pray ;
Strive the besotted heart to melt,
The downward course to stay.
With bitter curse be turned aside,
Thy prayers burlesqued, thy tears defied !

“ Go weep as I have wept,
O'er a loved father's fall,
See every cherished promise swept,
Youth's sweetness turned to gall.
Hope's faded flowers strewn all the way
That led me up to woman's day.

“ Go to thy mother's side,
And her crushed spirit cheer,
Thine own deep-anguish hide,
Wipe from her cheek the tear ;
Mark her dimmed eye, her furrowed brow,
The gray that streaks her dark hair now,
Her toil-worn frame, her trembling limb,
And trace the ruin back to him
Whose plighted faith in early youth
Promised eternal love and truth ;
But who, foresworn, hath yielded up
This promise to the fatal cup,
And led her down from love and light,
And all that made her pathway bright,
And chained her there, 'mid want and strife,
That lowly thing, a drunkard's wife,
And stamped on childhood's brow so mild,
That withering blight, a drunkard's child !

“ Go see, and hear, and feel, and know,
All that my soul hath felt and known,
Then look upon the wine-cup's glow,
See if its brightness can atone—
Think if it's flavor you would try,
If all proclaimed, 'Tis drink and die ?

“ Tell me, I hate the bowl !
Hate is a feeble word !
I loathe ! abhor ! My very soul
With strong disgust is stirred
Whene'er I see, or hear, or tell,
Of that dark beverage of Hell ! ”

CHAPTER XLV.

"The jargon of the frothy spouter Paul,
Bothers the pericraniums of them all."

—Yahoo.

"The Lord of Lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto."—Tim. vi. 16.

If *he only* hath immortality, there can be no Christ, angels, archangels, devils, nor any other imaginary beings. (?) If all are mortal, then all will become naught. In this case we would ask, what becomes of the fabled Heaven or hell, which is to be peopled with the immaterial, impalpable nothings, which Christians say are left of us, poor human beings, when we have "shuffled off this mortal coil," and gone to "that bourne whence no traveller returns?" Our text also says, this great and *only* immortal God "dwells in the light," &c. ; yet 1 Kings viii. 12, says, — "The Lord would dwell in *thick darkness!*" Psalms xviii. 11, says—"He made darkness his secret place." Psalms xcvii. 2, says — "Clouds and darkness are around about him."

"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake."—2 Tim. ii. 10.

God is said to be "no respecter of persons," yet the "elect" are often spoken of, and he has his peculiar "chosen people," who are a "special people unto himself." He says, — "I will be *their* God," and "will plead for *my people*." Plead to whom, or with whom?

12*

"All who will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."—2d Tim. iii. 12.

Mark x. 29, 30, says,—“There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel’s, but he shall receive an hundred fold *now in this time*, houses, and lands, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, with persecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life.” Psalms xcii. 12, says, — “The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon;” and there are any number of other passages which promise to the “Godly in Christ” exemption from pestilence, sorrow, and evil, and that they shall enjoy not only all temporal pleasures, but that in a future existence they shall have eternal bliss and joy inexpressible!—But are these promises realized? Do these Godly ones thus flourish? Could they have all this, and still “give to all that asketh, and from the needy turn not away?” How these Scripture texts clash with one another when one reads them with a critic’s eye, or studies them freely and fearlessly?

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”—2 Tim. iii. 16.

In 1 Cor. 7–12, we read, from the lips of the same speaker,—“But to the rest speak I, *not the Lord*: if any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.”—Are we not to understand that this is *not inspired* doctrine, but only the advice of a frail human being, like unto ourselves, and therefore not Scripture; not given for doctrine, reproof, correction, or instruction? And

if this be *uninspired*, we know not how much more of this Holy Book may be of the same stripe. But if all is inspiration,—

Then Christians boast your *holy trash*—
 Your Bible Calipee and Calipash,
 Your blessed Trinity, where one is three !
 And Orthodox and Lunatic agree !
 Mix'd up with humbug, fudge, and contradiction,
 Surpassing all the extravagance of fiction ;
 Incomprehensibles amalgamate
 With all the rubbish in your choked up pate ;
 Whatever is impossible, believe !
 'Tis holy logic, and can ne'er deceive ! ”
 —*The Yahoo.*

CHAPTER XLVI.

“ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”
 —Hebrews x. 31.

Why should it be, if he is a “ God of mercy, love, and long forbearance ? ” If a child be very willful, headstrong, or wickedly disposed, is it not in a great measure owing to its training or bringing up ? “ Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” If a Heavenly father leads us, or allows us to be led, into the thorny paths of temptation and sin, is he not just as responsible for our wrong doing as would be an earthly parent under like circumstances ? Aye, and more so, for hath he not all knowledge, all wisdom, and all power ? — And can he not, then, lead us all aright, if he only

choose to? And if so, *could* we do wrong? Would he not do the best he could? And is he not just as kind and loving as an earthly parent? Doth he not desire and wish for the happiness of *all* his children? Can he not have *all* his desires? If earthly parents possessed this knowledge, wisdom, love, and power, would not they all so guide their children that they would *all* become good and virtuous? Can we, then, expect less of one who is said to be the "Father of us all?" Should we, then, "*fear* to fall into his hands?"

"Abraham went out, not knowing whither he went."—Heb. xi. 8.

Gen. xii. 5, says,—“They, (Abraham and his kindred,) went forth, to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came.”

“By *faith* he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king.”—Heb. xi. 27.

Ex. ii. 14, says, — “Moses feared and said, Surely this thing is known!”—“Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh!” And this is going by *faith*, is it? This is confirmed by iv. 19, which says, “all the men are dead which sought thy life.”

“Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, his *only* begotten son.”—Heb. xi. 17.

“Abraham had *two* sons, one by a bond-maid, and one by a free woman.”—Gal. iv. 22.

Had he only one son, or two? Who shall say?

“And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented.”—Hebrews xi. 36, 37.

Prov. xii. 21 says,—“There shall no evil happen to the just.”

Psalms i. 3 says,—“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly. Whatsoever he doeth it shall prosper.” This kind of *prospering* which Paul speaks of, may be acceptable to Christians, but may the good fates preserve us Infidels from such Heaven-sent blessings in disguise, as being “scourged, tortured, stoned, and sawn asunder!”

“Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.”—Heb. xii. 6.

Yea, even when pure, “perfect and upright,” as Job was said to be! He, upon whom was sent almost every affliction that could befall a human body. Any king, ruler, or earthly parent, who would cause or allow to be caused, such woe and misery to any over whom he had control, particularly when it was done in such a cause as this of which we speak, would be deemed atrociously cruel, inhuman, and brutish. The Lord *loved* him, and therefore chastened him! This Bible proof of love is rather a hard sample of Divine affection! What more fiendish schemes of horrible suffering could Hate itself have devised?

Better far that shafts of Hate
Than Love like this should be *our* fate!
From open *foes* we all may guard,
But when we find each pleasure marred
By one who calls himself our *friend*,
We can but wish his ways he'd mend,
And to pure friendship prove his claim
In acts and deeds as well as name!

CHAPTER XLVII.

"Count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations." — James i. 2.

Why pray, then, for the Lord to "lead us not into temptation," if it be a source of so much joy to fall into it?

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and it shall be given to him."—James i. 5.

Where is the wisdom this "liberal God" bestows upon the fool and the ignorant man? Has prayer the power to develope into intellectuality a low, gross, contracted, illy organized brain?

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and neither tempteth he any man."—James i. 13.

James must have been a little muddled when putting forth such contradictory and diverse statements in his epistolary correspondence. He taught them to pray, "not to be led into temptation," and to believe in the old fable that "God did tempt Abraham," (Gen. xxii. 1;) yet now he says God never tempts. Perhaps, if we wish to be on the safe side, we had better use the precautionary measure of praying against temptation, lest James may have been mistaken, and the Lord really *does* tempt poor frail humanity!

"Hath not God chosen the *poor* of this world?"—James ii. 5.

"Yet how many Christians are there who are eager, or willing, even, to be poor that they may be among the "chosen of God?"

"Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."—James ii. 10.

If you keep it all, how is it possible to offend in one point? And again, who is so near perfect that he *can* keep all the law? Yet of those who sin are all equally guilty! Common sense itself tells us that this is not so. We are only censurable when we willfully do wrong, and the more evil we do the more we transgress the law. By our daily life are we judged, and shall man be called more just than God? Yet we make him so, when we make a God who is so unreasonable as to condemn alike the blood-thirsty wretch, and the author of some little, trivial peccadillo, hardly worthy of mention.

"Faith without works is dead." "By works a man is justified, not by faith only."—James ii. 20, 24.

In Romans iii. 28, Paul says:—

"A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

And in Ephesians ii. 8, he writes:—

"For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

"How shall we be saved?
By faith, or works; by grace, or prayers;
By days of penance, weeks, or years,
Or cash in plenty paid?
My counsel is, to walk alone,
Keep clear of troubles not your own,
And all religious strife;
Let madmen at each other roar,
Do good to all, both rich and poor,
And lead a blameless life!"

CHAPTER XLVIII.

"If any man offend not in words, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."—James iii. 2.

We of this day have grown wiser than the inspired ones of old, for we know how much easier it is to *talk* good than to *be* good. We know how many there are who set themselves up as preachers and teachers of the Gospel, who are very fair and smooth in words, yet whose hidden deeds prove to be, on inspection, fouler than the foulest ! It is said that "barking dogs never bite," and that "still water runs the deepest ;" so the man who "bridles his tongue" is often far from being the best man at heart, Scripture to the contrary notwithstanding.

"The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." — James v. 11.

As a proof of this merciful disposition, and pitiful heart, read Jeremiah xiii. 14, — "I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the Lord ; I will not pity nor spare, nor have mercy, but I will destroy them."

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."—James v. 16.

If a prayer is *effectual* it must avail much, but who can prove that a single prayer ever was effectual ? — that any single event in Nature was ever altered or changed by prayer ? Fervent, earnest aspirations, may sometimes have a soothing, purifying effect on

the heart of both suppliant and listener, and in this manner may do some good ; but one can feel a heavy burden of grief or care lifted just as soon and just as surely, by philosophy and reason, by submitting quietly to the inevitable—resolving

“ To patiently endure
Any ill he cannot cure,”

as by praying to some imaginary nothing, and then winding up with the well known sentence, “Not my will, O Lord ! but thine be done ! ” which is, after all, but resigning one’s self to *the inevitable*.

The Infidel, or Atheist, whose mind has been educated and enlightened, can bear sorrow, disappointment, and affliction, just as calmly and resignedly as a Christian, and with far less whining, for he knows ’tis no use crying over “spilt milk.” He knows that things which are born of circumstances over which he has no control, cannot be *prayed out of existence*, or diverted out of their legitimate channel, and he therefore resigns himself to them, and searches for other sources of happiness, looking ever on the sunny side, and when one cup of joy is dashed from his lips, he learns to fill for himself another from the first pure and legitimate fountain he can discover.

“ Elias was a man, subject to the same passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth for the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.”—James v. 17, 18.

Blind fanatic Christian faith may swallow this assertion, but ask not the philosopher, the Free Thinker, or the Infidel, to believe that prayer can change the course of the elements :—

“ If God be so supremely kind,
 Omniscient both in deed and mind,
 Why should we vainly, impiously try
 To change the monarch of the sky ?
 To grant each wish will he delay,
 Unless we sigh, and groan, and pray ? ”

CHAPTER XLIX.

“ Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear ; not only to the good and gentle, but to the froward.”—1 Peter ii. 18.

As Peter’s advice does not agree with that of Matthew or Paul, to which shall we listen, and by which shall we be governed ? Were our whole earthly and heavenly happiness dependent upon our obeying the Divine will, how could we tell which to do ? Obey our masters, or not obey them ? Matthew iv. 10, says,—“ Worship the Lord thy God, and *him only* shalt thou serve.” Paul says, (1 Cor. vii. 23,) “ Be ye not servants of men.” This is rather a knotty question to settle Scripturally.

“ The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.”—2 Peter iii. 10.

“ The earth abideth forever.”—Eccl. i. 4.

If it abideth forever it surely cannot be burnt up, even if the Bible does predict that this shall be its fate.

“ Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin.”—1 John iii. 9.

Yet, in chap. i. 8., he has just told us that “ if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the

truth is not in us," and in 1 Kings viii. 46, — "There is no man that sinneth not." Also in Eccl. vii. 20, — "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." Now, with all this conflicting testimony, does the Bible prove Christians to be sinless, or does it not? What conclusion can we form from such medley contradictions — plain, positive, flat contradictions — holy and Divine contradictions? Who has ever beheld that strange anomaly, a *sinless* child of God, taking the Scripture definition of sin, of course?

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." — John iii. 15.

Christ says—"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, his mother, and his brethren, he cannot be my disciple." Then, of course, none of the disciples are in existence at this time, either in Heaven or Hell; or, even if they still exist, the time must come when they will not, for they must have *hated* their brethren, and consequently were murderers, and so could not exist forever—could not have "*eternal life*!"

"If our heart condemn us not, then we have confidence towards God, and whatsoever we ask we receive of him."—1 John iii. 21.

What causes this feeling of condemnation when we think we sin, or do wrong? Is it not what we call conscience? And is not our conscience what our organization, education and surrounding circumstances have made it? If we are taught that it is good to lie for the welfare of the church, would our conscience or "heart condemn us?" Should we not rather feel conscientiously impelled to do "a right smart of lying?" If taught to burn ourselves upon the funeral

pyre of our husbands, should we not think it right so to do? If taught to eat the flesh of our enemies or prisoners of war, should we not become cannibals?—If taught Mormonism, should we not believe polygamy a virtue? and so on through the whole catalogue of sins—or what we think are sins? We are what we are, and our conscience is what it is, through no will of our own, but through the circumstances of our birth and surroundings—circumstances over which we had no control.

We could not choose of whom we should be born, or when, or where. We are the mere effect of causes, some of which are as “old as the hills,” aye, older than the hills,—older than God himself, or any Gods, or any men who made these Gods, — so very old that the mind of man cannot trace them to their beginning, or even *conceive* of a beginning! As to receiving whatsoever we ask, we know *that* cannot be, else would the whole world and all creation be revolutionized!—we might ask for the sun to be put out, the stars to be moved out of their places, and other like momentous operations to be done! Would one such prayer or request be answered?—or would even a straw be moved out of its place in answer to the request of the best Christian the world ever produced, or can produce?

“There is no fear in love; perfect love casteth out fear.”—1 John iv. 18.

Yet how often are we told that we must “fear the Lord?”—that the “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom?” Who can imagine a love devoid of fear?—fear of offending the loved one?—fear of doing something whereby we may forfeit the love we so much

prize? Indeed, were it not for this very feeling of *fear*, we should not be half so zealous in striving to merit, win, and retain love as we now are. It is human nature to prize that the most which we fear most to lose. The very thought that the object of our affection may be snatched from us, quickens and intensifies our feelings, as we may see exemplified in the fact, that when we come near losing a friend, parent, or child, by some severe sickness, or sudden accident, how much nearer are we drawn to them, and how much more tenderly we regard them, in consequence of the *fear* we feel that we may lose them? Is not love then full of fear?

CHAPTER L.

“I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth.”
—Rev. vii. 1.

Now-a-days men are wiser than to make Gods who have no more intellectual capacity than to inspire a set of scribes to write about *globes* with corners to them! As man progresses in knowledge, his Gods also advance in equal ratio; and consequently, as men now know more about worlds, globes and spheres than did these men of Revelatory notoriety, so do they make their Gods to be wiser and better, for we only worship what is higher and better than ourselves. A man's God is always an embodiment of his highest conception of power, wisdom, and goodness.

"A Lamb stood on Mount Sion, and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne—and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men,—and in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God."—Rev. xiv. 1-5.

"They that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage. Neither can they die any more, for they are equal with the angels."—Luke xx. 35, 36.

Now, in the face of all this evidence, how can a conscientious, practical, believing Christian ever marry? Why do they not tread in the "strait and narrow way," that they may be "equal with the angels," and counted worthy to obtain "that resurrection from the dead?" Surely, an eternal, never-ending life of joy, and permission to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," and the power to sing that "new song," "which no man could learn" by any other means, is a full and sufficient recompense for a short earthly life of celibacy, especially when one considers that his life-path may be brightened, as were those of Christ and the Apostles, by relatives, and by warm friends of this forbidden sex; and in fact, that he is only cut off from wedlock itself—that bond which many have considered as a source of more pain than pleasure, and which the mother told her daughter, when she came to her for permission to marry, that she had long seen the folly of. "Well," replied the sharp little Miss, "I want to see the folly of it, too!" So we may safely infer from their conduct that Christians are not content to live according to their creed, but want to try

the folly of not only wedlock, but of a majority of all the *real* sins, dissipations, and evils of life, even at the risk of eternal damnation, hell-fire, and the vengeance of a jealous, angry, and wrathful Deity.

But as all these judgments are in the unknown, far-off, and unseen future, and the temptation of the seen and the real present *now*, overbalances all fear of doubtful and future pain, they say, "*I believe*," ye their actions proclaim their scepticism.

"Such are Jehovah's pious, blessed race !
Born 'babes of wrath,' but changed to 'babes of grace !'
Yes, 'babes of grace,' and pretty babes they are !
And well they fatten upon Gospel fare.
As they're all blessed with faith, they cannot doubt
But what the Lord at last will help them out,
Nor turn his back upon such holy men,
Who feast upon his carcass now and then."

—Yahoo.

CHAPTER LI.

"These childish tales afford supreme delight ;
When nonsense is the bait, the gudgeons bite ;
Cram ghosts and bugaboos in every tale,
To please 'creation's lords' you'll never fail ;
Or give them precious, holy Gospel stuff—
Their maws with that can ne'er be crammed enough !"

—Yahoo.

"He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever, — and they have no rest day nor night. —
—Rev. xiv. 10, 11.

What supreme felicity it must be to the "holy angels" to witness such misery, woe, and suffering ! —

How joyful must *Heaven* seem when it is made beautiful by such glorious (?) scenes of Heavenly torment !

“ And I saw an angel come down from Heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand, and he laid hold of the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. After that he must be loosed a little season,—and shall go out to deceive the nations.”
—Rev. xx. 1, 3, 8.

And why not keep him bound down, or, better yet, put him out of existence entirely ? Was the Lord afraid the world would be too good if Satan was not allowed to be let loose again ?—afraid he would have no sinners left on whom to let loose his vials of wrath, vengeance, and fury, when they needed an egress ?

“ The earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them.”—Rev. xx. 11.

And where, then, were they put, and how could they be in *no place* ? And how could the earth fly away, when in Psalms civ. 5, it says, it “ should not be removed *forever* ? ”

“ I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea.”—Rev. xxi. 1.

A very *dry* earth it must have been ! No sea, and soon no moisture of any kind ; for were the sea to become dry, how soon would *all* waters dry up ?

“ The city was built four square, and the length is as large as the breadth, — twelve thousand furlongs, — the length and the breadth and height of it are equal.”—Rev. xxi. 16.

A city fifteen hundred miles high ! They must have carried up the materials in a balloon to build it with ! And then where would be the air ? How could a foundation be made strong enough to support such a weight ? Even at one mile high, it would crush

any foundation as flat as a pancake! Yet this is a *Revelation*! — this is God's own word revealed to man—a story told in Divine language, and so simple and plain (?) that none could mistake it! Therefore, all *believers* must swallow this high city, whether they can digest it or not! But *we* do protest against having it thrust down *our* throats, for we Infidels prefer some more plain and simple pabulum — something that we can examine ere we partake of it, and make it *a part of ourselves*!

And now, old Book, a long farewell
To thee, and to thy Heaven and hell,
Thy stories old, and strange, and odd,
Thy Jewish fable, creed, and God,
Thy miracles and wonders, too,
To each and all we'll bid adieu,
And hope the cursory glance we've shown
Will help to change the whole world's tone!
And from "air castles" in the sky,
And dreams of glories there so high,
We'll turn to this, our own bright earth,
And here make joys of greater worth
Than any in fabled Heaven or Hell,
Where Gods, or Christs, or angels dwell.
On man, on bird, on beast, on flower,
We'll lavish gems of love's pure dower,
Nor waste the precious treasured hoard
On any Jewish God or Lord,
Who's vainly sought on hills, in dells—
Who nothing is, and nowhere dwells!

THE END.

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